

James 4 13-17

9-12-21

- How many of you know where you are going for lunch today? If you are anything like our family you won't know until you have driven through town 4 times, everyone in the car is mad, and you end up eating somewhere no one wanted because it is almost 3. If we were better at planning maybe it would work out differently.
- What about other plans? Moving, buying a car, going on vac what about retiring? I figure I still have 25, 26 years to go but I have amazing plans. Both between now and then and after I retire.
- Today we are going to be looking at what James has to say to Christian's about planning for the future.
- If you look at any publicly traded company you will find 25-30 pages on risk the company faces, usually in there somewhere you will see "our stock price may fluctuate based on factors beyond our control". Making it clear that secular companies know how unpredictable things can be.
- So why is James having to tell us what normal ordinary businesses already know? Maybe it is that believers assume that because they follow Christ, they are immune to the unpredictability of life and work.
- Sometimes we think that God will just take care of us no matter what we get into, that He won't allow us to make poor choices or even that He will bless us in whatever we plan to do.
- This is a total mistake!
- Are any of you immune to life's unpredictability? I know I am not!

James is beginning a new section, but the connecting theme through chapters 4 and 5 is humility. True faith judges' pride by humbling oneself before God. In chapter 4 verses 1-12 the big push is using humility to resolve conflict. In our scripture today it's about humility regarding the future.

-This a warning much like the warnings we have today like.

- 1 Do not feed or molest the alligators
- 2 Caution contents are hot
- 3 Do not eat gum from the urinal

These all came about because someone tried it.

-James is confronting actions he observed in the church. Just like today they dealt with people professing to know Christ but living with a worldly attitude.

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit." 14 Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring- what your life will be! For you are like a vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes. 15 Instead, you should say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 So it is sin to know the good and yet not do it.

Pray

Boast, Believe, Behave

Boast

13. In those times it was customary for them to trade from city to city, carrying their goods and selling them to others in Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi and even Rome. As a merchant they would plan out their itinerary of where they would go and how long they would stay.

- James rebuked this kind of heart that lives and makes plans apart from the will of God.

- This attitude goes way beyond making wise plans for the future. Listen to what it says, "Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such city" Not "let us go" but "We will go" They are not looking for God's will or approval but instead looking for what they will be the most profitable to them.
- The second part says and spend a year there do business and make a profit. They were planning on doing what they needed to do to make some money. Did they say anything about doing this to glorify God? NO there was not a word about God in any of that.

14 We do not know what ten minutes from now holds let alone tomorrow or even next year. How many of you have had your plans changed due to unforeseen circumstances? That happens to me almost daily. We saw last year how our plans, things we whole heartily thought we would do got turned upside down and shook. We had to live more day by day then looking farther down the road. This has really shown us that we are not in control, but that God is.

- These guys are assuming that they will wake up tomorrow, that they would have safe travels to whatever city they chose, that their business would be successful in just a year and that no major setbacks would happen.
- All of this is to happen in an unknown future that they had absolutely no control over.
- Yesterday made the 20th anniversary of 9/11 and I am sure that everyone who was affected by that tragedy woke up that morning thinking it would be another normal Tuesday. But we do not get to decide that.
- I heard a story of young girl who complained to her mom about a headache, and her mom told her to go lie down. So, she did and died of a brain aneurysm. Another of a man in his early thirties out shoveling snow, his wife looked out the window and saw him lying on the ground dead from a heart attack.
 - Charles Spurgeon said "There are a thousand gates to death; and though some seem to be narrow wickets, many souls have passed through them. Men have been choked by a grape seed, killed by a tile falling from a roof, poisoned by a drop, carried off by a whiff of foul air. I know not what there is that is too little to slay the greatest king. It is a marvel that man lives at all."

- Life is short like a vapor, how quickly does the steam from your coffee disappear? Or like fog in the morning which is only there for a short time then dissipates.
- Moses compares it to grass that sprouts in the morning and by evening has faded under the hot sun. "As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone, and we fly away"
- When I was young it seemed like the days were so long. I had all the time in the world to do all 5 things that I was responsible for. Now I feel like I don't have time to think about the 50 things I have to do. Days and weeks fly by which turn into months and now here we are in September already.
- You know life is like a roll of toilet paper, the closer you get to the end the quicker it goes.

- According to Moses in November when I turn 42, I will have 28 years left, or 10,220 days, or 1456 weeks, or only 336 months. There are loans out there longer than that.
- Only God can give me the wisdom of how to spend those days to honor Him and His kingdom!

- To be clear James is not condemning them for making plans. If it is confirmed that God is sending you somewhere it is ok to plan for those travels. This is not the big problem, imagining that we are in control of what happens is the problem, then boasting about their plans to make money on their own. Not including God is like sky diving without a parachute. It's not going to turn out well in the long run.
- They were making plans without thinking about their mortality or God's sovereignty.

