

James 4:13–17

<sup>13</sup> 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”;

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”

<sup>16</sup> But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

## ***Proper Planning*** **James 4:13-17**

INTRO:

I have told you before about our experience when my kids were small and we would go to the Dairy Queen for a treat. Hannah was very young not yet very coordinated. Kathy told her she would help her get the soft serve out of the cup. But Hannah pulled away and said. “I do it myself.” This was one of those moments when God hit me between the eyes. This is particularly appropriate for this portion of James’s epistle.

***I. The Problem Illustrated (v. 1)***

***II. The Problem Expounded (v. 14-16)***

***III. The Overarching Truth (v. 17)***

***I. The Problem Illustrated (v. 1)***

**James 4:13** *“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.’”*

A. James now takes on the process we think about when we plan for the future. We first need to address what this doesn’t say.

1. The Bible does not say or even imply that profit making is wrong. There are many wealthy patriarchs in the Bible, think about Abraham, David, and Solomon. So riches and profit by itself is not evil.

2. The Bible never hints that planning is evil. Take for example our Lord’s teaching in **Luke 14:28** commends planning.

***“Which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it.”***

B. The problem here is not planning itself, it is the presumption that is the basis of the plan. These people did not plan recognizing God existed or that the Lord wanted a part in our plans.

## ***II. The Problem Expounded (v. 14-16)***

**James 4:14-16** ***“Yet, 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.’ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.”***

A. The first fault James find with these people is their lack of understanding what life is like. They did not know what they did not know.

***“Yet, 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.”***

1. There was a time in my theological training when I was taught that planning was the panacea. It was the solution to everything. While it is important to plan, we need to be aware of the nature of life.

2. The problem wasn't their planning, it was their self-sufficient attitude. They did not need God, they could do all this by themselves. The Bible speaks eloquently to this reality. It warns us in **Proverbs 27:1**,

***“Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.”***

In **Psalm 39:4** David asks God to

***“LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am.”***

Why is it so important we know how transitory we are? Moses in **Psalm 90** tells us. Moses' whole Psalm is a contrast between God's eternity and human transitoriness. Moses concluded, ***“So teach us to number our days, [in order] that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”*** Wisdom begins with an awareness of how much we depend upon God. These folks did not believe they needed God at all.

B. Their second problem was they did not recognize the sovereign providence of God in the fabric of our daily lives.

***“Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’”***

Instead of your thinking that God's desires do not matter, you need to say something else. This is the mouth speaking what the heart thinks. You need to admit that the

Lord runs the universe and He is in charge of all the details of our lives. These people were not convinced this was true. **Isaiah 14:27** says, *“For the LORD of hosts has purposed, And who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?”*

What Yahweh said about Babylonia and Assyria is true today. The Lord still is on the throne and He is still ruling. One day all will admit this truth. We must live it now.

C. Because of their words which reveal their hearts James wrote: *“But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.”* The problem is arrogance. It is practical atheism. These say with one breath, “The Lord lives.” With a second breath they deny He is living and the Lord of all things by their foolish self-reliance. The issue was not the words which they spoke, it was the meditation of their hearts which their words betrayed. Do we feel the horrible weight of James statement? *“All such boasting is evil.”*

### ***III. The Overarching Truth (v. 17)***

**James 4:17** *“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”*

A. James now sums up what he said in the verses above with a general principle. The principle applies to more than just the issue he discussed. Yet, the principle includes the issue of **verses 13-16**.

B. James identifies those who know to do good and those who do not practice it. The issues James talked about did not happen because of ignorance. They happened because although these people knew they could not determine what would happen in the days ahead, and that the Lord was the blessed controller of all things. They just refused to humble themselves before God and live according to what they knew to be true.

### ***What Do We Learn Here?***

1. We need to remind ourselves how much we rely on the Lord every moment of every day. We cannot plan not recognizing that our days and moments are in His hand.

2. Second, we have lost the realization that God is the blessed controller of all things. Do you remember the Children of Israel in the desert? They did not doubt that God could act toward them in doing evil, but they would not believe that He could and would do good things. In **Numbers 13-14** Moses sent the twelve spies into the land. 10 of the 12 and the rest of the people believed God was evil enough to bring them into the wilderness and kill them, even though Yahweh had fed them that very morning with manna, provided water for them, and tucked them in with their night light, the pillar of

fire. They could not trust God to give them the land. How about us? We couldn't do that could we?

3. Let us commit ourselves to recognizing Who our God is and what He does every day for us. He has the right to change our plans anytime He wants.

**Hymn *Anywhere With Jesus***