

Living by God's Promises and Power instead of Our Plans and Pride

2020.06.17 Prayer Meeting ▪ **James 4:13–16** ▪ Hopewell ARP Church

³ Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

¹⁶ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

Here now is a warning against those who live unmindfully of the Lord.

Their happiness lies not in the Lord's promises and the Lord fulfilling them in Christ, but in making promises to themselves and fulfilling them for themselves.

Notice that v14 reminds us not merely that we have no power to fulfill our own promises—which, if they be truly beneficial or not, we do not know—but that we have no power even to continue living.

The point here is not that we are not to have aspirations that are too ambitious, but that we are to have no aspirations at all apart from the Lord. That we are not to have our happiness or purpose in this world and this life at all, both of which are about to be taken away from every one of us, who are but a vapor.

We forget that from one moment to the next, everything depends upon the will of the Lord. This forgetfulness is what v16 calls "evil boasting in arrogance."

It is the opposite of that humbling of ourselves that we learn of from v10, and leaves no room for the gracious lifting up of those who are humbled before God.

Prayer, however, admits that we depend upon God for our very existence from one moment to the next. The poorest Christian and the richest Christian both pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

We know that we are a vapor, which is why we identify as "good" to be near the Lord—to be held by the hand and led by the counsel of Him who will receive us into glory.

The very essence of prayer is to acknowledge that we can do nothing apart from God, and that only what He ordains is truly beneficial... true prayer always says, "Thy will be done," even as each of us takes up daily whatever cross has been assigned to us.

So, when we rise from our knees, let us never lose the mind and heart of true prayer—that we would never find ourselves living for what we have promised ourselves and hoping in our ability to carry it out.