“How To Face Your Future”, Developing a Faith That Works, Part 12 of 15 – April 7, 2013 at SBC

 James 4:13-17

Today, we're going to see, what James has to say about, “How to Face Your Future.” Americans have always been, a forward-looking people. An article in, U.S. News and World Report said, . . . we’re obsessed, with the future. We want to know, what's going to happen next, . . next year, next decade, next century.

We're preoccupied, with the future. It's amazing, how people, try all kinds of different things, to try to forecast, the future: tea leaves, fortune cookies, astrology, palm reading. We try many different ways, . . . to get a grasp, on the future. We read books, subscribe to seminars, . . that forecast, the economic predictions. We attend conferences, and seminars, on planning, and goal setting.

What is the Christian’s viewpoint, . . . toward, the future? How am I to relate, toward, what happens? What should be, my reaction, to that? James, in this passage, talks about, . . . how to face the future. He says, there are **three mistakes**, . . . that are commonly made, that we should be aware of. He gives us, a warning. He says, plan for your future, . . . but, be aware, . . . of these **three common mistakes**.

He illustrates, the first mistake, with a typical conversation, . . between, a couple of businessmen. One guy, has his MBA, from the University of Jerusalem, . . . and, the other, is the CEO, of a Tel-Aviv 500 company.

They're talking, and discussing, their plans. In James 4:13, we drop into, their conversation, *"Now listen, you who say, Today, or tomorrow. We will go to this, or that city, spend a year there, carry on business, and make money."*

What's wrong, with this? People make plans, every day. These are just, a couple of entrepreneurs, go-getters. There is detail, in the business plan; they have it all, planned out. When? Today, or tomorrow. Where? This, or that city. How long? We'll spend, a year there. What? We'll carry on, business. Why? Make money. What's wrong, . . . with this?

The Bible, doesn't condemn, making a legitimate profit. The Bible, talks a lot, about planning, . . . too. This man, has planned, everything. His purpose, the place, the progress. He's got, . . . all the bases, covered. What's wrong, here?

**1. James says the first common mistake we make, is PLANNING, . . . WITHOUT GOD.**

There's not a single mention, of God, . . . in this entire, business plan. He knew what he wanted, he knew how to get there, . . . but, he didn't check it out, with God, . . first. Don't, misunderstand. The Bible talks about, planning. Luke 14:28 – “*No man goes out, and builds a house, without first considering, how much it's going to cost.”*

And, the book of Proverbs, says over and over again, . . . that, if I don't plan, . . . I'm a fool. It's wise, . . to plan. He's not talking about planning, . . . he's talking about, presumption, . . . without God. It's great to have dreams, it's great to have goals -- as long as you, . . . include God, as long as you, pray about it. There's nothing wrong, with what he did -- all of these things, are fine. It's what he, . . . forgot to do. He forgot, to include God. His attitude, . . . was one, of self-sufficiency.

This is what, James, is talking about. You can be a believer, . . . and, forget God, in your daily life. There are a lot of people, who love the Lord, with all their heart, . . . but, when it comes down to planning, . . . their business, or career, or their education, . . . they are, . . . practical atheists.

It's sad, . . to meet somebody, who says, . . "I don't believe, in God. I don't believe, He exists." It's even sadder, to find somebody, who says, "I believe, He exists," . . . but, then, . . . acts like, . . . He doesn't exist. He doesn't make any plans, . . . involving, the Lord. He just goes off, on his own, . . . as if it all, depends on him.

You say, "I believe, in God." Does He have a say, in your business? "Oh, I don't believe, in mixing business, and, faith." All business, . . . is God's business, . . . if you're, a believer. Don't plan, . . . without God. That's, presumptuous. Planning, without God, . . . is practical atheism.

\*\*\*\* What's the solution? **Include God, in your goal setting**. James 4:15 – *"Instead, you ought to say, `If it is the Lord's will, we will live, and do this, or that.'"* **If!**

Have you realized, that even the best laid plans, . . . of mice and men, . . . often, . . fall through? There's a thing called, Murphy's Law. If things can go wrong, they will. Count on it! Life is just, one big “if”. Right in the middle of LIFE, is IF. Life really is, pretty if-fy. I don't know, what's going to happen, tomorrow, and, you don't either. I can make, an educated guess. But, planning without God, . . . is presumptuous.

