

The Hidden Sinfulness in Our Hearts Part 2: Pride and Presumption

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Epistle of James

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Preached on: Sunday, July 1, 2018

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to James 4. We're continuing a message we began last Sunday from James 4:13-17. We titled the message "The Hidden Sinfulness in Our Hearts" because James exposes something of a sin that's really not easily recognized that probably none of us would think were a sin really until he shows it to us. So the hidden sinfulness of our hearts, I would add a subtitle "Pride and Presumption." The hidden sinfulness of our hearts: pride and presumption. So that's part 2 of that message. I just thought of the subtitle this week. I think that kind of summarizes what he's saying is the hidden sin of our heart, it's a pride that leads to this presumption upon the future that we see is a lot uglier than at first glance we're prone to think.

We saw last time in the text as we read it in a moment, you're going to see he basically indicts us for just planning our future. Now it's not just planning. It looks like that at first but he says that in our planning, in our statements about our future, in our attitude toward our future, that we can have an ugly, ungodly sin. We noted that at first glance it looks like a reasonable plan. In fact, I had three points last Sunday and the fourth point is basically the theme of today's message. The three points last Sunday: a reasonable plan, it looks like a reasonable plan, question mark, when you first look at it; but a surprising pronouncement, that God says, "No, it's not a reasonable plan," he pronounces it to be audacious evil; and then the profound problem that he exposes is that we're claiming to be God in the way we plan. So it's very surprising because we don't realize that we're doing that when we make these kind of plans. Well, today he's going to give us the prescription. I said last time when we introduced we're going to see the problem and then next time we're going to look at how we remedy the problem and so today basically a necessary prescription is the theme of the message. So it's the fourth point in the bigger outline but it's actually just the title or subtitle of today's message because today's message has four points also. So I hope that's clear. Four points today of the prescription. The prescription has a four-part or four-point prescription for us to overcome this problem of presumption and pride.

Now let's read the text again and we'll see James lay this out for us. James 4:13-17.

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a

profit." 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. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, as we come to this passage of Scripture, we acknowledge how dependent we are upon you. We cannot know what's going to happen tomorrow, we can't declare that we're going to do something in five minutes and then do it unless you allow it, unless you ordain it, unless you enable us, and so we ask that you might now by your Spirit enable us to understand your word, that in your light we might see light and that the light of your word might search us and expose areas we need to repent in and show us the glory of Christ that we might run to him. We pray this in his wonderful name. Amen.

So this hidden sinfulness in our hearts, basically we just don't realize how bad sin is and how ugly it is and how much it really grips who we are. We see it in some areas and in some ways it's obvious. There are things in our lives that we don't like but these are usually the sins that the consequences of them, either the embarrassment of it or the dirtiness of it we don't like, but the most dangerous sins are the ones that we don't even realize are a problem, that don't really even trouble us, and this is what James is identifying, one of those. He says, "Look," he's talking to businessmen in his congregation, he's writing to Jewish believers and many of them were successful businessmen and, "Listen, you have a tendency that you make a plan and you say, 'I'm going to go and I'm going to do something and I'm going to do it for a year and I'm going to make money,'" and basically we acknowledged the last time that apparently that's a reasonable plan but the problem was, "The problem is that when you plan, you forget God. You plan as if God is not determining everything in your life; that you're not dependent upon him for everything in your life." Which clearly the Bible really makes clear that we are. We're much more dependent than we realize. We're not sovereign over anything really.

Now, because of this, this problem of forgetting God and we don't even realize that we forget God. I mean, sometimes it's obvious when people are forgetting God. I was reading just this week again the words of that poem "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley. The word "invictus" means "unconquered." When you read the poem, it's clear this guy is advocating pride and audacity. He's glorifying humanity and it's really an obvious assault on God and his throne. Listen to the last paragraph of that hymn and you'll probably recognize, many of you know it but even all of us have probably heard the last phrase particularly, the last couple of clauses. Here's the last stanza in that poem.

"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:

I am the captain of my soul."

