



**“Ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that”  
(James 4:15).**

### **Faith Seeks God’s Will**

**Central Truth:** Choose God’s will in all decisions.

**L375. Date:** August 1994. **Text:** James 4:13—5:6.

**Topic:** Faith: Of Believers; God: Will of; Money: Possession of.

*“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon”* (Matthew 6:24). We are familiar with that verse of Scripture, but do we understand what it means? We know what it means to serve God. But what does it mean to serve mammon?

*Mammon* means things of material value. It is often translated as “money.” It is riches as the object of highest value and greedy pursuit. Jesus warns against a lifestyle that is set on the accumulation of earthly wealth to the neglect of spiritual values — serving mammon rather than serving God.

The warning is against the materialistic spirit which is so common in our society. Jesus said you cannot be caught up in the spirit of materialism (which places the greatest value on material things) and serve God at the same time. God requires first place, and the materialist does not give Him that. How can we keep from being governed by the desire for more? We can seek God's will and put it first in all decisions.

### **God's Will and Your life (James 4:13-17)**

God has a will for your life. He knew when you would be born, when you will die, and all the situations you will experience in life between birth and death. You are not here by accident. Your life is meant to have meaning.

You fit into God's great plan for the ages. That is why He put you here. Therefore, all of your life must be governed by a conscious desire to know and do God's will for you. That is the only way to lasting happiness and true fulfillment for you.

**Consider God's will and the investment of your life** (verse 13). It is wise to make plans for your life. Plan for your profession, your location, your investments, and your time. That is good stewardship. But it is not wise to make those plans apart from considering the will of God.

James rebukes those who say, "We will move to this certain city, spend a year there, and carry on a successful business." The problem is not in planning, but in the fact that God is left out of the planning. God is concerned about where you live, how long you live there, your vocation, and the profit you make from the goods or services you deliver. He is concerned about that because He is concerned about you. Therefore, be sure that all those things have His approval before you invest your life in them. Do not be presumptuous about what you will do with your life. Consider God.

**Consider God's will and the brevity of your life** (verse 14). All your great plans for the future could be terminated today. You have no guarantee of the next hour, much less of the next year. God says, "*Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*" (Proverbs 27:1). You have no assurance of the future except as you entrust it into the hands of God.

Do you remember the story Jesus told of the rich farmer (Luke 12:16-21)? That man had accumulated enough wealth to live for years without other income. He made plans to "eat, drink, and be merry." But that night he died. God called that man a fool, and He challenges you not to make the same foolish mistake.

How can any wise person depend upon something as temporary as the mist which rises from a lake on a fall morning? It is visible for a short while and then dissolves into the air. That is the brevity of your life. Live it in God's will.

**Consider God's will and the master of your life** (verses 15, 16). Here is the real key to wise living: "*If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*" The will of God is paramount. By the will of God we live, and by His will we do this thing or that thing. All of your life is subject to the God. If your plans violate His sovereign will, He simply cancels your plans. Therefore, you must make your plans in view of His being your Master. In your mind write "God willing" across every ambition and goal.

**Consider God's will and the responsibility of your life** (verse 17). You are accountable to God. One day you will answer to Him as a servant

accounts to his master (Luke 12:41-48). You know to seek the will of God first in your plans. To do it is to be rewarded; to fail to do it is to sin. And you will account to God for whether or not you followed His will for your life.

### **God's Will and Your Wealth (James 5:1-6)**

Wealth is deceptive. It seems to promise much more than it is able to deliver. The poor man thinks he would be happy if he were rich. The rich man thinks he would be happy if he were richer. The Bible warns, *“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity”* (Ecclesiastes 5:10). James 5:1-6 gives five guidelines concerning God's will and your wealth.

**Beware of the deception of wealth** (verse 1). Riches seem to promise pleasures. Instead, the rich people are called to weep and moan. Why? Because hardships to the point of miseries seem to make great promises but payoff in the exact opposite from what it promises. Proverbs 15:27 warns that he who is greedy of gain brings trouble upon his household. Who would have thought it?

