

## 1 **MADE ANY PLANS LATELY?**

JAMES 4:13-17

## 2 **Conflict starts with pride**

So James tells us:

- Turn hatred into humility
  - Do not pursue self-gratification and selfish desires
  - Quit making “highways” of bad behavior
- Turn judgment into justice
  - Remember that God is the Judge
  - He judges both others and you
- Now he tells us to turn boasting into belief

## 3 **James 4:13-17**

*Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there, and carry on business and make a profit,” you who do not know what will happen tomorrow, what your life will be like. For you are a smoky vapor that appears for a short time and then disappears. Instead you should say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to the one who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. (James 4:13–17, LEB)*

## 4 **The importance of Jewish merchants**

- The Jews were the great traders of the ancient world, and in many ways that world gave them every opportunity to practice their commercial abilities.
- This was an age of the founding of cities
  - Often, when cities were founded and their founders were looking for citizens to occupy them.
  - Citizenship was offered freely to the Jews, for where the Jews came, money and trade followed.

## 5 **Bragging contributes to conflict**

- James 4:13 – “Come now you who say” or “Go to now, ye who say” literally means, “NOW LISTEN!”
- James cites an example of an offender who causes problems.
  - Typical businessman who makes plans apart from God.
  - Self-assertive in both business and travel plans

## 6 **James paints a picture of a man with a problem**

- So the picture is of a man looking at a map.
- He points at a certain spot on it and says: ‘Here is a new city where there are great trade chances. I’ll go there; I’ll start at the bottom; I’ll trade for a year or so; I’ll make my fortune and come back rich.’

## 7 **The plans of the hustling business man**

1. *We will go to this particular city* – self-assertive in his travel plans
2. *We will stay there for a year* – self-confident in his time schedule
3. *We will carry on business*
  1. *emporeusometha* – word from which we get “emporium” – to buy, sell, trade
  2. Self-directing in his career
4. *We will make money* – self-centered in his trade relationships

8  **Abraham Lincoln on our self-centered natures**

- “The Bible says somewhere that we are desperately selfish. I think we would have discovered that fact without the Bible.”
  - Debate at Alton, Illinois, on October 15, 1858 (CWAL III:310)

9  **We are not qualified to make our own plans**

- James’ answer is that no one has a right to make confident plans for the future, for we do not know what even a day may bring.
- As Thomas à Kempis said in his book *The Imitation of Christ*: ‘Man proposes, but God disposes.’

10  **The uncertainty of tomorrow**

- *‘Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring’* (Proverbs 27:1).
  - The rabbis often quoted this verse and then added, “Perhaps you may not find tomorrow.”
- Jesus told his story of the rich but foolish man who made his fortune and built up his plans for the future but forgot that his soul might be required of him that very night (Luke 12:16–21).
- The Roman philosopher and statesman, Seneca, said:
  - ‘How foolish it is for a man to make plans for his life, when not even tomorrow is in his control!’
  - And again: ‘No man has such rich friends that he can promise himself tomorrow.’

11  **If life is uncertain, what does that mean for me?**

- God does not intend that the uncertain of our future cause us to:
  - Live in fear
  - Be paralyzed into inaction
- Rather, the uncertainty of life should make us realize our complete dependence upon God.
  - We are to make our plans with DEPENDENCE on God as a basis for those plans
  - Seek to know His will; seek to follow His principles
  - Trust God for the results

12  **1 Corinthians 4:19**

*But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.* (1 Corinthians 4:19, KJV)

13  **The development of proper spiritual instinct**

- Plato relates a conversation between Socrates and Alcibiades. Alcibiades says: ‘I will do so if you wish, Socrates.’ Socrates answers: ‘Alcibiades, that is not the way to talk. And how ought you to speak? You ought to say: “If God so wishes.”’
- The second-century Christian author Minucius Felix writes: *‘God grant it—it comes instinctively to the ordinary man to speak like that.*

14  **Commit our future and direction to God**

- The true Christian way is not to be terrorized into fear and paralyzed into inaction by the uncertainty of the future
- Instead, we are to:
  - Commit the future and all our plans into the hands of God
  - Always remember that these plans may not be within God’s purpose.
  - Be willing to change course should God dictate
- “Life is lived, but only if God wills, just as assuredly as deeds are done only if God wills.” -- Kurt

Richardson

15  **ABRAHAM LINCOLN**

A MAN WHO SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND THE WILL OF GOD WHEN MAKING PLANS

16  **Abraham Lincoln on God's will**

- "The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be wrong. God can not be for and against the same thing at the same time." --- *Meditation on the Divine Will* ca. September 2, 1862

17  **Lincoln's second inaugural address**

- He was commenting on the reasons for the Civil War and the views of both sides:
- "Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged."