Now do you see the clear biblical allusions he's making? "It matters not how strait the gate. It matters not how charged with punishment the scroll. I don't care what God says I've done wrong. I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul." Now if you heard a Christian brother or sister speaking like that, you would reprove them quickly. "What are you saying? You say you love Jesus Christ and you're talking like that." James is saying when we plan, whether we're a businessman, we're a stay-at-home mom, we're a student, when we talk and act as if, "I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that, I'm going to accomplish this," and we're not thinking about God as we ought, he says, "You are the man. You are acting like the master of your fate and the captain of your soul and if you could see it as God sees it, you would see it with that kind of ugly wicked pride." It's hidden, it's under the surface, but this is the essence of what sin is and so James gives us a prescription for helping us go about our lives in a way that we won't be doing that anymore; that we can turn from. He's exhorting us, "Now that you know what to do, do it," at the end in verse 17.

So now, what's the prescription? It flows largely out of verse 15 when he says, "Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills.'" There are four points and the first thing, the first part of the prescription for overcoming this kind of pride and presumption and learning how to live as we ought to before God, the first point is understand how prone you are to forget God. And I say, "you are," I'm including myself but James, remember, in this passage when he really zeroes in on us individually, "Come now, you who say," the "come now" is an individual, second person imperative. "I want you to look at this," and he's talking to you individually but then he's talking to the whole group. It's like he's talking to each individual among us. He's saying to me, "Come now and look at your life, Ty." And he's saying to each one of you, "Come now and look at the way you think about life."

So I say the first point: understand how prone you are to forget God. We're prone because of our sinfulness. Sin at its essence is the desire to be God. That's what Eve was told by Satan, "If you eat of the fruit, you will be like God." So we desire to be God. That's what the nature of sin is. Even in the redeemed believer who now has a new heart, you still have abiding indwelling sin in you and sin is not something just that we do, it's a principle, it's a force of opposition against God. It's an active power that indwells the believer and it seeks to make us forget God. It seeks to make us live independently of God and then, of course, we have the world system around us that's encouraging us the same way, the enemy of our souls, the devil.

So our sinfulness is one of the reasons that we should understand we're prone to forget God. A second thing, though, that makes us prone to forget God, this is actually a second subpoint under the first point: understand how prone you are to forget God, you're prone to forget God because of your sinfulness, you're also prone to forget God because of your shortsightedness. You and I cannot see reality as it really is. We don't see the unseen spiritual world. We see the world around us and from looking at the world around us, we

make inferences that appear to be good and necessary inferences but which are far from appropriate, good and necessary inferences and which are far from accurate.

We see the seen world, the visible world, and we presume things like we presume that we're in control because as we look at our lives, and think about it, as a little child, it's fun to watch little babies as they learn how, the things that they can control. You know, they just find that they can do something and they just start doing it. They discover something and, "Hey, if I do this, this falls over." So it's like, "Hey, I've got power. Yes!" And that little sinful heart is thinking, "Yeah, I rule!" Dr. John Street says that we're born, we're conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity and so he calls the baby, the viper in a diaper. We're selfish from the time we come out of the womb. We're committed to live life independent from God and we're also created in the image of God, there's beauty and glory in that precious child because we're made to reflect the glory of God, but sin has warped it and distorted it and so it's a part, it's marred and only the Gospel of grace can restore.

So we had this shortsightedness and we think that we're in control. We do things and things happen and we don't do things and things don't happen and we conclude that we make things happen. We conclude that I live my life and I decide I'm going to go over there, I'm going to get in my car, I'm going to drive to such-and-such a place and I get in my car and I drive to such-and-such a place and I get there and therefore I'm in control. Well, there's a measure in which, of course, my action, human responsibility is a part of the equation. We see that part and the Bible calls us to that. It doesn't call us to let go and let God because he's in control, just forget it and surrender to fate. No, it does not, the Bible does not teach that. The Bible teaches you are responsible to do what God has called you to do and do it, but within that context, it calls you to acknowledge your dependence upon him at every moment in everything that you do.

