

Trusting an Unknown Future to a Known God

(James 4:13-5:11)

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Summit Church

Pastor Chris Green

Happy Independence Day! I hope that you had a great time with family, friends & love ones. Its always fun to spend time with love ones, shoot off a few fireworks, and eat some good food!

I love to grill – but one of the things I absolutely HATE about summertime grilling and other outside picnic events - are FLIES. God, WHY – just WHY? What’s up with the flies, Lord - Is that going to be the first question you ask God in Heaven ? Help a brotha understand. Were you tired? Were they created right before you took the Sabbath? Did you slip up and say “fly” and they just appeared – and you were like – it’s all good!

Well, as pesky & nasty as flies are, they actually don’t live that long – the common housefly only lives about 15-30 days (some of yall are like that’s long enough!)....If you think that’s short, the housefly’s 1st cousin is the **Mayfly (he barely makes it through the FLY family reunion)** – because he only lives a day, AND some have been known to live a mere 30 MINUTES – 30 MINUTES life span YALL?!....so the Mayfly already finished high school, college, got a doctorate, married Mrs. Mayfly, had kids, and was laid to rest – and his epitaph read: “What a day!”....all while you were in line at Wal-Mart!

Seriously, we often can find ourselves making major Plans & Decisions (which never seem to be void of lots of money), living day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year (we are already over halfway through 2015) and we often neglect to hear what God is **saying and doing in our lives**. We are just like the Mayfly – clueless of how short our life really is...

And it amazes me as humans, how we live our lives everyday, while simultaneously being CLUELESS, about our FUTURE – this reveals a truth about us – The way we live our present lives are based on WHO/WHAT we currently Trust.

Tomorrow is UNKNOWN – so Who/What we Trust plays a major role in the Navigation of our navigate our UNKNOWN FUTURE – but I’m hear to proclaim to you that we can BOLDLY face any UNKNOWN FUTURE - if WE yield OUR lives to a KNOWN GOD!

Turn with me in your bibles to James 4 please.

Today, we are going to look at 3 sections of scripture in James 4 &5.

The first TWO sections reveal what happens when we place our assurance in things we revere or idolize. We are often blinded by these things, because they hide out deep down in the dark crevices of our hearts...but Pastor James will bring illumination to these counterfeit saviors. The final section, in classic James form, gives us a practical way to trust God.

But let's look at first place we easily put our confidence.

A. Overconfidence in Our Plans (James 4:13-17)

[13] Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—[14] yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. [15] Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." [16] As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

I'm sure you have heard the saying, "*If you fail to plan, you plan to fail!*" This is a true saying, and this passage is not in anyway trying to convince us that we should not plan. Instead, it implies that God's will is often absent in our plans. So, Pastor James – gives us 2 simple warnings here:

1. FIRST WARNING: We don't know what TOMORROW brings (this is not meant – it's realistic -vs. 14)
 - a. God is the only person who can say with confidence what the future holds – God can't be wrong about tomorrow! Why? because he is the beginning, the right now (I Am, Emmanuel), and the End – he exists outside of time – omnipresent – his nature.

The older saints would say: Pastor - "*I don't know what the future holds, but I know who holds my future!*"

2. SECOND WARNING: Planning without God reveals our arrogance (vs. 16).

- How is it that we can be so confident in our plans and not consult the ONE who holds our FUTURE in his hands? That's arrogance...that's evil...that's idol worship.
- If we are not careful, time quickly passes and in our ROUTINE - We are often blinded by our busyness BECAUSE we equate good plans with good Christian living. Listen to this, from a book called *Crazy Busy*¹:

“Busyness does not mean you are a faithful or fruitful Christian. It only means you are busy, just like everyone else. And like everyone else, your joy, your heart, and your soul are in danger. We need the Word of God to set us free...if only we could make time for an appointment.” – Kevin DeYoung

Proverbs 19:21 reminds us that - *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.*

The answer to our overconfidence and arrogance is in vs. 17.

17] So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Our problem is NOT that we don't know WHAT to do – we just FAIL to do it. Vs. 17 goes directly to our HEARTS. Write this down!

Delayed obedience is not obedience at all.

(REPEAT)

We have convinced ourselves that we can do right – later.

In all our planning, we often HEAR from Godⁱ, but we sin because we ignore him and make plans anyway saying, “*I’ll do it later, or I need some time to think about it...classic line – I’ll pray about it some more.*” with ZERO intentions of doing the godly thing.

¹ Crazy Busy, Kevin DeYoung (Crossway, 2013) pg. 32 – great read on a huge problem we all face.

