



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Weekly Bible Study - 17:03:2010

Website: www.victoriouschristianministry.org

STUDY 37: RECOGNITION OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND WILL

James 4:13-16

James reminds believers to recognize the fact that their plans and intentions are not necessarily synonymous with the will of God but are subject to divine providence, and hence should be qualified with "If the Lord wills". In giving this advice, he pointed out uncertainties in their knowledge for the future, including of their lives that were not in their hands. People sometimes say that man proposes but God disposes. The Bible is full of examples of people whose plans were never realized, including:

1. Joseph's brethren who wanted to destroy the dreams of Joseph.
2. Saul who plotted to kill David so as to prevent him from becoming king.
3. Jezebel who vowed to kill Elijah the following day (I Kings 19).
4. The 40 Jews who vowed not to eat or drink till they had killed Paul.
5. The rich man who planned to pull down his barns, build new ones to store his bounty harvest to enjoy for many years to come.
6. Pharaoh who plotted to weaken and exterminate the Israelites so as to prevent them from being delivered from Egypt.
7. Jehoshaphat who teamed up with a wicked king to send ships for commercial ventures, but the ships were broken.

All these and lots more are solemn reminder of the importance of acknowledging omnipotence. James equated lack of such acknowledgment to boasting and evil rejoicing.

It is noteworthy that James is not against planning for the future, but only wants believers to recognise God's overruling in human affairs and the dependency of our plans on His will. So doing, excludes self-management, along with its tendency to shut God out of a person's decision making process (II Chronicles 32:30-31; I Chronicles 13:1-4,9; 15:2; I Samuel 8:19; Jeremiah 44:16; Zechariah 7:9-11; John 7:17-18). A better approach is for believers to discover God's perfect will for their lives and base their plans on it. The summary below can help every believer achieve this aspiration (John 5:30; 10:27; Matthew 26:39; Psalms 40:8).

(a) Discovering The Will of God

(i) God's will can be known after these conditions are met:

- Salvation, meekness and godly fear (Psalms 25:1-15)
- Transformation, submission and surrender (Romans 12:1-2).
- Freedom from idols in the heart - i.e. removing our own will (Ezekiel 14:1-11).
- Maintaining a heart right with God (Psalms 66:18).

God in His love does not want any of His children to go stray or remain in darkness (John 8:12; Jeremiah 33:3).

(ii) How to know God's will. God is boundless in the ways He reveals His will to His children.

1. The Word of God is the will of God. Hence we can know His will by studying the Bible (II Kings 22:8,11-14; Jonah 3:6-10; Daniel 9:2). The will of God will never contradict His written Word (Acts 21:8-14).
2. God can reveal His will through the impression of the Spirit upon the believer's

Your Spiritual Welfare Is Our Concern

- heart (Acts 10:19-20, 8:29-30).
3. Counseling from a Pastor or mature believers (Jeremiah 42:3-7, 6:16).
 4. Revelations, Visions, Dreams, Prophecies and similitudes (Acts 10:3-5; Genesis 41; Daniel 2:17-19; Numbers 12:8; Hosea 12:10).
 5. Clear, audible voice (John 12:26-30; Acts 26:13-15).
 6. Circumstances and Events (Psalms 32:9; Numbers 22:30-31; Daniel 4:32,37).
 7. Prayer is central to knowing and doing God's will (Ezra 8:21-23; Acts 4:23-24; I Thessalonians 3:10; Daniel 2:17-19).

(b) Doing And Abiding By The Will of God. Unlike the merchants in our text who took their decisions and did whatever they desired, heavenly minded believers should know and do God's will. By creation and by redemption, God owns us (Psalms 24:1). The realisation of this should make us have absolute faith in God's faithfulness, that He cannot mislead us. His will is always for our eternal good though we may not realise it so at this stage. His will is designed by His eternal love for His creation.