He's that sovereign. In fact, the name of our church, Providence Church, this is the doctrine of divine providence that is taught throughout the entire Bible. Essentially it's this, that God foreordains and causes everything that comes to pass. He's sovereignly reigning over every molecule in the universe and every event, even the evil deeds of evil men who are acting as free agents and are responsible for their sinful actions. He still rules over those and superintends them to his intended purpose so that nothing happens apart from his will. The Bible teaches that. I mean, if you want to read the Bible and take what the Bible says, you will come to no other conclusion but that unless you twist and distort the Scriptures. We'll see some verses that make this clear. It's just abundantly clear. God claims that kind of sovereignty.

So James is saying we forget that and we act as if, remember we talked about Napoleon last week. The saying is man proposes, God disposes but Napoleon kept saying Napoleon proposes, Napoleon disposes. Well, sometimes we've got a lot of Napoleon in us and we begin to think that we propose and we dispose. That's what James is saying is a problem and it makes, there's a certain logic to it, though, and this is the problem of having died spiritually. When man fell, he died spiritually, his spiritual vision was damaged and even when we're redeemed, though it's now restored, we become able to see for the first time

spiritually. We say like the man that was born blind that Jesus healed in John 9, that was a picture of salvation, "I was blind but now I see." Yes, we do see but we still don't see perfectly.

Our vision is still limited and we can't see the world as it really is. It looks as if the world operates in a cause and effect thing, that what we do really makes all the difference. A help to understand this, let me just kind of quickly go over something that a professor of mine said in seminary that I think is just accurate. He said that we tend to be in Christian circles even, practical deists. Practical deists, d-e-i-s-t-s. Deism is a religious philosophy that says there is a deity, there is a God, he's made the world but it's the clock-maker god religion; that in the same way that a clock-maker makes a clock and sets all the gears together, puts it together so that it operates and it keeps time and then you give it to somebody and the clock-maker doesn't have to stay and attend it anymore, you take it away and the clock works. The idea is that the universe is like that, that God created it and he made it to work by this process of natural law and everything operates according to his plan and then God, then, is disengaged and distant, probably involved in other things, more impressive matters.

This was the theology of people like Thomas Jefferson. Many of the founders of our country were deists. There was a blend of theists who believed in a personal God, like Washington, and deists, those who did not believe in a personal God who was involved in reality. This is why Thomas Jefferson cut out all the miracles of the Bible because he didn't believe that the deity would be involved, these were just mythological things, elements added to the Scriptures. Well deism, it seems to make sense. In fact, it went right along with the discoveries of what we now refer to as Newtonian physics. Isaac Newton, who was a Christian and a theist, actually, believed in a personal God, he discovered or articulated basically, you know, the law of gravity and the idea that the universe, there was a beautiful order to the universe, to every action an equal and opposite reaction; that the universe, you can chart the orbit of the planets, the orbit of the planets around the sun and all these things happen uniformly.

So the idea came to be that when you look at the order around us, it appears that it really is that God has set it into motion and we're just down here living and he doesn't have to get involved that often. In fact, it affected the church so much that the church began to see the world as what we call an open system versus a closed system. The closed system was like Jefferson. He believed that God had set the world in order, he made it but he's leaving it alone and he does not get involved. Closed system. Closed from his hand. The Christians of the 17-18th century in arguing against that would say, "No, it's an open system. God set it in motion and he gets involved whenever he wants to and he does miracles." The biblical picture is neither a closed system nor an open system. The biblical picture, truly understanding the Scriptures is God controls every part of the system at every single moment of all eternity; that the only reason the system operates in order is because God is making it and willing it to do so at every moment. The law of gravity is not really a law that if I drop this book, it falls, that just happens. God is willing that to happen for it to continue. In fact, the beauty of it is that science is coming along to understand this. They still suppress the truth in unrighteousness and don't bow the knee to

the God of the Bible because God has always told us in his word, in fact, that he upholds all things by the word of his power, Hebrews 1:3. Why are the planets in the orbit? Because Jesus is upholding them by the word of his power, actively exerting his will at every moment.

