

Making Plans for the Days Ahead

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.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, to him it is sin” (James 4: 13-17).

In this passage we are being warned about sin. But what is the sin being condemned? Is it making plans for today? Is it making plans for tomorrow? Is it moving to another city? Is it being there for a year? Is it doing business there? Is it making money? No, it would not seem so from the Bible. There is nothing necessarily wrong with any of these things. In fact, the Bible condemns sloth and laziness as just *“a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest”* (Proverbs 24:30-34), saying that suddenly poverty *“will come on you like a bandit”* (NIV).

What then is the wrong if it is not the planning? It appears to be leaving the Lord’s will out of the planning! Those dreams, hopes, and plans for today, tomorrow and the future need to be guided by God’s will at the center of our lives. It can *“completely outfit”* or *“thoroughly furnish”* us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is *“everything we need for life and godliness”* (2 Peter 1:3). Whatever plans we make, then, have to take into careful consideration whether they are at odds with the Scripture. And if we do not then we are sinning because we are being guided by something else, by our own wisdom, instead of applying the Lord’s wisdom to our lives. James says it is a form of boasting and bragging, and it is evil.

With some thought we can see how this is true:

- Mom and Dad are sending their boy off to college. They know it’s a good school but have no idea about the character of the nearby congregation...
- Here’s a young girl considering a proposal of marriage. She knows he’s handsome and has a good job and money, but not much about him spiritually...
- A family is considering a move to a town for Dad to have a better job, but it is a very worldly place...
- An older couple is going to move down south to a lovely retirement community, but don’t know if a congregation is near...

What is needed in each of these situations? It is a genuine concern for the Lord’s will from a heart that will put His will into the practice of their everyday life.

This lack is what we may call a sin of neglect. It is not like actually committing a sin as when we lie or steal or hate. It is one in which we omit or neglect to do something that we ought to do, like speaking up for the truth, or sharing what we have, or loving our neighbor as ourselves. In the case of such examples as we suggested - as with all of life’s serious choices - we should look at the Scripture to see its principles and precepts for the situation at hand (1 Peter 4:11), and then pray for wisdom to deal with the choices we have (James 1:5).

James says such planning is a good thing to do! He said why earlier: *“Receive with meekness .the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”* (James 1:21-22).

- by Robert Hines

Filling the Church

It is a peculiar thing that some brethren think they can fill the church with worldliness (worldly things that attract) and cause it to grow spiritually. IT IS NOT SO! Things of the world and of the flesh never arouse any kind of response but a fleshly and worldly response. Why would anyone think bringing “loaves and fishes” or entertainment would attract the spiritually minded or make anyone more so? The more banqueting and partying and entertainment is brought in, the more it will require, and worldly and fleshly things will only make the church more worldly until it is swamped and spirituality is lost sight of and forgotten.

- by Roy E. Cogdill

Examining a Predestination "Proof Text"

There are those who teach that God has predestined certain specific individuals to salvation, and in doing so He has rejected or excluded others from being saved. This "election" is said to be "unconditional," meaning that God does it, separate and apart from anything that the chosen persons may say, do, or think.

A favorite "proof text" for those who hold this position is Romans 9:10-13 . . .

"When Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

It is argued that this proves that God has historically chosen certain individuals whom He "unconditionally" favored, and others that He rejected. But careful examination of this passage, along with cross referencing to the Old Testament, will help understand what is under consideration. Yes, prior to their birth, the prophecy was made . . .

"Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23)

However, notice that this was a statement about the "nations" that would descend from the two children. In fact, Malachi referred to the prophecy and its fulfillment . . .

"The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi . . . Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished . . . thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down . . . the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." (Malachi 1:1-4)

"Jacob" and "Esau" are clearly referring to Israel and Edom - the nations, not the individual persons. This outcome - punishment against Edom - resulted from the fact that the nation had consistently refused to submit to the will of God.

Those who teach predestination are wrong, and this "proof text" is misapplied by them. Regarding individuals, the truth of the matter is this: "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." (Acts 10:34,35)

- by Greg Gwin