18  **Lincoln's 2<sup>nd</sup> inaugural address (2)**

- "The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh."

19  **Lincoln's 2<sup>nd</sup> inaugural address (3)**

- "If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him?"

20  **Lincoln's 2<sup>nd</sup> inaugural address (4)**

- "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away.
- Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

21  **Lincoln's reply to Eliza Gurney (1)**

- "I am glad of this interview, and glad to know that I have your sympathy and prayers. We are indeed going through a great trial -- a fiery trial.
- In the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am, and as we all are, to work out his great purposes, I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to his will, and that it might be so, I have sought his aid..."

22  **Lincoln's reply to Eliza Gurney (2)**

- "...but if after endeavoring to do my best in the light which he affords me, I find my efforts fail, I must believe that for some purpose unknown to me, He wills it otherwise.
- If I had had my way, this war would never have been commenced;
- If I had been allowed my way this war would have been ended before this, but we find it still continues; and we must believe that He permits it for some wise purpose of his own, mysterious and unknown to us; and though with our limited understandings we may not be able to

comprehend it, yet we cannot but believe, that He who made the world still governs it.”

- Reply to Eliza Gurney on October 26, 1862

### 23 **The sin of arrogant boasting**

- Anyone who does not remember that is guilty of arrogant boasting.
- The word is *alazoneia* was originally the characteristic of the wandering quack who offered cures which were no cures and boasted of things that he was not able to do.
- The future is not within our hands, and no one can arrogantly claim to have the power to decide it.

### 24 **The irony of it all**

- It is ironic that we should boast at all or make plans without God.
- We know nothing about our future experience.
- The ignorance of James’ readers was based in:
  - Their spiritual immaturity
  - Their nature as human creatures bound by time
- We should remember that only God knows the future!

### 25 **Right and wrong boasting**

- *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:* (James 1:9, KJV)
  - It is OK to boast of the work of God.
- But James’ readers were taking credit for their accomplishments and making plans without God.
  - James tells them, *But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.* (James 4:16, KJV)
  - This attitude is closely tied to “friendship with the world.”
- What determines whether boasting is right or wrong is the focus of our boasting. Whom are you glorifying?

### 26 **Other passages on wrongful pride**

- *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.* (1 John 2:16, KJV) -- Those who boast tend toward bitterness.
- *Proud and haughty scorner is his name, Who dealeth in proud wrath.* (Proverbs 21:24, KJV) -- Pride and anger travel together
- *Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,* (Romans 1:30, KJV) -- Pride corrupts all of a person’s morals.
- *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,* (2 Timothy 3:2, KJV) -- This boastful pride is growing more prevalent.

### 27 **Life is uncertain and short – don’t plan without God (4:14)**

- *Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow!*
  - Man’s plans are always tentative.
  - His plans are not his own. Time is not his own. In fact, life is not his own.
- James then fired another of his famous questions: *What is your life? The answer is a mist* (“vapor, a puff of steam”).
  - Believers need this godly perspective on their earthly sojourn.
  - Among other things, it blasts boasting right out of the selfish, proud quagmire from which it emerged.

### 28 **R.G. Letourneau**

### 29 **Maintain a proper perspective**

- Put God in the picture before you make plans.
- In place of vain boasting one should say, *If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.*
  - Emphasis here is not on the words, but the attitude that includes God in all our planning.
  - A God-consciousness should pervade our thinking and behavior.
- All planning without God is EVIL (4:16) -- anything that leaves God out is EVIL

### 30 **James – master of the summary**

- *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins*
  - This statement applies to everything in this epistle
  - James has not told these Christians that they should not already know. He is putting them in remembrance of truths they have already been taught.
  - "Then" (lit., "therefore,") supports this contention. James' readers could not plead ignorance. (And neither can we.)
    - The letter abounds with exhortations to do good.
    - To fail to comply is clearly sin.

### 31 **The imperatives of the Christian life**

- To attain spiritual maturity a believer must do the good he now knows.
- He must stand confidently on God's Word even in trials and temptations.
- He must compassionately serve his brethren without prejudicial favoritism but with practical faith.
- He must speak carefully with a controlled tongue and wise, cultivated thought.
- He must submit in contrition to his all-powerful Father, Law-giver, and Judge with a humble spirit, just action, and a trusting heart.
- He must be what God wants him to be, do what God wants him to do, speak as God wants him to speak, and sense what God wants him to sense