The starting point, in facing the future, is to say, "God, what do you, . . want me, to do. What do You, want me, not, to do." Planning without prayer, is presumptuous. He says, we should preface, all of our planning, with the phrase, . . . "if it’s, the Lord wills".

Couldn't that, become a cliche? Of course. You could, . . . trivialize it. But, he's not, saying that. He's saying, that, the whole attitude, of our life, should be, . . . "It's up, to God. Whatever, He wants, me to do, . . . is what I want." It's just, a good reminder.

Christians, for hundreds of years, used to, . . . write the initials D.V., at the end of their letters. They'd sign their name, and then write, D.V. They stood for, the Latin phrase, "Deo Valente" -- "Lord willing". James says, that ought to be, our response, to life. It's OK to plan, . . but, include God, . . in your plans, and goal setting.

**\*\*\* There are three, possible responses, to God's will:**

1. I can make reference, to it. That's what, he's saying here. I admit, that God has a will, . . . and, I accept it, acknowledge it, . . . make reference to it.

2. I can show deference, to it. I really want God's will, . . . and, I accept it, into my life.

3. I can show preference, for it. More than, anything else, I want God's will, in my life. What God wants -- that's, my plan. I deeply, . . . desire it.

Proverbs 16:1 – *"We may, make our plans, but God, has the last word."* Man proposes, . . . God disposes.

Proverbs 16:9 – *"We should, make plans - counting on God, to direct us."* Stop praying "God bless, . . . what, I'm doing". Don't pray that, anymore. God, I've made, . . . my plans. I've worked them all out, . . . now, You, bless them. Instead, pray, . . . "God, help me to do, . . . what You're blessing."

God is doing, a lot of fantastic things, in the world. I just want to be, in on them. Help me to do, . . what You're blessing. I don't want, my plans. I want Your plans, in my life, because Your plans, will provide success, in my life. Planning without God, is the first mistake. You overcome it, by including God, in your goal setting.

**2. The second mistake is PRESUMING, . . . ABOUT TOMORROW.**

Taking it for granted, . . . assuming, I'm going to live, forever. I've got, the rest, of my life. James 4:14 & 16 – *"Why you don't even know, what will happen, tomorrow. What is, your life? You are a mist, that appears for a little while, and then vanishes. As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting, is evil."*

There are a couple reasons, we shouldn't presume, about the future, . . . and, assume, that we've got, tomorrow:

1) Life is unpredictable. *"You don't, even know"*. None of us know, what's going to happen tonight, much less, next year. All we can do, is make guesses. Life is, so unpredictable. Another war, could start, . . the economy, could turn around, . . . your friends, could leave you. None of us know, what's going to happen, in life.

Life is, so unpredictable. Many of you, work on commission, or you are self-employed. You go from, feast to famine, . . in your income. One day, it's great, . . and, the next day, it's the pits. You don't have, any assurance. There is no guarantee, of perpetual success. None of us, do. Realize, that you can't presume, . . . on tomorrow.

We shouldn't let that, frighten us, . . . that, life, is uncertain. Don't worry about it, or be afraid. Just let it, cause you, . . . **to trust God, more**. Let it cause you, to **be more dependent, on God**. You don't know, what's going to happen, in your life, or your business. It just forces you, . . to trust God, more. Life is, unpredictable.

2) Life is brief. *"You are, a mist"* “Mist" in Greek, is "atmos", . . . where we get the word, . . . "atmosphere". Your life, is like fog; it rolls in, in the morning, . . . but, it burns off, by noon. Who knows, how long, we're going to live? None of us, do.

How does the Bible, describe your life? It uses phrases like, a leaf, grass, shadow, cloud, puff of smoke, vapor. I'm only one heartbeat, . . . away, from eternity. I don't know how long, I'm going to live. Life, is short. It goes so fast, . . . from hot wheels, to wheelchair. Diapers - Dignity - Decay. Life's, brief. Watch out, and, don't presume, . . . you have, the rest of your life. Don't take tomorrow, . . . for granted.

Isaiah 56:12 – *"`Come,' each one cries, `. . . Let us drink, our fill of beer! And, tomorrow will be like today, or even better!'"* Do you know anybody, . . with that kind of attitude? Life is great! Let's party! The guys who say this, have a bumper sticker, on their camel: "It's party time, in Jerusalem!" Live it up, and have fun. We're going to live, . . . forever.

