

For what is your Life?

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[0:00] And turn with me to James 4, if you've got your Bibles please. You that say today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.

For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a time, a little time, and then vanisheth away.

For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings, all such rejoicing is evil.

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. What is your life? What is your life?

Your life is a precious gift from God. Amen? Isn't it? Amen. Just this last Friday, just two days ago, Julie and I attended a funeral of a long-term friend, a long-time friend.

[1:37] We've known him some 30 plus years. And it makes you ponder. What is your life? Next time you boil the kettle, and you see the vapour.

You see the steam. And then it's gone. It's even a vapour that appeareth for a little time. And then vanisheth away.

Life is fragile, isn't it? Don't take it for granted. Who's heard of that old-time game show on TV? This is your life. There's a neat little track that says, this was your life. And it makes you wonder, doesn't it? It makes you ponder.

Every life tells a story, a different story. Every life has a different journey. And we're making a life in this world. Making memories.

[2:47] Making mistakes. Hopefully making some wise choices too. But James challenges us here to consider this question. What is your life? And we see, what is your life?

Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour. That appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. Life is uncertain. It's like a flower that fades. Life is short. I've got some flowers that were flowers in my garden. Now they've just dried up pieces of twigs.

And life is just like that. When you think about life, what is your life? The question, what is your life? You've got birth and death.

Two certainties, isn't it? You don't choose when you're born. You don't choose the date of your death. But it is appointed. God's already got it in his calendar. It is appointed unto man once to die.

[3:53] But after that, the judgment. There's a timeline here. From birth to death. Do we consider that? Maybe we think we're still at the early stages.

And we might think we've got a long span of time yet to hear down the track. A long, many years perhaps to live still. But maybe we're actually further to the end point than we would like to reckon. Who knows? Young or old, we could still be at the closing chapter of our life. What is your life? How close are we? Really, it's from womb to tomb, isn't it? Even before you were born, you were alive. At conception.

And then, is the end point of the tomb? No. It goes on. It goes on still into eternity. Our lifespan. From birth to death.

[4:59] From the womb to the tomb. Our lifespan. What is your life? Through it all, do we stop and consider God's workings. Point number one.

God is at work. God is at work in you. In me. In us. God is at work. We are a work in progress. I used to like the Christian bumper sticker.

God, I'm a Christian under construction. God's still working on me. God's working on us, isn't he? You know, when you look back to your early years as a Christian, hopefully you've done some growing.

And strengthening. And God's working and shaping him more as the potter, as the clay on the potter's wheel.

He's shaping and moulding and remaking. He is working through all the ups and downs of life, too. Even when we think he's far, far away, he's always there, isn't he?

[6:01] With us. And do we stop and consider? John says, as we go through the day by day of life, God is at work. God is at work.

And he challenges him. He tells us, stop and consider this. The workings of God. Go to now. He says, hey, listen up here.

You hear that saying today or tomorrow, we've got these big plans, this big trip. We will go into such a city. And continue there a year and buy and sell and get going.

Not just talking about tomorrow, but we've got to stay there a year. Big plans. Big trip. And even when I do the church notices, which I tend to not do very well, I say, well, God willing, we're going to have the youth group Friday night.

We may not see Friday night. Amen. We may not see Thursday for the women's group. Or even Monday night for the prayer meeting. We can't guarantee. God willing. We'll have such meetings.

[7:06] Sunday night. We might not even make it tonight at six o'clock. But James tells us here, don't say tomorrow I'm going to do this and do that. A year or so I'm going to do this or that.

He's telling other person here, using his time without regard for God's will. With no consideration of God here. I'm going to go and do this. And it's got the sense, I'm told, of this being a habit.

That this is just a blasé kind of attitude. That this is how I do things with my life. It tells of people consciously making decisions with no regard for God.

God's not in their thoughts, in their thinking. It speaks of a man saying, when they're going to travel. Where they're going to travel. How long they're going to travel. And why they will travel. And what they're going to do.

James is saying, don't be arrogant with your life. He calls us to a humility here. In the book of James. The context is of humility. Humble yourselves. Submit to God.

[8:11] He calls us to humility in the context here. And it raises the question, who is in control? What is your life? Who really calls the shots?

Who's in control? We think we control time and events. Time. Today or tomorrow. Purpose.