Some of the findings in the last 150 years. Max Planck, quantum theory. Einstein, theory of relativity and some other things. Chaos theory. String theory. These various things in physics that basically the question, physicists now understand that though there is order, the order is of as you get smaller and smaller into matter, the building blocks of matter, atoms and subatomic particles, the question is why do things hold together? There is chaos and disarray that is made into order. This is what they find out as they keep studying and the question is how do things hold together? Why are things holding in their orbits? They shouldn't be when we look at the chaos that we see in the building blocks of matter. But Colossians, the Apostle Paul writing around 60 AD gave us the answer when he said that Jesus Christ is the firstborn of all creation, for through him all things were created that have been created, things in heaven and things on earth, visible and invisible. All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. He's holding everything together so the real picture is, the reason the molecules in my body and your body hold together is because God wills them to hold together. Every breath you take. The God of the Bible is a God that's much bigger than the god of an open system that can come in and do miracles. The God of the Bible, and this is the God that, I mean, when you read the Bible, it's clear, he is holding all things together at every moment, as Paul says in Acts 17:25, "In Him we live and move and have our being." He reigns and he rules.

Now, our shortsightedness is we look around us and we see this apparent order and we kind of think we're doing our own thing and God is distant, but that's not right. So you see and understand our proneness and a child growing up without spiritual eyes looking at the world around them, they start concluding, "I'm in control." I mean, it's amazing how foolish this is, how built into the wiring.

Did any of you have, I'm going to confess something that I did when I was young and I know a number of you did, probably most all of you did but maybe not everyone is going to admit it or remember it. I would watch a ballgame, I'm a big Georgia fan, I would watch a Georgia game and there were times where I realized that we were doing well when my tennis shoes were at a certain position on the floor and then I moved them and things went bad, and I determined that if I would put them back, and not just my tennis shoes there were other things too, but I was going to make a difference in the game. Now I would not have articulated that to that level but something in me believed it. That is scary. That is scary about this wicked heart. I mean, think about that. Here I am in my home in Lawrenceville, Georgia, Georgia is playing in Athens or some other town and I think that by me doing something here, that I'm affecting the universe in such a way that it controls the outcome of a football game. What is it in the human heart that aspires to that kind of power? That's what God's saying is a problem. That's sin and it seems to make sense. That's the problem because our deception, the deceitfulness of sin, it really does in ways seem to make sense.

So we need to understand how prone we are to forget God. Secondly, our second main point this morning, the prescription is not just understanding how prone you are to forget God, how great your need is, secondly, actively remember who God is. Actively intentionally make an effort to continue to remember who God is as you go about your life and particularly as you plan your future. Remember we said that planning is not bad. The Scripture makes clear planning is important but it's a humble planning, it's a tentative planning. It's not a presumptuous planning.

Actively remember who God is. In a word, God is sovereign. He's sovereign. He will determine what happens. He alone. This is why we should pray because he's going to determine what happens. We should always pray and ask him because he has the power. James makes this clear in verse 15, "Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'" This isn't just a magic term we're supposed to start using and now as part of our superstition, things will go better with me if I say this magic term. You see, this is how crazy we think. We'll take the word of God and then turn it into some kind of formula to control things. That's not it. The answer is you and I are not in control, cannot be in control, and if we think we are, we're just deluding ourselves. The answer is to surrender to his control. It's just the way to live. It's the only logical way to live. Remember who he is, he is sovereign.