James says, that's a dumb attitude, toward life. You can't presume, that tomorrow is going to be, just the same, as today. You can't presume, that you're going to live, to be 100. Proverbs 27:1 – *"Do not boast, about tomorrow, for you do not know, what a day, may bring forth."*

We love, to announce **our** plans, . . . to make our goals, and declare them. Next year, I'm going to, double my income! Next year, I'm going to take over, three territories!

Announcing a goal, . . . can either, be a statement, of faith, . . . or, it can be, . . . a statement, of arrogance. What makes, the difference? Your motive. Why are you saying, what you're saying? God says, it's great to have goals, but, check in with Me, first. Let me share with you, what I think, . . your goals, ought to be. Don't presume, on tomorrow.

\*\*\* What's, the solution? Matthew 6:34 – *"So don't be anxious, about tomorrow -- God will take care of, your tomorrow, too. Live one day, at a time."* **Live one day, at a time**, that's how God says, to face the future. The future, could be overwhelming, . . . but fortunately, it comes, in bite-size pieces, a 24- hour segment, at a time.

Plan for the future, . . . but, you can only live, . . now. I can't live the future, I can only live, today. Plan for the future, . . . but, take advantage, of the present. "Life is what happens to us, . . . while we're planning, . . . something else." We're always planning, what's going to happen, in January, and, miss Christmas.

Today, is the Good Old Days, . . . you're going to talk about, in 15 years. Enjoy, now. Make the most, of now. Don't make the mistake, . . . of planning, . . . without God. Don't make the mistake, of presuming, about tomorrow. I don't know, if I've got next week, . . . much less, next year. I shouldn't, just, assume it.

Spencer Johnson, the man who wrote the book, “The One Minute Manager”, wrote another book, called “The Perfect Present”. In this book, he said the perfect present, . . is literally, the perfect present. The present time. That's all, I have. That's all I have, . . to give to this world. Not next hour, or next month, . . . but, right now. That's the gift, that God has given to me, so, I ought to use it. That's all, I have -- the present.

Just because, the future is uncertain, and unsure, and brief, doesn't mean, you get all uptight, and get paralyzed, with panic, and worry. It's the motivation, . . . to trust God, more. You put your trust, in God -- that's how, you face, the future. I don't know, what the future holds, but, I do know, Who holds the future. That's, what counts.

David said, . . . in Psalm 35:15 – *"Lord, my days are, in your hands."* Commitment -- that's, what James says. Don't make the mistake, . . . of planning, without God, . . . and, don't make the mistake, of presuming, . . . about tomorrow. Instead, include God in your planning, and make the most, of today. Live life one day, . . . at a time.

**3. A third common mistake is PUTTING OFF, . . . DOING GOOD.**

James 4:17 – *"Anyone then, who knows the good, he ought to do, . . . and, doesn't do it, sins."*  James is talking about, . . . the issue, of **procrastination**. "I'm intending, to do it." Ever met somebody, who is always, "aiming, to do it." I always, want to say, "When are you going, . . to pull the trigger?" (Poem: “Procrastination, is my sin, It only caused me sorrow, I know I ought to change my ways, . . . In fact I will -- tomorrow.”)

We love, to put off. James says, . . that's, a trap. Just because, you know, the right thing to do, . . doesn't mean, you're going, to do it.

How do you, define sin? We think of, evil activities: murder, adultery, cheat, lie, steal. Those are sins, . . . of commission. But, there's another, kind of sin -- sins of omission. V. 17 – *"To him, who knows, to do good, and, doesn't do it, it's sin."* I can do nothing, and still sin. Because, there are things, I ought to be doing.

You can be a part, of a legalistic church. "I don't drink, smoke, cuss or chew, or, run around with girls, that do." You don't do anything, . . . but, you still forget God, in your life. Christianity is more, than simply, . . . avoiding evil. If that’s all, the Christian life was, is a bunch of "don't"s -- don't do this, don't do that, . . . then, everybody, who is dead, would qualify, as a Christian, . . . because, they don't do anything.

Procrastination, is a subtle trap -- it's the land of, "Someday I'll, . . ." "One of these days, . . ." and, you never do, because we presume, upon tomorrow. "One of these days, . . . I'm going to get serious, about God. I'm really, going to get committed." God says, you don't have any guarantee, of tomorrow, none at all. \*\*\*\* The solution is, . . . **“Do it now”**.

