

Life

James 4:14

1

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.

Yesterday we went to Fresno for a birthday party for a longtime friend and brother in Christ that just turned 100 years old. As we reach the yearly milestones of our birthdays, they should serve as reminders to us to ask the questions that we should be asking every day of our lives. James is making a point here. **2** Life is fleeting, there are no guarantees. We don't know what tomorrow brings, what difficulties, what hurdles may be in our way, or if we will even be here. James says that our lives are like vapors that appear and then vanish as quickly as they appear. Therein is the urgency of his statement...

3

What will your life be like tomorrow?

We have all heard the saying...

4

Today is the first day of the rest of your life

This may sound trite and because of that, it gets passed off, but this is very much a scriptural concept that every Christian, every person, should be applying in their lives.

Ps 119:59

5

59 I considered my ways, And turned my feet to Your testimonies.

At first, and it may not seem to be but, this passage has a contrast in it that speaks to an absolute truth. The Psalmist says that he considered his ways. He then illustrates the contrast by saying that after his consideration of his ways, he turned his feet to the testimonies of the Lord. The obvious, implied contrast is that the ways that the Psalmist saw in himself were not the ways of the testimonies of the Lord. That is the true contrast of the passage, the ways of man are not, nor can they ever be, the ways of the testimony of the Lord. The Psalmist is saying that when he considered his ways he found that they were not the ways of the Lord and so he corrected his direction and turned to the Lord.

The Book of Lamentations consists of five separate poems. Though not mentioned in the book itself, it was probably written by Jeremiah the prophet. This is based on a reference from...

2 Chron 35:25

6

25 Then Jeremiah chanted a lament for Josiah. And all the male and female singers speak about Josiah in their lamentations to this day. And they made them an ordinance in Israel; behold, they are also written in the Lamentations.

In chapter 1 of Lamentations the prophet speaks about the miseries that oppressed the City of Jerusalem and describes it as a solitary bitterly weeping widow. In chapter 2 these miseries are described in connection with the national sins that had caused them. Chapter 3 speaks of hope for

the people of God. The chastisement would only be for their good; a better day would dawn for them. Chapter 4 Jeremiah laments the ruin and desolation that had come upon the city and temple, and traces it to the people's sins. Chapter 5 then, is a prayer that Zion's reproach may be taken away in the repentance and restoration of the people. Note then what the prophet says to the people in...

Lam 3:40

7

40 Let us examine and probe our ways, And let us return to the Lord.

Jeremiah tells the people that they need to examine themselves and then the prophet exhorts them to recognize that the way they are following is not the way of the Lord. It is one of the principles that govern man's relationship with God that it is up to man to determine how he fits God's standard of living. The real problem with this is that while man has to decide how he compares to the standard, it will be God who ultimately will judge. But the principle remains true. Man must examine himself. Paul speaks to this concept in...

1 Cor 11:28-29

8

28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.

The context of Paul's discussion here is the Lord's Supper and the point he is making is that when we observe the Lord's Supper that the emblems of Christ's sacrifice should cause us to search our souls and see how we measure up to the sacrifice that was given for us. That's the point we are trying to make, examining ourselves. Christ says in...

Matt 7:5

9

5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Paul again speaks to this principle in...

2 Cor 13:5-6

10

5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? **6** But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.

He can't make it much clearer than this, can he? In addition, his statement takes the form of an imperative, a commandment.

11

Test Yourselves, EXAMINE Yourselves!!!

As time flies away from us, we need to consider what we are, where are we going, what are we doing, who are we serving, and ultimately, what will be our reward? So when we look at this principle of examining ourselves combined with the point that James makes that our lives are just a vapor, in light of what we read in...

2 Cor 5:10

12

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

So, follow this progression that we have just looked at. Life is short with no guarantees, we are going to be judged by the life that we have led, we need to examine ourselves to see how we measure up against the testimonies of the Lord and turn to Him and follow His path.

So there are some thoughts that we want to look at concerning this thing we call life...

- 13**
- 1) Its Swiftness
 - 2) Its Changes
 - 3) Its End

I really don't think that it is any great revelation to speak about...

- 14**
- 1) Its Swiftness

To say that life flies by may be as gross an understatement as there is. And what is really amazing is that the older you get the quicker it flies by. The Book of Job speaks of this swiftness with three illustrations...