"If the Lord wills." This word "wills" means "to resolve; to determine; to purpose." If the Lord resolves and determines and purposes, we will live. In fact, it's interesting James in this passage verses 11 to 17, there are 20 some odd verbs and most of them are in the present tense, and the second large number is the future tense because we're talking about the future. So some of these verbs are "we will live," for instance, is in the future. "We will do this or that," is in the future. Most of the verbs, though, are in the present. "You who say and our boasting is evil," and all these things, it's the present tense and he's been talking in present tense verbs all the way through chapter 4 and, remember, I mentioned present tense in Greek is not so much about the time of the action. In English it's more about time, present tense, present time, right? In Greek, it's that but it's more about the kind of action. Present tense Greek verbs refer to continuous action, ongoing action. So when he says, "Come, you who say, you who are saying," in verse 13, ongoing way, this is the way in your life you just go, you talk like this all the time, "We're gonna go here. We're gonna do that." Well, I say that because there is only one aorist verb in the entire passage and the aorist tense is the past tense, but again not the time of action but the kind of action. The aorist tense is not continuous, ongoing, that's present, it's punctiliar. It's like a period. It's a point in time.

So when he uses that tense in verse 15, "If the Lord wills," "wills" is not present, it's aorist and the idea is it even highlights and emphasizes that if you and I are going to live, God has to make a moment by moment determination, "Yes, you live. Yes, you live. Yes, you live." Point by point by point throughout your life. Now, for us that's overwhelming. I can't imagine having a to-do list, that required me to do something every half millisecond. No, I can't do that. God is not like me. If he stops for a moment, forgets, I will cease to exist. He must make a determination, thoughtful determination, "You live."

This is what the Bible says. I mean, it's interesting, Paul even uses this kind of teaching in his evangelistic sermon in Acts 17. He preaches to the Greeks at the Areopagus in Athens. He reminds us to remember who God is and essentially says, "Your life is in his hands. If you want to remember who God is, understand your life is completely in his hands." Now that doesn't mean that you don't eat right, take care of yourself. Yes, you should. Human responsibility and you're going to suffer if you don't. Yes. Yes. Yes. The Bible teaches that, human responsibility, but as you exercise your responsibility, don't think you're making it happen. Even as you have the energy to exercise, thank him for the energy to exercise. Thank him for the determination to exercise, especially if you're like me, "Man, this must be a miracle. You have me exercising. Thank you, Lord."

In Acts 17:24 he says, "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things." So every single person on the face of the earth that is alive is being given each breath by God. That is a big God. That is the true and living God. He is sovereign and so he's giving you breath and when he stops giving you breath, you will die. I will die. Our life is in his hands.

Remember who God is, your life is in his hands. Remember who God is, the details of your life are in his hands. Every detail. I mean, the number of your days, we could add that to the first subpoint, actually. Write a few verses down. Psalm 139:16, "And in your book were all written all the days that were ordained for me before there was yet one of them." David after he says, "I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. You knit me together in my mother's womb." You see, God is that involved in the creation of each child. He's creating the child in the womb. He's holding the molecules together. He's forming that. Do you see that? That's what's really happening. It's not an independent process that a man and a woman, yes, they have to obviously be engaged in the physical relationship for a child to be born. Yes, only one time in history that didn't happen, the virgin birth, but when it happens, God is enabling it at every point. He's upholding at every point. He enables the conception. He enables the cell to reproduce, the child to grow to maturity in the womb and then to be born and then to give that first breath. God is giving it. Job 14:5 says the same thing. A man's days are numbered, "The number of his months is with You."

Back to the passage in Acts we were just looking at, if you read on down to the next verse, the details of your life are in God's hands. Look what he says in verse 26. He just told them he holds your life and breath, verse 26, Acts 17, "and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation." Why were you born where you were born? Did you have anything to do with that? It's like a lottery in heaven? Maybe some kind of weird Mormon theology and the preexistence of the soul or whatever? The Bible doesn't teach that. Mormons do. No, you were born in the place that God determined for you to be born. You were born at the time God determined for you to be born, in the family that God chose. Now some of us were born in families that were godly

families and some of us were born in families that were not. Some of us have suffered in ways that others have not. Some of us will suffer in ways that others will not. Ultimately all of that is in the hand of God. It doesn't mean we shouldn't be compassionate. Of course we should. It doesn't mean that sin's not involved. Yes, sin is involved, evil is happening and God will punish that. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. But he will take what Satan means for evil and he will use it for good. That's what happened with Joseph, wasn't it? We read that in Acts 7 about his brothers hating him, being jealous of him, and he told his brothers at the end of their dad's life when Jacob died, "You meant it for evil, God meant it for good." Yes, you did evil but God was superintending that to bring about this great salvation. Isn't God amazing?

