



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
SERIES: THE BIG FINISH
TITLE: HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW
SCRIPTURE: JAMES 4:13-17
DATE: SEPT 21, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever thought about how *long* you might live?

Surprisingly, that question can carry undertones of arrogance—it assumes life is long. In truth, life is short; eternity is long. Perhaps a better question is, *“Have you ever thought about how short your life might be?”*

It’s easy to believe we are in control of our lives. Because of this, we often assume we can manage our own schedules and choose what to do and when to do it. If we don’t want to do something today, we assume tomorrow will come and give us another chance. But James challenges this mindset.

Three main thoughts will be discussed today:

1. Life is short. Much shorter than we often think.
2. Do today what you can do—do not procrastinate until tomorrow.

3. Do not boast about what you can do—recognize that we can only do what the Lord wills.

Text

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.*

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

Explanation

Life is Short

James emphasizes life’s brevity: *“What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.”*

Picture the brief puff of smoke after a match goes out, or the steam from boiling water that vanishes as it rises. That’s how short our life is on earth. Physically, we are here only briefly before we vanish.

So, if we truly understood how short life is, how would that affect how we live? Would we live with more urgency? Would our priorities change?

Discussion Questions:

- We don’t know how long we have. Any day could be our last. Would you rather know the date of your last day—or not?
- If you realized that life is short, what would change more for you: Your priorities? Or your sense of urgency?

Explanation:

How Should We Think about Planning?

As mentioned earlier, we often make plans with subtle arrogance, assuming they will come to pass just because we've made them. It's not wrong to plan—but it's foolish to believe our plans are guaranteed.

Have you ever made plans only for them to fall apart? Maybe the weather didn't cooperate. Maybe someone didn't act the way you expected. The truth is, you and I are not God. Only God has sovereign control. God can make plans concerning weather. He providentially arranges for people to align with His plan. His divine plan will not falter.

We must humbly make plans, understanding that God's will determines what happens. Otherwise, we'll find ourselves in despair, frustration, worry, and even anger—toward others or even toward God.

But knowing that God's plans overrule our own should give us peace, not frustration. For those who love God, we can trust that His plans are always higher and better than ours (Romans 8:28; Isaiah 55:8-9). Even when our pure and righteous plans change, we can trust that He is working for our good. He has had a plan from the beginning—and that plan includes you.

James says it well: *"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town...' Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast in your arrogance."*

Discussion Questions:

- Do you consider yourself more of a planner or someone who goes with the flow?
- What are the benefits and dangers of: Being a planner? Or Going with the flow?
- Do you regularly reflect on your day? When you do, do you feel more frustrated or content?
- When you reflect on your day, do you focus more on: Your own activities? Or God's activity in your life?

Explanation:

Focus on Doing the Right Thing

It is worth emphasizing our last verse. It reads, “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” Two points can be drawn.

First, the proper response to whether or not our personal plans are successful is to do the right thing in the moment we find ourselves. Beyond focusing on whether plans succeed, focus on doing the right thing.

The second point is that we should not procrastinate. When we know the right thing to do, we should do it. Now, certainly there are times when finding the proper time to do something has wisdom to it. For example, if you realize you need to apologize to someone, doing so in a crowded car may not be wise. At the same time, one is wise to know that perfect opportunity doesn’t always come on its own.

It is easy for us to assume that procrastination is not a sin. Likewise, we can easily think that even if it is a sin, it is not a serious sin. We can just as easily laugh at ourselves for struggling with procrastination. But it is a sin to fail to do the right thing when we know what to do. Procrastination is serious because it boasts of ourselves and are so called “ability” to predict the future and do something whenever we want. Such predicting the future is not our ability and is only the ability of the Lord. But only God knows and determines the future

Discussion Questions:

- Do you more often find yourself in situations where: You know what to do? Or where you don’t know what to do?
- When does procrastination officially become procrastination?

Conclusions/ Applications

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| BALANCE BETWEEN OVERPLANNING AND PROCRASTINATION |
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This lesson helps us guard against two extremes:

- Overplanning every detail a year in advance.
- Not planning at all and procrastinating.

The right balance is to humbly plan, acknowledging that only God's plans are certain. While we wait for our plans to unfold—or change—we must be faithful to do today what we can for God's kingdom, even if it wasn't in our original plan.