We will go. Place. To this or that city. Our situation. Goals. I'm going to carry on business. I'm going to go there and buy and sell.

And reward. I'm going to make money. I'm going to get gain. Me, me, me. This is what I'm going to do. Who's really in control? Do we stop and consider God's workings?

God is working. In our life. Above and beyond what our plans might be. Whether they come to pass or fail. James tells the people here. Who've made firm plans.

[9:10] And had some expectations. Sometimes we can spend a day without giving a thought to where does God fit. Let's be honest. Where does God fit?

We can make our business plans. Our travel plans. Our holiday plans. Our money making plans. Just as this person did right here. Yet miss God's plan.

What does God want? What does God want to work in us? In our life? Verse 14. It says, Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.

For what is your life? It is even a vapor. That appear for a time. Poof. And then it just vanishes away.

In a way we should live like there is no tomorrow. There's no guarantee of it. The Bible says in Proverbs.

[10:08] Don't boast yourself of tomorrow. You don't know what a day will bring forth. There was a man on his way to his execution.

Called Sir William Russell. As he was being escorted there. The clergyman on one side and the executioner on the other. He took the watch out of his pocket.

And he gave it to the clergyman. And said, Sir, the timepiece is yours. I'm not dealing with time now. I'm dealing with eternity. One day that little wrist watch.

You're going to leave it behind. You'll have no more need of it. Amen. For all of us. Life will give way to eternity. Don't waste your life.

I know my dad likes this saying. Only one life. It will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. One life.

[11:08] That's all you get. It will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ. Will last. Into eternity. As Peter says, For all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man is as the flower of grass.

The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away. Now I'm seeing the sour souls popping up here and there in the garden. Who can identify with that? The sour souls popping up and then only just months away, they'll be, they'll vanish away.

You don't have to worry about weeding. They'll just let time pass. You know, they're going to vanish away. The grass is going to wither. And the flowers are going to fall away.

It's life. People of God. What is your life? May we always be mindful of God's workings in our life. As we look back, how he has led us.

You know, hitherto hath the Lord helped us. Wow. Where he's taken me from. What he's taken me through. And what's in store still. He's presently leading us.

[12:21] We're the night to continue his work in us. God's workings are from tomb to womb and beyond. Or rather, from womb to tomb and beyond.

Come on. He that started a good work in you will complete it. He's going to finish the job. It's God's workings.

God's at work. Amen. And next, when we think about the question, what is your life? Number two. The grass withereth and the flower that are forth away.

God's working. Number two is God's wisdom. God's wisdom. Consider the reality of God's wisdom. How we need wisdom to tackle the challenges of life.

James tells us in his book here, in the earlier part of it, in James 1 verse 5, If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. But give it to all men liberally.

[13:20] And a brave if not, he doesn't hold it back. And it shall be given him. If you ask, he will give it. His wisdom. Consider the reality of God's wisdom for life.

Pray. Ask of God. Get fellowship. It can be strengthened. That's the wise thing to do. Get the word. That's the wise thing to do, isn't it?

God's wisdom. We can make wise choices or we can make unwise ones. Truly this is the making of a life. When we consider our limited time span. Don't boast yourself of tomorrow.

You may never see Monday. When we consider our limited life. We want to spend every day wisely. Psalm 90 is called the prayer of Moses.

It's prefaced as a prayer of Moses, the man of God. Psalm 90. And these words are there. So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

[14:22] That's a good prayer to pray, isn't it? Lord, teach me to number my days. Help me to apply my heart unto wisdom. Are we living wisely?

Are we living wisely? Let me illustrate this with a picture of a sandcastle. There was a little boy on the beach.

And on his knees he scoops and packs the sand with plastic shovels into a bright red bucket. Then he uphends the bucket on the surface and lifts it. And to the delight of this little architect, a castle tower is created.

Now I could have pictured all kinds of fancy castles. You know, look at images of castles. And there's some very ornate ones. But they're just sand. Sand shaped. The story goes on.

All afternoon he will work, spooning out the moat, packing the walls. Bottletops will be sentries. Popsticks will be bridges. And a sandcastle will be built.

[15:27] That's one castle. Another place. A big city. Busy streets. Rumbling traffic. A man in his office. At his desk. He shuffles his papers into stacks.