Money may promise much good. It can be used to that end if a person is wise in his use of it. But it can also bring a curse. God warns, *“They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (I Timothy 6:9, 10). Look at the consequences of the wrong use of money: *“temptation,” “snare,” “foolish and hurtful lusts,” “destruction and perdition,” “evil,” “erred from the faith,” “pierced themselves,” “many sorrows.”* Beware of the deception of wealth.

**Be aware of the uncertainty of wealth** (verse 2). Wealth in ancient times was often measured in coins, livestock, land holdings, clothing, etc. James pictures a person who has accumulated his wealth in perishable items. Gathered with such care and preserved with such diligence, that wealth has deteriorated before his very eyes. The treasures lie rotting and the expensive clothes are eaten by moths. Such is the uncertainty of wealth. Jesus gave this good counsel: *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”* (Matthew 6:19, 20). Heaven is the only place where treasures are truly safe from loss by

decay or theft.

Haggai described inflation eating up wealth as if someone had put it in a bag with holes from which it dribbled forth (Haggai 1:5-7, 9). The wise man was correct: *“Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven”* (Proverbs 23:5). You would not set your future security on something so fleeting, would you? Be aware of the uncertainty of wealth.

**Be prepared for the judgment of wealth** (verse 3). God will judge us on how we gained our wealth, how we invested it, how we saved it, and how we gave it to the purposes of His kingdom. There is no problem in the possession of wealth. Many saints of God have been very rich. The issue is on the use of our resources. God pronounces a woe on those who profit from wealth gained by evil means: *“Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong”* (Jeremiah 22:13). The “woe” means that certain judgment is coming upon such a person.

James writes of the rust of ill-gotten gain being *“a witness against you.”* That means God will call you into account for your stewardship of material resources. It will be much more than an audit by the Internal Revenue Service. Deeds, motives, and actions will be considered as well as the use you made of the wealth. What a solemn accounting!

**Be careful in the accumulation of wealth** (verse 4). Fraud in business dealings is certainly noted by our Lord, who will call the guilty to account in that solemn day. Please note that God does not condemn the accumulation of wealth by honest means. It is the ill-gotten gain that He warns will be considered in judgment.

The Bible gives this warning about unjust gain: *“The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death”* (Proverbs 21:6). Death awaits fraud! Be careful about your business dealings. Give a full day's work for a day's pay. Pay an honest wage to employees, not taking advantage of a person in need. Keep correct records and give an honest accounting of income and expenses to the taxation department of your government. Be honest in your financial dealings and you will have no fear of inspection by man or God.

**Be unselfish in the use of wealth** (verses 5, 6). There is no end to sin when one has begun the course for unjust gain. James turns from financial transgression to spiritual rebellion. The self-indulgent and profligate lives which bring financial rewards lead on to worse sins.

*“Ye have condemned and killed the just,”* James accuses (verse 6). But wait. Examine that statement more carefully. The word “just” actually means “the just one.” It is a reference to the crucifixion of our Lord! James

was saying, “You have condemned, you have murdered the Righteous One.”

But what does the crucifixion of Jesus have to do with a discussion of wealth? Listen to the threat the religious leaders felt that Jesus posed to them: *“If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11:48). They were worried about their “place” and their “nation.”* Jesus was a threat to their security, as they saw it. They were willing to kill Him rather than face the personal loss they felt might follow His unhindered ministry. Yes, the love of money produces all types of evil.

Be careful to find and follow God's will for your life and for your wealth. *“What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26).* Keep God at the center of your life. The best thing that could happen to you is for the will of God to be done fully in all your affairs. Set that as your goal and pursue it diligently.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Why can no man serve two masters?
2. What is it like to serve mammon?
3. How is this study a warning against selfish pride?
4. How is it a warning against materialism?
5. How is God's will related to the brevity of your life?
6. How is God's will related to the goals of your life?
7. How can a person be deceived by wealth?
8. Why is wealth so uncertain?
9. Why will God judge us for the use of our wealth?
10. How can you do the will of God more perfectly this week?