

God's will versus our own.

Ephesians 4:1-7
Jeremiah 31: 31-35

James 4:11-17

Let us start this morning, by turning to Psalms 46. Verse 10 came to mind as I was reading through this section of chapter 4. “Be still and know that I am God.” James has been instructing his readers how to conduct themselves in their lives. How they should live, how they should act, how they should think, and how they should speak. I think this verse here in Psalms puts a capstone on exactly everything that James has been teaching,

James said, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, “Be still and know that I am God.”

Is there partiality among you? this should not be for God is not partial, Be swift to hear, and slow to speak, “Be still and know that I am God.”

Who is wise among you? Are you bitter? Self seeking? “Be still and know that I am God.” who grants you wisdom that is pure, and peaceable.

Are there wars and fights among you? “Be still and know that I am God.” seek brotherly love for each other, edifying each other, instead of pride and personal gain.

Do you lust, and not have, Do you ask for your own desires and pleasures not seeking Godly wisdom and His will? “Be still and know that I am God.”

Submit to God, draw near to God, Cleanse your hands, purify your hearts, humble yourself in the site of the Lord, “ Be still and know that I am God.”

And this very same thing carries on into today's passages, Do you speak evil, judging each other, “Be still and know that I am God. Are you making plans with little consideration for Godly wisdom, and without prayer? “Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, and I will be exalted in the earth!

Our heavenly Father is holy, he is just, he is pure, and he is sovereign in all things. Nothing happens without His knowledge, nothing happens without it being his will, for his glory, and for his good pleasure. This should be a great comfort to us, for the very God who has the universe in his hands, is the very God who chose you to be adopted children and heir to all his promises. Ephesians 1:4 says, that we are, “Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise and glory of his grace, by which he made us accepted in the beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence having made known to us the mystery of his will , according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself.”

When we look at the writing of James, and his exhortation to turn to God, to be doers of his word and not hearers only, to be a people who walk in the spirit with a true, living, vibrant, active faith. And we look at all that God has done for us, the sovereign creator of all, the ruler, and king of all and we turn, away, and we do that which we should not do, when we slander, when we show partiality, when we doubt, when we seek our own selfish desires and pleasures, Think about God, the mighty sovereign Lord of all, who created us, who gave us life, who gives us all that we have, who sent His son to die,

for the very sin that we are committing, what an awful horrible way to show our appreciation for all that God has done for us.

Sometimes I think that we don't understand sin to be as bad as sin really is. It isn't just a little infraction, but a rebellion against our father. Thank God for his forgiveness, for his grace and his mercy upon us sinners who deserve nothing more than death, and hell. Yet God, chose us, paid for our sins, provided us with the holy spirit, changing our hearts, our minds, and our lives for his glory.

An example that comes to mind is my dogs. They are stubborn, They have a mind of their own and they want to do what they want to do when they want to do it. But they are mine, they exist for my pleasure, and I provide everything for them. I provide their food, their shelter, and love and attention. I look out for their safety that they do not run out the door and get lost or hit by a car. I put a hedge around them, or in my case... a fence, and a leash.

Of course analogies can only go so far, but for the most part my dogs seek to make me happy and their obedience brings me joy, but the second I am not in their sight, they can not help themselves to grab food from the table, or counter top, or out of the trash but they know full well that is unacceptable behavior, for the moment I walk into the room I don't even have to say anything...they run off seeking to get away because they know, they know I am not happy with them.

In a small sense, I think it is the same with us. God provides everything for us. Nothing that we have is our own. Our homes, or jobs, our friends, family, our very life is only because God allows it. We only have to remember the account of Job to see how quickly things can change, how quickly God can take away everything we have if he so chooses. Our friend, Jim Pearce, reminds his children of this very thing, when they are fighting over a toy and don't want to share he says. "is that yours?" of course they will both answer yes, then he will remind them, that they only have it because he their father gave it to them and that they should share, and be loving toward each other just as he was when he gave it to them, Just as we should be thankful for all that our loving heavenly father has given us. I think sometimes we have a very small view of God. We often don't think of him as the almighty, who is in control of creation. When we think of God, his sovereignty, and all that scripture tells us about him and what he has done, and then we turn and fight among each other, we turn against each other and slander, and seek to do harm to each other, and in our anger we speak curses to each other how grievous of a sin is that, we are slandering, even lying about another one of God's elect why? Because we are prideful, arrogant, and we want our way.