Job 9:25-26

15

25 "Now my days are swifter than a runner; They flee away, they see no good.

26 "They slip by like reed boats, Like an eagle that swoops on its prey.

- 16**
- A) Swifter than a runner
 - B) Swifter than a boat
 - C) Swifter than the diving eagle

Remember, Job is talking about life and the swiftness with which it passes. He begins by comparing life's passing with a runner. Whether that refers to a man or a horse or some other type of runner isn't the point, but the fact that he escalates the comparison when he then uses the reed boat running in the current of the river. A runner or a horse is fast, but not as fast as the reed boat running with the current but even the boat pales in comparison to the diving eagle. I looked this up and I have to admit that I was stunned by the answer. A peregrine falcon can reach speeds up to 200 mph. The eagle, a much bigger bird, can reach speeds between 100 and 150. Job uses these things to illustrate the speed with which life passes by.

Ps 90:10

17

10 As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away.

This brings us to our next point...

- 18**
- 2) Its Changes

We often talk about the things that have changed in this world, medical advances, technological advances, life style changes, the world around us changes almost every minute of every day. What momentous change did the invention of the wheel bring about? How is the world different because of the massive change that technology, the computer, the cell phone, the world-wide web bring? How is the life of man better because of antibiotics? The world has changed, is changing, and will change throughout our lives. But that isn't what this thought is speaking to. We are talking about the changes that happen to each of us, the things that motivate us, the things that we believe in, the things we look forward to, from the moment we are born we become subject to the influences that work upon us. There is an old saying that goes;

19

We are the products of our environments

That saying is talking about the things that influence us, that affect our way of thinking, that help to influence our goals and aspirations. Life is constantly moving and changing to reflect who and what we have decided to be. And that's the real key, we decide. God does not force His will onto anyone, never has and never will. Note what is said in...

Josh 24:15

20

15 "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

The Israelites were God's chosen people. He has been with them, has led them, fought battles for them, has been patient with them through their unfaithfulness and disobedience, and has offered them His love. But they still had to make a choice. That's what Joshua is saying to them...

21

"Make a Choice"

That is the real point. We have to make a choice. Even after God had chosen them, they still had to choose Him. The Psalmist says...

Ps 25:12

22

12 Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way he should choose.

God hasn't left it to chance. He has given us His instructions to help guide us in the way that leads to Him and salvation. But it is still our choice.

Note how Solomon states this in...

Prov 1:29

23

29 Because they hated knowledge, And did not choose the fear of the Lord.

Those who do not choose the Lord, by definition, hate knowledge. The world doesn't see it that way. The world has decided that it can choose what is and isn't knowledge, what is and isn't truth. The world of religion has decided that it knows better than does God about what

commandments and or Laws it should follow, with each separate religion deciding to follow and practice different things. That just makes no sense to me at all.

Eph 4:4-6

24

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Is this true? Is there only one Lord, one faith, one baptism? Which one? Is it Catholicism, Mormonism, Buddhism, I'm OK you're OK ism? Which one? That, my friends, is the choice we must make. Is Paul's statement here true? Is there only one way, or are there many? Here at the Eastside Church of Christ, we endeavor to remove the doubt of choice by practicing the things that we see in the first century Church as seen in the New Testament scriptures. If we do those things that we see here that were approved of then, it stands to reason that they will be approved of now. The things we do now, the lives we live, the actions we take, the words we say will be what judge us in the end, and that is our last point...

25

3) Its End

When we think of our lives, the things we have been talking about, we are talking about the now, the physical. There is something that we must all realize about this physical life that we live...

2 Sam 14:14

26

14 "For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again.

This is the same thing the Hebrew writer says...

Heb 9:27

27

27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

There is an end coming for each of us. We don't know when our time will be, or what the circumstances will be, but we can most assuredly know what the future will be. The Psalmist says God will guide us into the path that leads to Him, if we will just choose to let Him. The physical lives we live are nothing more than a vapor, speeding away like the swooping eagle. As desperately as we might cling to this world, this life will end. But our immortal souls will continue on. The only question is, where?

28

And that my friends, is the choice we get to make. Do we choose to seek life through Christ in the grace and mercy of God, or maybe we prefer to go through life like a jellyfish in the ocean, being pushed by every current and every wind choosing to not make any decision for ourselves but inviting Satan and the world to be our guide?