

Bible Studies for Life: October 9

Faith on Display in Your Priorities • James 4:13-17; 5:7-11

By Laura Lee Leathers



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If you do a little research on the Internet, you'll learn there is some dispute about how it originated. One theory is that Benjamin Hawkins received a summons from the President to come to Washington, D.C., in the late 18th century. His response was, "God willing, and the creek (Creek?) don't rise."

Was he referencing the Creek Indian nation or a swollen creek? There is no clear answer. Perhaps it's just folklore. Another thought is that it's a reference to James 4:15.

Subject your plans to God's will (James 4:13-17 ESV). Life is a mystery because no one knows what a day will bring, let alone tomorrow, a year from now, or the future. James warns his readers to remember life is uncertain and complex and to be careful about how we make our plans.

Notice the question, "What is your life?" James then reminds the reader, "For you are a mist (vapor) that appears for a little time and then vanishes" (v. 14). Throughout Scripture, the brevity of life is stressed. In the book of Job, observe a few examples: Job 7:9; 8:9; Job 9:25, 26; 14:1-2. Also, look at Proverbs 27:1.

We think we're in control, but we control nothing. As Believers, we place our lives under God's sovereignty, His will, plans, and purposes. How is this accomplished? By being in His Word. "In the Bible, God gives precepts, principles, and promises that can guide us in every area of life. Knowing

and obeying the Word of God is the surest way to success” (Joshua 1:8; Ps. 1:3–Wiersbe).

In verse 17, James writes that it is a sin when you know the right thing to do (obedience) and choose to go in the opposite direction (disobedience). If we were honest with ourselves, we would see it’s our pride versus humility.

Pride is arrogance. We think we know more than God, or we don’t want to wait for His timing. Wiersbe brings out a significant point: “We believe God’s will is something we can accept or reject. In reality, the will of God is not an option; it is an obligation. The will of God is a living relationship between God and the believer.”

The following may help you better understand what it means to subject your plans to God’s will: “We should know His will (Acts 22:14); God wants us to understand His will (Eph. 5:17), We must prove God’s will (Rom. 12:2), and We must do God’s will from the heart (Eph. 6:6)” (Wiersbe).

James is not saying don’t make plans; make your plans based upon “if the Lord wills.” Proverbs 16:3 is an excellent reminder, “Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.”

Focus on the Lord’s return (James 5:7-9). We move past the first six verses to focus on patience, suffering, and the Lord’s return. The first illustration of patience is the farmer.

The farmer has no control over the weather. The crop depends not only on the soil and fertilizers but the sun, rain, temperatures, and even the wind for pollination. He works the land and waits to see what the harvest will bring.

While we wait with patience, we are responsible to see to it that our hearts are established or strengthened in God’s Word. We walk by faith, not by sight. We trust, leaning upon His

understanding (Prov. 3:5-6). We work until the Judge comes (v. 9); the goal is to be found faithful.

Stay the course (James 5:10-11). Biblical characters give us tremendous insight into how to live a godly life. They had their failures and sufferings, but there was a steadfastness to remain faithful. James tells us to “take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord” (v. 10).

Using the example of Job, James tells us to observe his steadfastness and see the purpose of the Lord. What is that purpose? The realization that, “The Lord is compassionate and merciful.”

Daily we are called to remain steadfast, trust His Word, see our suffering as an opportunity to share the hope found in Jesus, and be patient as we wait for the Lord’s return.

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