Proverbs 3:27-28 – *"Do not withhold good, from those who deserve it, when it is in your power, to act. Do not say, to your neighbor, `Come back later; I'll give it, tomorrow' -- when you now have it, with you."*

If somebody comes to you, and asks you a favor, . . . don't say "tomorrow -- later". Don't, procrastinate. If you can do it, now, . . . do it, now.

There are three things, you can do, with your life: spend it, waste it, or, invest it. You can waste your life; there are a lot of ways. TV commercials will show you, lots of ways to waste your time, money, life. Or, you can, spend it. You can spend your life, . . . trying to acquire things: fame, pleasure.

Or, you can invest, . . . your life. The best use of life, is to invest it, on something, . . that, is going, to outlast it. (Jim Elliott: "He is no fool, who gives up, that which he cannot keep, for that, which he cannot lose.")

What's going to, . . . last forever? The Word of God, . . . and, people. People will last, . . . one of two places, . . for all, of eternity. Where I spend my time now, may determine, . . . where, I’ll spend, eternity. Invest your life, in things, . . . that will last -- the Word of God, . . . and people. Make it, count.

There was a commercial, years ago, on TV, by the Peace Corps: "It doesn't matter, how long you live, if you're not, doing anything, . . . with your life." We worry, about the duration -- how long, are we going to live. God worries about, **the donation** -- what are you doing, with it. Am I making my life count, or frittering it away, on non-essentials, things that aren't going to count. God says, Make your life count -- do it, now!

Remember the story, that Jesus told, about the talents? The master, gave one talent, to one man, five to another, and, ten to another. He left, and came back, years later. Two guys, had doubled, their money. (A talent, was a weight, of gold.) The third man, had taken his gold, buried it in the ground, and did nothing, with it.

The master said, . . . “At least, you could have put it in a passbook account, . . . and, got interest on it!” He said, "You wicked servant!" Why? What had, he done? Nothing. That's, . . . wickedness. Doing nothing, . . with your life, is bad. Make your life, . . . count.

I can do, all kinds of things, that keep me from doing, those no-no sins, . . . but, if I'm not doing anything, . . . in a positive sense, . . . what does it matter? God said, . . . it doesn't!

Whatever you intend, to do for the Lord, . . . **do it, now**! Not next week, next month, next year. Thinking about witnessing to a friend, . . and, inviting him to church? Do it, now! Thinking about teaching a class, and, getting involved, in Bible study? Do it, now! Thinking about starting, to tithe and giving? Do it, now! (Do your giving, . . . while, you're living, . . . then, you're knowin', . . . where it's goin'.)

A businessman, in Dallas, gives 50%, of his income, back to the Lord. There's a guy, who's got the concept, of doing it, now! 2 Corinthians 6:2 – *"Right now, God is ready, to welcome you. Today, He is ready, to save you!"* When is the best time, . . . to get it, together, . . . with God?

In Luke 12, Jesus told a story, . . . that illustrates, what James is teaching, in this passage, of Scripture. He tells the story, about a man, who is very successful in life, . . but, he made a very, foolish decision. He made the same mistakes, that James talks about -- all three mistakes. He planned, without God. He presumed, about tomorrow. He put off, doing good.

Luke 12:16-20 – *"Jesus told them, a parable,`The ground of a certain rich man, produced good crop, and he thought to himself "What shall I do. I have no place, to store my crops." Then, he said, "This is what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns, and build bigger ones. And, there I will store all my grain, and my goods, and, I will say to myself, `You have plenty of good things, laid up for many years. Take life, easy. Eat, drink, be merry,'" but, God said to him `You fool. This very night, your life, will be demanded from you. Then, who will get, all that you have prepared, for yourself.'"*

This guy, has "I" problems -- all he can see, is himself. Doing "my" thing, for "me". God says, "How dumb!" You don't know, how long, you're going to live. Don't get morbid, about it. Don't worry, all the time, “Am I going to die, . . . tonight?”

I invite you, to give your life, to Christ, . . . not, because, you're going to die, today, . . but, because you have to live, tomorrow! The fact is, none of us have any certainty, . . . how long, we're going to be here.

Just consider that, in your planning, and do three things: plan with God; don't presume on tomorrow, . . . but, live, today -- make it count; don't wait on the things, . . . you know, are the right things, to do.

\*\*\*\*\*\* 2 Cor. 6:2 – *"Right now, God is ready, to welcome you. Today, He is ready, to save you!"* For some of you, today is your day, to **give your life, to the Lord**. Today. Not, tomorrow. Not, next week. Today!