So remember who God is. If you remember who God is, then you will be strengthened against this temptation. You'll know that he holds you in his hands. Psalm 115:3, Psalm 135:6 basically say this, "The Lord is in the heavens. He does as he pleases." We read last week, remember from Daniel 4 about Nebuchadnezzar, the amazing chapter in the Bible written by a pagan king who was apparently converted through that amazing circumstance and remember what he said in Daniel 4:35? He said, "The Lord does as he wills in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can resist his will." That's what Nebuchadnezzar says about the Most High God, the God of the lowly Jews that he had conquered. He now says, "I now know and understand that it's not Baal, the god I worshiped, or Marduk, the god that I worshiped, or any of the other Babylonian gods. It is Yahweh, the Most High God who rules and reigns over the affairs of mankind and gives the kingdoms to whomever he wishes and he is able to humble those who walk in pride."

So that's who God is and we remember that, then we propose. Yes, we should still try to plan but we understand as we plan that we can only propose, we cannot dispose. God must dispose and this sets us up for when our plans don't work. I mean, isn't that part of life? Our plans just do not work. All the time, isn't it that way for you? You're getting frustrated. You know, for me some project I'm working on and I can't figure out how to fix something. I've got a plan, I've got so much time and then the thing comes apart. I'm always surprised when things do work actually. "That worked. I was able to fix that." Things don't work because life is hard in a fallen world and it reminds us that God is the only one who can make it happen.

So remember who God is. We can only propose, he disposes. A man plans his way, the Lord directs his steps, Proverbs 16:9. The third point, not only understand how prone you are to forget God and not only actively remember who God is, third point, actively remember who you are. That's what James is basically saying real emphatically in this passage. Back to James 4:15 and the surrounding passage when he says in verse 14, "You don't know about tomorrow. What is your life? It's just a vapor. Remember who you are. Look at who you are. You're a vapor that is here for a moment and gone. You don't know anything that's going to happen. Really you don't know what's going to happen one second from now."

So remember who you are. To put this in a word, I think it's helpful to step back and remember something that James alludes to in the very first verse of his letter. Remember who you are. Remember who God is. He's sovereign. Remember who you are and who I am, a slave. I'm a slave of Jesus Christ. Interesting, James the half-brother of Jesus, remember he's the half-brother of Jesus. Joseph and Mary, his mom and dad. James doesn't introduce himself as James, the half-brother of Jesus, he says, "James, the bond-servant of Jesus Christ." That's just a pretty way of saying what the text really says in Greek, "James, a slave of Jesus Christ." The word "doulos" means "slave." Interestingly, Jesus had another half-brother who wrote a book in the Bible, Jude. Jude says this, "Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and the brother of James." He's willing to say, "I'm the brother of James. I'm not willing to call myself the brother of Jesus in any way that puts me above anybody else. I'm just the slave of Jesus Christ. That's my relationship to him."

That's the word, that's really the whole argument of the New Testament. In fact, the way that we're saved is redemption. Redemption is a redemption price was paid and you and I were bought off of the slave market. We were slaves of sin and Jesus paid the price and redeemed us but now we are exchanged and set free from the slavery of sin into the slavery of Christ which is freedom indeed. You can't be freer than being the slave of Jesus Christ. It is true freedom, freedom indeed. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed but you're still the slave of Christ.

Now, John MacArthur has written a book, "Slave," in which he talks about this. This is really the cost of salvation. If you want to be a believer, what do you have to do? You have to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Christ. You follow him. You don't determine where you go. That's not what we do. You follow him where he leads. In that book, MacArthur points out that a slave has no will of his own; he does not assert his rights; he doesn't assert his plans for the future. What is a slave's responsibility? To discern the will of his master and to do it.