Quoting Paul again like last week, Oh wretched man that I am! God has given me everything, yet I rebel, I sin, I choose my will and I do not seek after Gods. Our reading this morning in Jeremiah talking about the new covenant that is written on our hearts he says that Israel broke the covenant he made with them though he was a husband to them. But this is the new covenant that I will give to them, I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts, and I will be their God and they will be my people. Thank God that the new covenant he has made is not like the old. With the old he said, do this and I will bless you, with the new God says I will do all these things for you, I will make you my people, I will write my law on your heart giving you the ability, and desire to follow me. This new law, this new command that is written on our hearts is Christ himself and the gift of the holy spirit which indwells in us working in us to will and to do that which is pleasing to God,

That is why in verse 11 James says do not speak evil of one another for he who speaks evil of a brother and judges him speaks evil of the law and judges the law. I do not think that James is talking about the old covenant, mosaic law but rather the new covenant, the new law written on our hearts.

James is talking about speaking evil against a brother, a fellow christian. IF we speak evil of this person, we are judging the law written on their hearts.

If we speak evil of our brother or sister in Christ, then we are not loving them as we should, we are not doers of the law of love that is written on our hearts but rather have become judges of their hearts, . Verse 12, James reminds us that there is 1 law giver who is able to save, and to destroy so who are we to judge and speak evil of each other. Christ is the one who has made the covenant, Christ is the one who has written the law on our hearts, and it is only Christ who is the lawgiver who is able to save.

Now just so I am misunderstood here I am not saying that we are not to judge at all. For the bible instructs us to. We did just go through Galatians after all, and in chapter 6 verse 1 it says that if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you be tempted. How are we to know a brother or sister is overtaken in any trespass if we do not judge what we see, if we do not judge their fruit, if we do not judge their actions. Is not James judging here in his writing calling and exhorting people to turn from selfish pursuits, slander, partiality and false faith? The bible does not allow for the idea we hear so common today. "You can't judge me!" God says judge not lest ye be judged!" No, God is not telling us not to judge, he is saying to be careful when you do that you are not guilty of the very thing you are calling out in another. This is how we implore our brothers and sisters to turn from sin, we must first judge that they are indeed in sin, then we seek to restore them in gentleness and humility.

It is also important to make the distinction here that James uses the term brother. These are fellow Christians, other people of faith. There is a difference between speaking evil of a brother, and judging a false teacher, or some one with a false faith. Far to often today there is the idea that we should not criticize, or judge anyone for anything yet, scripture teaches that we are to call out false teachers, and guard and warn against those who may be wolves in sheep's clothing.

There is a good example left to us by Paul about judging rightly, and how we should react to sin in the assembly. In 1Corinthians 5. Let us turn there, and read the chapter so we can get a full context of what is going on and Paul's response and instruction to the Corinthian believers.

He tells us he isn't concerned about judging those who are on the outside of the assembly for God will judge them. But he instructs us that we should be watching each other who claim to be in Christ, we should be exhorting, and guiding each other to live righteously. In this case here, Paul is very adamant that we should not keep company with sexually immoral people within the church. Not even to eat with this person for the reason he stated earlier that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. It is better to not be associated with such a person then to be drawn into their sin, whether personally, or by association, at the end of the chapter here he says that those who are outside God, those who are outside the church judge, so put away the evil person so that you do not become guilty of their sin by association.

So yes, we can judge, we do judge, and we should judge, but we are to be sure that when we are that we are judging rightly with humility, seeking Godly wisdom and truth.

Looking now at the remaining verses here in James, it comes around to what I was saying earlier. It has to do with our view of God, and of ourselves. Verse 13 says, Come now, you who say "Today or Tomorrow we will go to such and such city, spend a year there, buy, sell, and make profit" Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away"

It all comes back around to we should be seeking God's will, and wisdom in everything that we do in our lives and not our own. We make plans, we choose things that we want to do and when it doesn't happen we become upset, or mad even. But remember what James said earlier in this chapter...you ask and do not receive, it is because you ask amiss.

Instead of saying that this is my desire, this is what I want to do we should instead be saying that if it is God's will, this is what I will do. That being said I am always a little put off by people who claim so quickly they are called to do something. Or use the phrase, "God told me to this." We have had pastoral candidates tell us that they were called to Holland Michigan and that God told them that they would be our pastor. Well.. they aren't here, so it seems that God must have lied to them, Of course we know that God is not capable of lying, so the problem isn't in God's calling but rather the problem lies within them, confusing their own will and desire for God's will. Seeking out what they want, what they deem to be right and hastily judge that God told them to do something instead of patiently asking for wisdom and guidance actually seeking God's will. James calls this type of thing arrogance, and says that those who act this way are boasting in their arrogance calling their will, God's will. James says that all such boasting is evil.

I think of course there is a way that we can refer to God's calling, or his plan in our life but we need to be careful not to presume upon God with our own plans and ideas thinking that is what God wants us to do. Once again it all comes down to understanding who God is, and who we are in the grand scheme of things. As James says, we need to humble ourselves before God and he will lift us up. Let us not be arrogant, prideful, and self seeking, but rather let us seek after God's will. Quoting Psalms again, "Be still, and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

We exist for God, for his glory, next time we start to seek our own will, let us instead seek God's and praise him for all he has done for us.