- *We know the bible says we shouldn't have premarital sex, but we will do that later, besides we are getting married.*
- *I know I should be a cheerful giver, but this sale at TJ Maxx is only this week, besides it's a big church - they got plenty of people that give!*
- *I know my neighbor is going through a rough time, but I'm sure their family will take good care of them.*
- *I know I need to be involved in a small group (because Jesus was in a SG, just sayin'), and I will once this sports season is over.*
- *I know I should share my faith now, but I will be ready after I hear Pastor JD preach more on evangelism.*

How long are we going to arrogant & disobey what God has made clear for us today? That's why I beg you to listen to God's voice and simply – be obedient. Delayed obedience is not obedience at all!

Verse 17 also - sets up the next section. Let's look at a group of people who live a lifestyle of delayed obedience.

B. Overconfidence in Material Possessions (James 5: 1-6)

This particular group of people in this text - attend James' church in Jerusalem and they happen to be very RICH.

So as a point of Clarity, Consider these 4 Categories of People: There are Godly Poor People, and UnGodly Poor People, There are Godly Wealthy People, and UnGodly wealthy people – **this passage is about UnGodly wealthy people that attend this church:**

Let's read James 5:1-6

[1] Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. [2] Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. [3] Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. [4] Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. [5] You have lived

on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. [6] You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

These ungodly wealthy people in James Church were known to:

- Hoard their possessions: they were so stingy that they would literally let their fortune go to waste before they shared it with others.
- Defraud their employees – they mistreated /cheated people because they had the power to do so. They always viewed others as lower than themselves—always wanted to be served, but never a servant – you know the Capitol – President Snow in the Hunger Games.

What can we learn from ungodly rich people?ⁱⁱ

They teach us that **TWO** brutally different worldviews expose our hearts motivation when it comes to **Money & Material Possessions**:

You're either blinded by Ownership or humbled by Stewardship.

See – **Ownership** says, “*I don't belong to God, nothing I have belongs to God, in fact I DESERVE all that I have because I worked hard for it and I answer only to myself.*” (ex. *Money in Air – I will throw all my money in the air, what goes up to Heaven is Gods, and what falls down is mine.*)

- Ownership convinces YOU that YOU always have the final say – YOU are the voice of reason – YOU are self-made – YOU made the boots & pulled yourself up by YOUR own Bootstraps, YOU wake yourself up every morning, YOU are in control because YOU believe that – YOU.... Are.... Ultimately God.

But humility produces an attitude of **Stewardship**, which screams that there is someone BEYOND YOU, it says:

“I belong to God, everything I HAVE belongs to God, in fact I don't deserve ANY of this – it is a gift FROM God, because I am the Lord's steward.” (ex. *I would be a fool to throw the money in the air to test you, besides it's all yours anyway, I'm breathing your air and I'm standing on the ground you created.*)

- A Good steward is WISE, because they know that everything on this planet will spoil. A Good steward recognizes we will have to give an account with what God has given us; “*To whom much is given, much is required.*”² – Spiderman’s Uncle Ben said it like this – “With great power, comes great responsibility.” (Somebody say - Preach Uncle Ben!)
- **Jesus sums it up in Matthew 6:19** “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, **20** but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**
- A Good **Steward** recognizes that *Earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof*³, in other words – it is ALL His – so I will not store it up for myself and will certainly not consider myself more highly than others, instead I will, just as Jesus did – **humble** myself and serve others rather than desire to be served. I have been abundantly blessed to be a blessing!

This is the right thing to do – this is obedience to God (James 4:17)

Look back at vs. 6 - *You have condemned and murdered the righteous person and he didn’t resist you. All to common*, this was the fate of many Christians in this time (James 2:6) - we saw this happen with many of Christ disciples & with Paul, Stephen, and the author of this passage - Pastor James, murdered because of his undying faith in his big brother.

Nevertheless, Jesus is one that we ALL condemned and murdered – you say how?

None of us were born placing our confidence in Christ. None of us were righteous; we all were born in sin.

² Luke 12:48

³ Psalm 24:1

Do you realize the first time you inhaled oxygen freely outside of your mother's womb – you began the natural progression to presume upon God's grace? We don't own the air that we breathe. Kids don't think like that.

I love my kids yall. I really do. But I am kindly reminded that we are born sinners, every time I see my kids AND other peoples kids do things that NO ONE taught them.

For example – you ever sat beside that kid (might be your own) and you graciously let them play with something that's yours – like your keys – and when it's time to go – you ask for them back– and they snatch them from your hands and say the 2 magical words that NO ONE ever taught them to piece together – NO...MINE! I kinda need my keys back little buddy...No....MINE!