- If there are two things that are certain they are that God knows and the other, is we do not know.
- There was a study done and the statistics are quite impressive. 1 out of 1 people die. You'd think that with statistics like that and knowing that everyone will stand before God to be judged, that more people would be trying to figure out to get right with God.
- Strangely there are so many who see hundreds of lives lost weather from human causes like terrorist attacks or natural causes such as hurricanes and they go on with their lives as if thinking that this could not happen to them, instead of getting on their faces before God and repenting.

Boast, Believe

15. There is a saying we hear quite often, Lord willing. But I feel like we use it as a way of speaking and not as it should be used as a humble heart feeling. Do we actually allow God to lead our lives, do we put our agenda aside to let the will of God direct us?

- It is wise to plan for things but, are we looking at with the arrogant thought that we are going to do what we plan to do no matter what?
- Planning is not the problem, planning as if the future is in our hands, is a problem.
- We are responsible for using the resources, abilities, connections and time that God gives us wisely, but we are not in control of the outcome.
- I believe that having a life insurance policy to protect my family if I should die before them is a good idea, I do not think that it will sustain them long term. Also, what if we see a larger scale of 2020? Many people were drawing more on unemployment than they normally made going to work.
- Some people for once had a problem they have never had before... What do we do with this extra money? Save it, invest it, take care of some things that need to be taken care of, go on vacation, blow it on crap no one needs? We found out really quick that it didn't matter how much money you had, there were some things you just could not buy, you could not go into a restaurant and eat. We saw problems that I'm sure no one ever expected.
- It proved to us that there is no such thing as absolute security when we are doing it on our own. Trusting God is the only source of security for the future.
- Why is it this way? This can be answered by looking back at what we discussed back in verse 14. God is sovereign and we are not! These men talking about their future plans were supposed to be Christians, this shows us another great point.
- As a Christian we do not live separate lives, our church life and our business life. If you are a Christian and a business owner your business should be ran with God at the CEO position. If Jesus is not in control of all your life, then He is probably not in control of any of your life. Your business dealings must please and glorify Christ.
- James' words should make believers realize that we have to be able to adapt and change, our plans must be flexible as Gods changes the directions.

16. Back in verse 13 it was full of arrogance, a lot of what we will do, not so much of what God wants us to do. Here in 16 James is directly calling out the sinful attitude shown in 13.

- In those days arrogant was used to describe someone who was full of empty claims about products they had for sale or things they could do.
- It is often referring to the idiotic self sufficiency of the world apart from God. This makes me think of young people who have learned from the world around us that "You can be whatever you want to be, just pursue your dreams and you see them come true" What about the kid who wants to be a doctor and goes around telling everyone that is what they are going to be. That they are going to the best collage for medicine, that they are going to have their own practice, they are going all in to be a doctor. This is the same kid who is failing high school biology and passes out at the first sight off blood. Their plan to be a doctor is nothing but empty boasting.

- I'm not saying that we should not encourage our children to try their best to be what want to be, but I do not see setting our kids up for failure in the form of telling them they can be whatever THEY want as a good idea. The future within their reach depends on God's plan rather than their personal fantasy.

-Pride and lack of humility is what makes us think that we are more in control then we really are. As believer we have to resist the worldly temptation especially in today's time when we can pretty much go where we want, do what we want, order what we want, and set up whatever schedule we want.

Boast, Believe, Behave

17. Sin is not always something that you DO, it could be something that you DON'T do. We may think that we are doing pretty good because we are keeping filth from our mouths, or we are not committing adultery, and we haven't killed anyone yet. But are some of the things that we are not doing actually sinful.

- We kind of get the things that we should not do, not saying that we may not struggle with them from time to time. But I think those are on our mind more often.

- What about the commands from God to do something positive?

- Love our neighbor as ourselves, its easy for us to see when we hate our neighbor that we are sinning but what about when we simply ignore our neighbors, we are busy, we don't have time, we have things that we want to do in our time off instead of going out of our way to help someone else.

- In Matthew 25:45 Jesus says 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. He is saying that we have to not do what we are instructed is bad, but equally we must do what we are told is right.

- If you are a believer, it is not enough to just avoid sinning, God has supplied us all with spiritual gifts. With those gifts He calls you to use them. Knowing this and not acting on it is as sinful as doing something we are commanded not to do.

-Now understanding pride is a daily battle, life is but a vapor, God is sovereign and humble obedience to God is the only path of security. We should not **Boast** in plans that we do not control, we have to **Believe** that Christ knows the plans He has for us, and we need to **Behave** and assess our sinful nature for do's and don'ts.

As we look to the future and are making plans for what direction we what to go we need to keep these steps in mind.

1. Plan prayerfully
2. Plan without making boastful assumptions
3. Do not include anything ungodly or unethical
4. Plan with your eternity in view
5. Submit your plans to God

Pray