So now how does that affect that way you plan if you realize you're a slave of Christ? Even as you think about what you're supposed to do, if you're a businessman and you need to plan and you need to decide if you're going to go to such-and-such a place and how long are you going to stay there, just like these guys did, you say, "Lord, what would you have me do? It seems good to me that I should do this. Confirm, Lord, your will. Show me in my heart and as I plan, if you want to change anything, it's completely up to you." So then when your plans don't work out, you take it as from the hand of God. It's not that you're fighting against this, "It never works!" No, the Lord has acted. He stopped this. I can praise him in the moment. "Now what do I do, Lord?"

So remember who you are. Your life does not belong to you. You can't make your life longer. Jesus said in Matthew 6:27, "Who of you by worrying can add a single," listen to this, "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?" That is something to think about. Those of us who want to fret and worry over our health or whatever, it cannot add a single hour to your life according to Jesus Christ. That verse I mentioned from Job 14 where Job says the same thing, his days are determined, the number of his months is with you. Job says, "and his limits you have set that he may not pass." The

limits to his life are set that he cannot go beyond it. You may want to live longer but you can't because God has determined. He will determine the end.

So your life does not belong to you, it belongs to him. The details of your life, the second subpoint under 3, remember who you are. Actively remember who you are. Your life does not belong to you. The details of your life do not belong to you. Where I am, what I'm going to do, it does not belong to me. Now I have a responsibility to be engaged in it, yes. I have a responsibility to plan, think about the future, what kind of career are you going to have, young person. Yes, you should be thinking about that. You should be actively seeking that. You should be exploring options but always with dependence upon God and submission to him and gratitude to him for everything that he gives you along the way. In fact I said, he calls us to follow him.

Our problem is I want to set out my course and live today the way I want to live it. I want everything to go my way today. That's really my plan every day. I can just write that down. This is my plan for today: everything go my way. Summed up right there. I want all the traffic lights to be favorable. I want the meals to taste exactly like I want them to. I want people to be civil and nice to me. I want people to basically show appropriate level of appreciation for whatever I do. You know, let somebody in front of you or whatever, on the road, they give you the thank you. That's getting rarer and rarer around here in Georgia. It didn't used to be that way in Georgia, by the way. Everybody used to wave all the time but anyway, that's another point. It didn't mean that the kingdom of God was here, it just meant it was a nicer place to live. But I want all these things to happen and I plan my way and I want it to happen and when it doesn't, I get angry and frustrated. What's happening? I'm trying to be my own god and I am being confronted with the fact that I am not. Praise his name, he's letting me know I'm not god. How kind of him to remind me that I cannot propose and dispose.

So I need to remember who I am. I am a slave. And fourthly, I need to understand how wise God is in helping me remember. How wise God is in helping me remember. I'm going to encourage you just to read a passage this week, Deuteronomy 8, and I'm going to try to summarize it real quickly for you in summing up this fourth point. Deuteronomy 8, the Lord through Moses is telling the people as they get ready to enter the Promised Land how God has dealt with them in the past and how they need to, and his point is don't forget God. Like three times in that passage it says, "lest you forget the Lord your God." Twice it says, "remember the Lord your God." So he says, God is determined, the good news is the Lord is more concerned that you and I not forget him than we are and he knows exactly how to help us not forget him and he's going to do it. Now you need to pray and keep seeking him and don't take it for granted, of course, but you can rejoice that our God is perfectly wise and essentially what he does is he says this, "The Lord was teaching you about how dependent you are upon him." Because remember, the people of Israel were leaving Egypt, they had been delivered out of bondage in slavery there, now they're the people of God, they're going into Canaan. They're going to possess fields of barley and wheat that they did not plant. They're going to possess vineyards that they did not plant or cultivate. They're going to be blessed with olive trees that they had nothing to do with. They're going to receive all of these blessings that they did nothing to produce

and he says, "When you get in the land, you're liable to start eating of that wheat and that barley, eating of those grapes, eating of those vines, and you're going to forget that God gave them to you and you're going to think, 'I did this.'" It's a lot like Nebuchadnezzar. Actually verse 17, I think it is, where they said, "I did this by the strength of," not the strength of my might but something like that. "I made this happen, and you will forget the Lord your God."