Of course we don't have the cognitive ability to understand grace as a young child – but we naturally begin down a trajectory that incites us to MAKE PLANS without considering him....to allow MATERIAL POSSESSIONS to corrupt our hearts and TREAT OTHERS around us as inferior....some of us are not kids anymore, but we still act like this when it comes to our PLANS and our MONEY – God wants to speak and take the KEYS and we respond just like a child – “NO...MINE.”....and we just like the people in vs. 6 put the righteous one to death because of our sins – Jesus died for us and even though we mistreated him.....

.... he DID NOT RESIST us. He willingly became sin, so we could be righteous.

He submitted his plans to God – “not my will Lord but yours be done.”

He had it ALL in Heaven, but gave it ALL up, emptied himself - (2 corinthians 8:9,10) became Poor so we could become RICH because he loved us...and **he didn't delay his obedience – he was obedient, even to death on a cross.**

The Hero dies for the Villain. The Judge steps off the Bench and pleads guilty on behalf of the Criminal and says “*Punish me instead of him*”. Why kind of love is that?

That's how Jesus loves US, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

If you hear his voice, don't delay – TRUST him now!

Some of you might be here today and you say: Pastor Chris, my story is different. I desire to make plans, but my life is in such a worldwind – I don't know what to do next. Money – I'm not rich, I don't have a lot of possessions – that's not where I am, I'm going through a tough time and I need direction.” How can I trust God right now?

If that's you – just keep listening to God's voice in our final passage in James 5:

C. Confidence in a Known God (James 5:7-11)

[7] Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. [8] You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. [9] Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

James is teaching his persecuted and suffering congregants how to place their confidence in Jesus, the Good Judge by being patient.

So How to do we Trust Jesus?

1. **Be Patient** – sounds simple right? Patience is not natural yall. Patience is a gift - fruit of God's Spirit⁴ –you supernaturally have this gift of Patience. We often misunderstand the purpose of patience. James back in Chapter 1, said that Patience will have its perfecting work...what kind of Work? (vs. 4)

Paul David Tripp says it like this:

Patience is not just about what you will get at the end of the wait. Hear this truth, “Patience is about what you will become as you wait.” – P. David Tripp

⁴ Galatians 5:22-23

Verse 7 uses the examples of farmers. Farmers don't believe they are wasting their time – waiting is not useless, meaningless, or a vain pursuit. They joyfully and enthusiastically wait for the fruit of the harvest – they count it all joy.

Patience is a lot like faith: It's believing something is happening even when you can't see it happening!

So what does Patience Produce as you wait?

- It EXPOSES OUR IDOLS – Patience CALLS out all the things that WE have put our TRUST IN – all the counterfeit idols can be clearly seen if we let Patience have its perfecting work! How do we know it's working? Because we want to complain.
 - God why is this happening to me, right now – I'm not ready!?
 - How long is this going to last?
 - I don't know about you - but it has not been an easy year for me & my family and I feel the prophetic words of Sweet Brown ringing in my ears – “Ain't nobody got TIME for that.”

Where is our TRUST? Who have I placed my hope in? Do I believe that he is Good? Do I believe he will never give me more than I can bear? Do I believe his yoke is easy and his burden is light? Do I believe that he has placed Godly people around me?

- We are tempted to go into isolation, angry at God, and even others.
- So James tells us NOT to grumble against one another — **GRUMBLING is a reflection of what you believe about God's sovereignty & his character....**so Pastor James also reminds them that Jesus is a Judge - a good judge, a just judge, a judge that could never be wrong - so don't you worry about your oppression or your oppressors -because God will take great care of this. In the meantime our life a GRUMBLE or a song of praise?

Patience also produces CHARACTER & HOPE. Listen to Paul's encouragement in Romans 5: 3-5.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance (Patience), and endurance (Patience) produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Church, let us not NEGLECT how God can and will make us more like him in the presence of our hardships and never forget that no matter how grim it may get – **you have HOPE beyond this world and a Spirit inside of you to guarantee that!**

James leaves us with two practical examples of suffering & patience in the midst of an unknown future. Let's read.

[10] As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. [11] Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

We see the unwavering faith of the PROPHETS & JOB:

The prophets certainly trusted their UNKNOWN FUTURE to God – isn't that IRONIC – dudes that talk about the future, but are often UNSURE OF THEIR OWN – IMAGINE THAT!

Look at the prophet **Jonah**, who wrestled with delayed obedience (he knew the right thing to do, but ran from doing it) and God taught him that salvation belong to him, and used his time(**patience**) in the belly of a fish to expose the idols in his heart until he TRUSTED God to preach his Word to the people he wanted to save in Nineveh..... he was trying to give Jonah his heart.

