

The Lord's Will Be Done

April 2007

James writes to a very selfish, materialistic group of people who are so wrapped up in their own pursuits that God simply becomes a “rubber stamp” of their personal ambitions. He warns them about leaving God out of their plans: “*Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that’*” (4:13-15).

The truth is that we have little power to make things happen as we choose. Further, we serve a God who surveys the whole landscape, who charts the course of the future, who understands the difference between what is *desired* and what is *good* for us. Faith embraces human limitations and gladly yields to a benevolent and powerful God whose will is supreme.

James’ words apply not just to the arrogant and self-determined; they speak to those who are trying to be good stewards and make choices that honor God. By now many have heard of the unexpected outcome of my trip to Washington, D.C. two weeks ago. In anticipation of our upcoming move, I went merely with the purpose of assessing some properties in the area – *no buying with wife in absentia*.

So what happened? In spite of our research, planning and prudently established objectives, I found a home that was *better* in nearly every respect than what we anticipated buying:

- * In a better school district.
- * Closer to the church meeting house.
- * Closer to many brethren.
- * Closer to shopping, schools, doctors, etc.
- * In a county we had not even considered due to higher housing costs and taxation.

You want to know pressure? Just find a house that is “perfect” yet unseen by your wife. I did the only sensible thing: I got her to D.C. on the first flight out the next morning. (*Blessed are the peacemakers ...*).

After looking carefully at the particulars and signing on all the specified dotted lines, we were struck with the irony of what we had just done: we bought a house that fell entirely outside the parameters we had established, parameters that we felt were matters of conservative good judgment and certainly not established without much prayer and supplication.

After hearing this story a friend wrote: “You know, we set our schedules & timelines and think we are being so organized and smart, but when we add ‘Lord willing’ to our plans we have to know His plan may be different from ours just to say to us that He is in control. It sounds like He made it apparent that this was His plan for you all. And that is comforting to all of us.”

While we recognize the complexities of identifying the providential workings of God, we are told to present our petitions of daily care to Him and trust in His willingness to provide. We must do this in the confidence that “the Lord’s will” is a real, operative factor in our personal lives. I, for one, will attribute blessings to the working of God and thank Him for often providing something *better* than I could even envision.

We must not presume upon the will of God and act like He is our servant, but we must make our future plans in the knowledge that God knows and provides what is best.