He said, "The Lord was giving you a learning opportunity in the wilderness. This is what he was doing. He led you in the wilderness." It's really interesting. He says, "He led you in the wilderness to humble you and to test you." The word "humble you" means he wanted to bow you down, to weigh you down, to discourage and dishearten you. This is the opposite of Joel Osteen theology. God's way is not to give you your best life now. God's way is to bring you low and humble you. Now not all the time. He's gracious. He doesn't do it all the time but he's going to do it sometimes. He's going to make you low and feel the weight of the burdens so that you, then, will come to know that the Lord God is who you need.

So he took them out and he says, "I took you out in the wilderness." Now think about the trip planning. You know, you plan a trip, you're going on vacation, if you're going to be intelligent about it, you have a place that you're already going and you have a reservation and now you don't even have to have a map, you just have a smartphone, right? So you drive but you know where you're going. You plan it out and then you plan everything enough so that you can have a good vacation. Well, the Lord's travel planning was, if you just look at it from human standards, for them to get from Egypt to Canaan was really terrible from a human standpoint. It was really wonderful. It was the most glorious if we saw spiritual realities.

But he says in this, he says, "I took you into the desert, the great and terrible wilderness." That's what the Scripture says in Deuteronomy 8. "The great and terrible wilderness with fiery serpents and scorpions. Ground that was parched and dry. No food. No water. Terrible circumstances so that I could bring water out of the rock and I could feed you with manna from heaven so that you might come to understand that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. I took you into this misery area so that you would know how much you need me every moment. Now the reality is even when those vines where you're going to enjoy the wheat and the barley and the vines and the olives, in those moments you are just as dependent upon me as you were in the wilderness. For the olive tree to keep bearing, I must will it to. For the barley harvest to come, I must will it to. For everything that you think you're doing, I must will it to and if I stop willing it to, it won't."

And the Lord takes us in seasons. He knows. He knows how hard-headed we are. He knows how hard-hearted we are. He takes us into seasons where we know we don't have what we need. He humbles us. He tests us. He purifies us through the affliction so that we know that it's the Lord God that we need. "I am nothing apart from you, Lord, and now I see it and I cry out to you and I pray. I pray because I know I have to pray and I look to Jesus because I know I have to look to Jesus and I understand that he's redeemed me, he's

made me his own through his blood, the sacrifice on the cross. His righteousness is now what gives me standing before you. Even though my life may be seeming to come apart around me, you hold my life in your hand. You have my life breath in your hand. You have my circumstances in your hand. It's all going according to your plan. Not my plan, your plan and your plan is better. I don't see it now. I wanted this. I really want that still but I know that your plan is better and really I'm learning to surrender that. Even though I think it's better, it's not. Your way is right. I want your way." And when that begins to happen, that is growing godliness. That's learning now to be content in all circumstances and that's what God wants for you and me and that is the best. That is, actually, your best life now. Surrender to Jesus Christ, walking with him, trusting him no matter what he brings because this life is a vapor. Eternity is coming.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we marvel at your amazing perfect wisdom, your unimaginable infinite lovingkindness that you would look on us who act like we ought to be God in so many ways. We want to set our will, our determination, and make it happen and that is just so wrong. Forgive us, Lord. Have mercy on us. Change us. Bend our wills. Break our wills. Break our hearts that we might in our brokenness run to Jesus Christ. We thank you that we have in him a Savior who not only upholds all things by the word of his power and who not only holds all things together, but who became like us in every way, was tempted in every way as we are yet without sin. Because we share in flesh and blood, he also partook of the same that he might be a merciful compassionate high priest. We marvel that you, the great God of glory, have entered into our wretched existence so that you could save us and then that you could be our friend. Lord, help us run to you. Help us delight only in you, to know only you, to say with Paul, "For me to live is Christ." To forget everything else in our lives that matter relative to knowing more of Jesus Christ. Grant us grace to be humble, dependent, and to walk in a way that is pleasing to you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.