Another example, the prophet **Jeremiah** was treated horribly – beaten and thrown to the animals (Jer. 20:2), thrown into prison (Jer. 32:2), and thrown into a muddy, mirky dungeon left to die (Jer. 38:6)⁵ – God entrusted his words to Jeremiah, but it seems like he was continuously persecuted. WHY DID JEREMIAH PERSEVERE? Why did he still, proclaim things that his eyes might not ever get a chance to see, under constanst duress? How did he manage under all this UNCERTAINTY?

⁵ From Expositors Bible Commentary, Abridged Edition (Zondervan, 1994) pg. 1037

He didn't allow his distress to define God. Some of us are BFF's with Jesus, until pain & suffering come. It's easy to praise him for his Provision, but can we be content with his Presence?

Don't forget this:

Confidence in Jesus is having confidence in his character.

TRUSTING Jesus means you have a good grip on his character... While we are heavily concentrated on the outcome of our circumstance - Our Dad is concerned about the outcome of your faith.

Some of us will only realize how Fallen our World is, when it all falls down around us. This is not our home family - we have a much better residence in the kingdom.

That's why you can't TRUST him, if you don't know him. It is very difficult to trust someone you don't know and 2 of the ways that CHRIST has made himself KNOWN is in the scripture (I John 2:3-6) and through his body of believers (I John 1:7) - that's why we are called Christians - we represent Christ.

It will be very difficult to TRUST God if you can't HEAR from him or FEEL him.

How do you Hear him? - Study his Word (that is his voice) - he speaks in many ways but most clearly in his WORD!

How do you FEEL him? Be in Community with his People! - that is why we are called the body - the hands, the feet, the body of Christ.

Band Vamps.

I want to close with the final example in vs. 11 - Pastor James s his listeners of a story they all would be familiar with - story of cousin Job. Job was a righteous man - a Godly Wealthy Man, who had a pretty consistent routine (A MAN WITH A PLAN⁶) and he was wealthy (Probably the most wealthy

⁶ Job 1:5

guy in his town). Just like many of us – his Plans were interrupted (not knowing what that day would bring) and one catastrophe happened after another, he suffered immensely as he lost all his material possessions, the lives of his children, the trust of his spouse, and lost his health – and take it one step further his friends try to convince him that his sins had brought this calamity upon him - ...he had NO IDEA what the future would hold –yet he worshipped the Lord in the middle of his tragedy⁷.

Yes, Job had praised him for his **Provision** when everything was Good, but he was still willing to WORSHIP God because of who he KNEW GOD to be – a Good Father.

Now, take a peep at what Patience produced out of Job’s heart... I love Job because he kept it real with God and wanted an answer to WHY so much CALAMITY & HEARTACHE had come upon him – **JOB NEVER GOT AN ANSWER TO WHY, BUT he received something even greater – A MORE INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.**

THIS is Job’s response after God spoke to him.
Listen.

(Job 42:1-6 ESV)

Then Job answered the LORD and said: “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.’ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and **repent in dust and ashes.**”

I’m convinced, the closer we get to God – we are compelled to repent. Repentance is not a one-time event at the beginning of salvation – it is our continuous posture as believers.

We confess our faults and he is faithful and just to cleanse us of all unrighteousness...this is where healing begins – in confession and repentance.

⁷ Job 1:20-22

REPENTANCE is a blessing because you become highly aware of his GRACE – God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense.

You can not **purchase** it, You don’t **deserve** it, you can’t **earn** it – BUT it produces a heart change – that’s what Jesus is after- he is making us more like him!

And don’t miss this, yes God returned Job’s wealth at the end of his trial (which is foreshadowing what he will do for us in eternity through Jesus). But don’t forget that God reformed an already righteous Job **THROUGH** his trial – he was renewed by the uncomfortable grace of a sovereign God – a KNOWN GOD!

And if you are in the middle of a trial today, we stand with you (the body of Christ) – longing for it pass – and that is not a bad thing for you to desperately desire it to PASS, because it REMINDS us that WE don’t belong here in this fallen world, but in a better world, a better Kingdom, with a better King - King Jesus that will return.

Submit to him. **Trust** him. While we can’t predict what tomorrow will bring, we can place all of our confidence and TRUST in the one who holds the FUTURE in his hands.

Let’s pray.

ⁱ in fact scripture tells us that every time we face temptation - God provides a way of escape (I Corinthians 10:13-14)

ⁱⁱ This section heavily influenced from Mark Driscoll’s Teaching on [James: Jesus bold little brother series](#) -