

## Humility and the Will of God (James 4:10, 13-17)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (2/15/15)

### Introduction

1. Today, we look at the second of two illustrations that James uses to argue the fundamental rule of piety: humiliation must precede exaltation (v. 10; Matt. 23:12).
  - a. Last week we looked at how we presume to abuse the law in our relationships (*scandal mongering*, vv. 11, 12).
  - b. The verses before us today deal with prideful presumption or lawlessness—*iniquity* (vv. 13-17).
2. At the center of our discussion today is the will of God (note v. 15) and how our relationship to His will naturally promotes the humility that God desires of all His followers.

### I. Presumption Is Sin

1. What is *presumption*?
  - a. It is boasting that one is able to determine a desirable outcome to one's planning, assuming one can reasonably control his circumstances.
  - b. James' indictment: "*As it is, you boast in your arrogance*" (v. 16) — presumption is a pride issue.
  - c. Presumption is simply to determine one's life and direction without consideration of the Lord's desire in it.
2. Presumption illustrated: "*Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit'*" (v. 13).
  - a. Here is the *presumption*—that one can control (1) Timing: "*today or tomorrow,*" (2) Self determination: "*we will go,*" (3) Circumstances: "*into such a city,*" (4) Purpose: (a) "*to continue there a year*" and (b) "*to buy and sell,*" and (c) "*to make a profit.*"
3. Why is presumption wrong?
  - a. No one can control his life. (1) No one knows the future, which means, (2) no is able absolutely to regulate anything.
  - b. The reality? (v. 14). (1) One's life is but a brief moment, like fleeting vapor—here and gone. (2) Even with the best planning, one's life is dependent on (1) both foreseen and unforeseen *forces and* (2) controllable and uncontrollable *conditions*.
4. How does one correct presumption?
  - a. Recognize presumption and deal with it by (1) humbling oneself before the Lord, admitting one's inability to self-determine, and (2) Submitting fully to *God's will* in everything.
  - b. Acknowledge God's sovereignty over all things. (1) God's will assumes a plan and purpose, which He exerts through *guidance* of all His children. (2) Faith apprehends God's will through knowing God and His ways, which allows for careful planning — "*If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that*" (v. 15).

### II. Presumption Is Evil

1. *Evil (poneros)* is the effect or consequence of presumption (v. 16b).
  - a. There are consequences of the corruption of *character (kakos)* — what one does is bad because his character is not good).
  - b. There are consequences of *degeneracy (saphros)* — what one does is bad because he is morally degenerate or depraved).
  - c. Thus, all prideful “*boasting [presumption] is evil [hurtful consequences]*” because all who presume are both corrupt and depraved naturally.
2. Presumption is the fruit of a heart that does not want to recognize God’s right or power to purpose and plan all things for His own ends.
  - a. Presumption rests on the notion that human choice produces change, which affects the contingencies of all future events. Choices can force God to change intentions.
  - b. Presumption counts on a favorable turn of events, which denies that God has predetermined the outcome of all things.
  - c. Thus, presumption is the sin of iniquity (v. 17).

### III. Iniquity and the Will of God

1. *Iniquity* is that condition of heart that rejects divine guidance (through law and Word), stubbornly following one’s own desires and purposes (Jer. 23:7).
  - a. One cannot truly be saved if he is lawless (*anomia*) (Matt. 7:21, 23).
  - b. *Lawless* refers to one who rejects divine guidance for self-determination (1 John 2:15-17).
  - c. True believers are trusting, dependent, and submissive to God, His will, and His ways.
2. *God’s will* is His choice of things arising from His own desire (*thelema*).
  - a. There is “*the purpose [eudokia] of His will*” (Eph. 1:5)—what He desires to do.
  - b. There is “*the mystery [musterion] of His will*” (Eph. 1:9)—revealing what He desires to accomplish.
  - c. There is “*the counsel [boule] of His will*” (Eph. 1:11)—determining to accomplish His desire.
3. *God’s desire* is to have many sons and daughters conformed to the image of His Son, the last Adam, in order to restore His kingdom on earth (2 Pet. 3:9).
  - a. We are to pray that His will be done (Matt. 6:9, 10).
  - b. Nevertheless, what He has willed will be done (Psa. 135:6).

### Conclusion

1. Are you becoming more like Jesus in your person and purpose (2 Cor. 5:17)?
2. Are you being guided by the Spirit (Rom. 8:12-17)?
3. Have you a greater desire to do His will (John 6:38)?
4. The Lord’s sons and daughters are—
  - a. Faithful to His person, knowing and trusting Him implicitly, and —
  - b. Obedient to His purpose, serving Him fully (Prov. 12:22).