God has a plan, for your life, . . and, God wants to work, in your life. You're not here by accident. You weren't made, and created, just to breathe, and take up space, . . . get up in the morning, go to work, come home, and, watch TV, go to bed, retire and die. There is more, to life, . . . than that.

It starts, when you give your life, to Jesus, God's Son, . . . and, you commit yourself, to Him. He becomes, the manager, of your life, . . . and, He will direct you. Start, by getting in tune, with the Lord, . . . and, establishing, that relationship, with Him.

Don’t say, "That's, real interesting. In fact, I'd like to hear more, about it. Why don't you come back, in a few days, . . . and, we'll discuss it, some more?" You may never, . . . get another chance. It's presumptuous, . . . to depend, on tomorrow. (The same, . . . with us waiting, . . . to witness, to someone.)

What are your plans, . . . for the future? Have you set days, marked your calendar, scheduled appointments, and then prayed, "By the way, God, . . . I want You, to bless my life." God says, . . . that's, practical atheism. The person who acts, as if God doesn't exist, . . . in his planning, . . . is no different, than the person, who doesn't believe, . . . He exists. Does God have a say, . . . in your schedule, . . . or, do you just fill it up?

Let's get, specific. Have you talked to God, about how you're going to retire? Have you talked to God, about your plans, to get married, to get divorced, to date, to remain single? Don't you think, He's interested, in those kinds of things? He is. Have you talked to God, about your business? A career change? Your investments, and how you spend, your money? James is saying, that none of us, have any right, to just, plan our lives, . . . as if God, doesn't even care. Check in with Him, first. Consult, Him.

Do you have a tendency, . . . to take tomorrow, for granted? "There will always be time, to spend time with my kids. Right now, we're just trying, to make ends meet. Once, we reach, a certain economic level, then, I'm going to spend more time, . . . with my husband/wife." Right!

What starts out, as a temporary condition, . . . ends up, as a permanent lifestyle. People are going, 100 miles an hour, bringing in the bucks. And, then, once they have them, . . . there are no, relationships left. If you only had a week left, how would you spend it? What would you do, with your husband, wife, children?

God says, live each day, and each week, . . . as if, it were your last. Don't get morbid, about it. And, do plan for the future. But, you can only live, . . . right now. That's, what counts. (Country Song: “You haven’t lived, . . . until, you live, like you’re dying.”)

Live each day, as if it were your last. James says, you don't know, what is going to happen. Is God a partner, in your business, or your career? How? Prove it. How do you know, if God's a partner, . . . in your work? Simple. Does He get, part of the profits? Whoever heard, of a business partnership, where one partner, . . . took all, the profits?

What have you been knowing, that you ought to do, and you know is the right thing to do, . . . but, you've just been, putting it off? "Someday, I'll get around to it." James says, “Do it now.” Right now! Don't wait. "Someday, I'm going to give my life, . . . totally, to God." Why not, today? There's not, a better time.

“How To Face Your Future”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 12 of 15

James 4:13-17

Everyone is interested in the future. James warns us about common mistakes we make regarding the future.

3 COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID:

1. MISTAKE #1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*"Now listen, you who say, `Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business, and make money."* (vs. 13)

THE SOLUTION: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 *"Instead, you ought to say, `IF it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."* (vs. 15)

 Proverbs 16:1 – “*We may make our plans, but God has the last word.”*

 Proverbs 16:9 – “*We should make plans -- counting on God to direct us.”*

2. MISTAKE #2: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*"Why, you don't even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil."* (vs. 14 & 16)

 Psalm 39:4-6; Psalm 102:3, 11; Job 4:7,9; Psalm 103:15

Isaiah 56:12 – “*Come," each one cries, "Let us drink our fill of beer! And tomorrow will be like today, or even better!"*

Proverbs 27:1 – “*Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.”*

THE SOLUTION: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 6:34 – “*So don't be anxious about tomorrow -- God will take care of your tomorrow, too. Live one day at a time.”*

3. MISTAKE #3: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*"Anyone then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it sins."* (vs. 17)

THE SOLUTION: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 3:27-28 – “*Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, `Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow' -- when you now have it with you.”*

Luke 12:16-20 -- A foolish man

2 Corinthians 6:2 – “*RIGHT NOW God is ready to welcome you. TODAY He is ready to save you!”*