And delegates assignments. He cradles the phone on his ear. And punches the keyboard with his fingers. Numbers are juggled. And contracts are signed. And much to the delight of a man, a

prophet is made.

All his life he will work. Formulating the plans. Forecasting the future. Annuities will be sentries. Capital gains will be bridges. An empire will be built.

Two bearers of two castles. They have much in common. They shape granules into grandeurs. They see nothing and make something. They are diligent and determined.

And for both, the tide will rise. And the end will come. Yet there is where the similarity sees. For the boy sees the end while the man ignores it.

[16:27] Watch the boy as the dusk approaches. As the waves near. And the wise child jumps to his feet. And begins to clap. There is no sorrow. No fear. No regret.

He knew it would happen. He is not surprised. And when the great breakaways crash into his castle. And his masterpiece is sucked into the sea. He smiles. He smiles.

Picks up the tools. Takes his father's hand. And goes home. The grown up, however, is not so wise. As the waves of years collapse on his castle.

He is terrified. He hovers over the sandy monument to protect it. He blocks the waves from the walls he has made. Salt water's soaked and shivering. He smiles at the incoming tide.

It's my castle! He defies. The ocean need not respond. Both know to whom the sand belongs. And I don't know much about sandcastles, but children do.

[17:22] Watch them and learn. Go ahead and build. But build with a child's heart. When the sun sets and the tide takes, applaud. Salute the process of life. Take your father's hand and go home.

Building castles. A child at the sand. And a man at the office. But eventually it all finished, won't it? It's all gone.

What are we building? What is your life? Will you build wisely? What is your life? Do we consider God's workings? Also the desire. The dire need for God's wisdom in life.

Which is ours for the asking. Do we stop and say, Lord, I need your wisdom in this situation, in that. Guide me to make a life with wise choices.

God's wisdom is there for the asking. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God. Who give it to all men liberally. And upraideth not.

[18:24] He doesn't hold it back. It's there for the asking. We've seen God's workings. He's helped us in the past. He'll help us now.

He'll help us still. God's workings. It's a lifespan. Eternal. Truly. God's will. Wisdom, rather. Is there for the asking.

And thirdly, it's God's will. Consider God's will. Lastly this. God's will. What is God's will? James 4.15.

For that he ought to say, if the Lord will. We shall live. And do this or that. Well, God helping me. If I live to see tomorrow, I'm going to do this tomorrow.

For the glory of God. That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to come under God's will. Whatever God's will is.

[19:19] It's most important of all, isn't it? And really this passage is talking about, where does God fit into our plans? You know, the telling of James' story there.

It tells us someone who just willy-nilly does this or that. Makes all these plans. It's as if God's not even in their thoughts. Where is God in our plans?

What are you planning? Where does God fit in that? We don't know what the future holds. We ought to make God the centre of what plans we make. Ask yourself when making decisions, is it God's will?

Would that really please God? Is that what God wants? Do I, when I plan my life, consider what's God's agenda? What's God's purpose? What's God's plan for me?

God hands his will for us. If you picture here, perhaps it's a straight line here. The perfect will of God. The perfect will of God.

[20:22] To be in the centre of God's will. Wouldn't that be great? If you could consider this, the perfect will of God. It tends to look a bit more like that though, doesn't it?

When we actually live it out, don't you reckon? That's my life. That's my life. Where I go up and down, here and there, backwards and forwards, and in and out. And hopefully still within the permissive will of God.

And you know, that kind of coloured range there. That's the permissive will. Now the perfect will is a straight line. But the permissive will is where God allows me to make a mess of things.

And to get off track. And he allows that for our lives, doesn't he? Oh, what a mistake I've made here or there.

Lord, guide me back where you want me to be. He allows us to meander, doesn't he? I think he does. To wander here and there and make mistakes. He doesn't force his will on us.

[21:23] I think ultimately he has got some boundaries that he keeps us in check. But God is working, isn't he?

Do we stop and consider through the ups and downs of life, what is God's will for me? May we ask for ourselves, am I bearing fruit for the kingdom of God?

Are my life's priorities in order? Or I might need to really rethink some of those things. Someone said life is a coin. You can spend it any way you want to, but you can spend it only once.

Plan your life with God's will in mind. With God's priorities in mind. As your ultimate guide. And when we may ask, when we make a decision, ask what is God's will.

