

FAITH IN ACTION SUBMITS TO GOD'S WILL

Greetings: From the onset of the Sermon on the Mount, we hear the words of Jesus that our attitude must be one of humility through mourning, gentleness, and seeking righteousness...being merciful, pure, and peacemakers and having the attitude of submission, even throughout persecution, if it is on account of our Redeemer. These are the be-attitudes of the kingdom for which we should pray: *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* And these attitudes are at the heart of the Father's will.

Lesson 9 reminds us of this as we willingly and humbly submit our desires (as studied in previous lesson) to the desires (will) of Christ. Christ, the Husband of the church, is also the Lawgiver and Judge of the entire world. May we be filled in knowing that *Faith in Action Submits to God's Will.*

JAMES 4:7-17 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

¹¹ Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge *of it*. ¹² There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

¹³ Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." ¹⁴ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." ¹⁶ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

This passage teaches the importance of submitting to God (and His will) by humility and repentance, by treating each other properly and not being presumptuous and boastful. These verses can be separated into three parts; all, however, are connected to submitting to the will of God. The first paragraph could be summed up as God's will for sinners to be reconciled. These scriptures identify those who are in a state of sin either through spiritual adultery (**4:5, 5:19-20**) or those in the world who have *never* been united with Christ (but may be in attendance listening to the word).

The next section (**11-12**) is God's will for saints (the brethren) to be free from judgments. God is the Judge— not us! And verses **13-17** highlight that God's will for stewards should be Christ-driven. Presumption of one's own life, timeline, and abilities without the Lord is considered sinful and arrogant.

SUBMIT TO GOD'S WILL FOR RECONCILIATION... 4:7-10

- Sinners are reconciled to God on *His* terms.
 - The unconverted and wayward soul make up part of many Christian audiences. **1 Corinthians 14:23-25**
 - James is appealing to both audiences: those who have never submitted to and obeyed the gospel (**2 Corinthians 5:19-20**) and to any among them who have strayed from the truth (**James 5:19-20**).
 - Remember, the word *therefore* in verse 7 connects with verse 6 from the prior week. Because God gives grace to the humble, submit to Him.
- Ten imperatives reflect the proper attitude of Godly repentance.
 - These commands are in the *aorist* tense (a one-time action) connecting one's faith to God's grace.
 - Those coming to Christ (or back to Him) must submit to God's authority.
 - How to properly submit: *Resist the devil. Draw near to God. Cleanse your hands. Purify your hearts. Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves.*
 - This example of be-attitudes is for those who are truly sorrowful for how their sins have separated them from God. When we submit, we can clearly see that God's grace has been provided.

SUBMIT TO GOD'S WILL BEFORE THE LAW... 4:11-12

- Exalted saints (brethren) are on an equal platform as family and should not be speaking against/judging one another.
 - James ties together the themes of being mindful of the tongue, **1:26, 2:12, 3:2-12**; impartiality, **1:9-11, 2:1-9, 3:9**; and God's law, **1:25, 2:8-13, 2:24-3:1**.
 - Slander is speaking against the law and is judging the law.
 - Judging is not keeping the law but sitting in judgment of the law.
- There is only one Lawgiver and Judge.
 - Submit to the law and do not be arrogant and usurp the very role of God Himself.
 - Only God is able to save you (and everyone else)!
 - Judging and the law—Compare **Matthew 7:1-3** and **James 2:4, 9**.
- ❖ How is speaking/judging a brother speaking against/judging the law?
(Suggested answer: the law is what judges—when you judge, you assume the law is unable to and you take that as your job/duty/prerogative/role; thus, you “judge the law” as inadequate and take its role on yourself.)



SUBMIT TO GOD'S WILL YOUR PLANS... 4:13-17

- As stewards of God, remember everything we have (time, money, resources) should be under God's direction.
 - James juxtaposes arrogance and humility. (**4:6, 10**)
 - We do not know what tomorrow will bring (**Proverbs 27:1**). The problem is leaving God out of the planning— so do not commit the sin of presumption. **Psalm 19:13**
 - *You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.* Just from the book of Job, look at the following examples of being like a mist or vapor. **Job 7:7 breath, 7:6 weaver's shuttle, 7:9 cloud, 8:9 shadow, 9:25 runner, 9:26 eagle, 14:2 flower**
 - We should acknowledge that God is in control.
- To ignore the Lord's will is sin.
 - Although used as a text to condemn all "sins of omission," vs **17** in context is applied to the wrongs named in **13-16**. (That is not to say "sins of omission" are not real, **2:14-17**.)
 - God's will can be ignored (**13-14, 16**), disobeyed (**17**), or obeyed (**15**).
 - N.T. examples of acknowledging God's will: **Acts 18:21, 21:14; Romans 1:10, 15:32; 1 Corinthians 4:19, 16:7; Hebrews 6:3**
 - Deo Volente— "God willing." And we should say *likewise!*

Discussion Questions:

- ❖ Give some examples of what faith submitting to God entails?
- ❖ What is the relationship between submitting to God and repenting? What is the relationship between submitting to God and humbling yourself before God?
- ❖ How are resisting the devil and drawing near to God related to submitting to God? Give concrete ways to "resist the devil and draw near to God."
- ❖ Are visible signs of penitence important? (Examples in Scripture indicate they can be. **Nehemiah 1:4-11, 9:1-4; Ezra 9:3-15; Jonah 3:6-10**)
- ❖ What does it mean to "speak against" or "speak evil against" a brother? How serious is that? What situations today might tempt Christians to do this?
- ❖ How should recognizing God as the one Lawgiver and Judge affect the way we think of and treat our fellow man?
- ❖ What is the error being addressed in verses **13-16**? How can we avoid this sin?

Prayer