That's a good question to consider. Before you make plans. What is God's will? God's will. And seek it. And find it. Spend your life so as to please the Lord.

[22:32] Ask the Lord to readjust your priorities. And we can plan and schedule. And yet miss what God wants. And we're all over the place.

God is sovereign. We can truly yield to the Lordship of Christ. Wouldn't that be the best place to be? The best place. And it's been truly said, one of the most fascinating of all subjects is this four letter word, time. We all have the same amount of time. Whether we are penniless, or whether we happen to be the richest person on earth.

Whether young or old, single or married, employed or without a job, a teenager, or some famous person. We have exactly the same amount of time.

Of course, some have a longer life than others do. But we've all got the same building blocks of those minutes and hours, of days, of months, of years.

[23:35] God's will. James says, But now ye rejoicing of boasting, all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him is sin.

He's saying you're bragging on here. You've got all these kind of boasting, bragging, big plans, big ideas, but you're missing God's best. To know God's will, that must be what sets the course.

And to refuse it is clearly unwise. What a tragedy, what a shame. What is your life? To spend the life, and miss, what we're here for.

What is your life? What is your life? We only get one shot at it, don't we? Life, we only get one shot at it. And in James 4 and 5, the context is humility.

And it's kind of contrasting here, with these bragging, boasting remarks. Oh, I'm going to do this tomorrow, and I'm going to stay here a year, and I'm going to buy and sell, and make a profit.

[24:42] It's kind of man's willful arrogance, man's prideful ways. What a tragic waste of life, to live a life without God. What a terrible choice to make.

A foolish choice. Man's planning a life without thought for good, and God, and right. One day we will, be in a casket.

And will it be too late then? It will be too late then. What is your life? That is the question. May we recognise God's workings.

God is at work in us. He's shaped us, he's made us, and he still is, working on us. And all things work together for good, for those who love God. So those who are caught according to his purpose. He's been working on us, and he still is, and yet he will, making us more like him, working in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.

[25:45] Let's not miss God's potential for us. God's working. Let's not shrug it off or resist his working.

Can man resist God? I think he can. I think he can willfully resist God. Yet, ultimately, God overpowers us, doesn't he?

Hopefully God gets our attention. He unblocks our deaf ears. He shakes us from our complacency. He chastens us.

He gets our attention. Yet, man, willfully can still kick against the freaks, like Paul, till he comes to his knees, he comes to his senses.

What a tragic thing it would be to miss God's potential for us. Time is like money. You can only spend it once. We need a wise investment strategy.

[26:57] Who wiser can we go to? You know, if you, you might, like, like my dad, he's got lots of money in the bank, and he goes to, he might go to a financial counsellor, and he gets a, a, a, a financial advisor, and gives him a wise investment strategy.

Rather, what about that which is of greater value? Your life. It's of greater value than dollars and coins, and thousands and millions in the bank. Your life.

Make a wise investment strategy. Go to the one who has the ultimate wisdom. Go to God for wisdom. How am I going to spend this? This finite resource.

Seek that wisdom from above. Go to God for wisdom. From his word. Seek God's wisdom, not man's. No man, no counsellor of man, can give you that wisdom.

But you can receive it from above. God's workings, God's wisdom. And, what is God's will? The moment a man is born, he begins to die.

[28:06] Isn't that a fact? And death could come at any time. By design, disease, disaster, or decay. Man is not here to stay.

He's here to go. What is God's will for the meantime? Will we have a life to live? Will we live it? Do we consider that which ought to be our first and foremost consideration of life?

God's will. Why am I here? What do you want me to do, Lord? There was a man called Peter Waldo who was at a banquet one night and everyone was having a well-to-time.

This was a party. They were thoughtless and careless without burden, without devotion, without commitment. Everybody was just having a real well of the time.

And Peter Waldo was at this banquet enjoying all the laughter and gladness and the carry-on.

Everyone was careless without a care.

[29:10] and his friend by his side fell upon sleep, just suddenly died. Bang.

Wow. That's a wake-up call for me, isn't it? When one of your friends passes away, what is your life? What is my life? And Peter went home hastily that night and he searched for God and he searched the scriptures and he gave his life to Christ and he became the founder of a godly church that kept alive the faith of Christ of his time.

God worked on Peter Waldo when a man died at his side. Life is short.

It's fragile. It's like a vapour that vanishes away. Next time you boil the kettle and make that cup of tea or coffee, think about life.

What will you do? What is your life? Maybe you have big plans for tomorrow. We can all have big plans for tomorrow. Tomorrow.

[30:31] He was going to be all that a mortal should be. Tomorrow. No one would be better than he. Tomorrow. Each morning he snaked up the letters he would write. Tomorrow.

It was too bad. Indeed, he was too busy to see Bill but he promised to do it. Tomorrow. The greatest of workers this man would have been. Tomorrow. The world would have known him had he ever seen.

Tomorrow. But the fact is he died and faded from view and all that was left when living was true was a mountain of things he intended to do tomorrow.

We can procrastinate, can't we? Put off those things. I should do that now. I should do it now.

Those things left undone still.

Those things we ought to say and do. Let's not put it off till tomorrow. Life is precious, isn't it?

[31:30] Even the moments, the minutes. You have a minute. You have only just one minute. Only 60 seconds in it. Forced upon me. Cannot refuse it but it is up to you to use it.

You must suffer it or lose it. Give account if you abuse it. Just a tiny little minute but eternity is in it. Those moments, those minutes, those brief sections of time.

Eternity is in it, isn't it? James writes to us, he tells us how some people are planning. Oh, tomorrow I'm going to do this and that. Buy and sell. Stay here and there for a year or so.

Without God in the picture, rather may we seek His will. May we look for God's purpose in all that we do. God knows the future. The future is in His hands. He's already there.

His will and His way is the best for us. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.

[32:32] Here's what someone said about the new dimension of life. As followers of Jesus we should seek God's perspective. Are you like me overwhelmed and losing perspective? We need to stop and climb the mast of the ship of faith to see life from God's perspective.

It will change completely what we see. Now sometimes we hurry and scurry down here below without, as it were, climbing the mast of the ship and getting in the bird's nest and seeing, wow, what God has got in store for those who love Him.

Our lives belong to God. What will we decide? What will we determine? Today. Let's not wait till tomorrow. What will we do today? Today. Life is short.

Death is short. Sin the cause. Christ the cure. You might be outside of Christ just now. You don't know Christ as your Saviour, as your Lord. Life is short. Death is short.

Sin the cause. Christ the cure. Counting times will come. And the only thing that really, really matters when we boil it all down is the Lord's will.

[33:42] As verse 15 said, if it's the Lord's will we'll live and do this or that. Let's resign to the fact, actually I'm not in control. I'm not in charge. He is.

Ultimately. And what is His plan? Do we stop and take the time to find it? To submit to His will? His way? Some people know what they want to do but God is not part of their future plans.

Don't brag like the people in the book of James here. Don't boast about your plans for tomorrow but humbly bring them before the Lord. Submit to His workings, His wisdom, His will, His way.

Commit your plans to Him to recognise He is in control and humbly work in that frame of mind. Our lives are like a vapour.

You know, it really brings it home when you stand at a graveside and a casket is loaded in the ground and it makes you wonder what is your life? What is your life?

[34:51] Our lives are like a mist, like a vapour. We never know when they may vanish. I urge you, each one here, personally, one by one, each one here today, submit to the Lord of your life.

The Lord of your life. Submit to Him. And submitting to His Lordship is not an irksome, onerous, burdensome thing, it's a gladsome, restful, joyful thing.

To know your hand is in the hand of the Creator, the caretaker of this planet, of your life. The ultimate controller of your present and of your eternity.

Consider your life, your eternity. What is your life? If you've yet to trust Him, trust Him now. Trust Him now, for now and for eternity.

Trust Him, who is the Almighty, the sovereign, King, Master. May He be your Master and Lord and know His will and do it.

[36:07] Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that you are ultimately our absolute ruler and King, our great loving Lord.

Lord, and your Lordship is not irksome, it is a great blessing, a great gladness to our hearts. Lord, we pray for everyone here today that they might all come, we might all come to know that glad news, that glad message of life eternal in Christ.

that when we ask and answer that question, what is your life? We'll know our life is not earthbound, it's actually in Christ eternal and everlasting because you've granted that gift to us of eternal life by your grace and our faith.

Lord, we bless you for that. Encourage each one now, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.