

James 4:13-17

- Intro:**
- How does the subject of these verses relate to the previous verses of James' epistle?
 - presumption of judging others connects with presumptions of profit-making?
 - "playing god" by judging others connects with "playing god" in economic ventures?
 - arrogance of judging others connects with arrogance of controlling one's own life?

- Vs. 13**
- Who are those "who say" that they are planning a foreign business venture?
 - Jewish merchants?
 - Christian merchants who were ostracized in Palestine?
 - Christians who were caught up in an opportunistic "get rich quick" scheme?
 - Christians who saw the opportunity for entrepreneurial activity?
 - Is James indicating that it is wrong to go to a distant city and conduct business for prolonged periods of time?
 - Is James indicating that it is wrong to organize a business venture and make a profit?
 - Doesn't the New Testament indicate that indolence should be avoided by Christians? (cf. II Thess. 3:6-15)
 - Doesn't Jesus explain that projects should be planned carefully? (cf. Luke 14:28-30)
 - What, then, is James' point about planning a business trip and making money?

- Vs. 14**
- What does James mean by "you do not know what your life will be tomorrow"?
 - no one knows the future?
 - life is uncertain and transitory?
 - man is not in control of tomorrow? (cf. Prov. 27:1)
 - you might be dead tomorrow (cf. Lk. 12:16-21)
 - What does James mean by the analogy of "a vapor that appears and then disappears"?
 - the brevity of life compared to eternity?
 - the transitory nature of life?
 - our lives are as insignificant as a "puff of smoke"?
 - What is James' point in explaining human uncertainty about the brevity and transitoriness of life?
 - don't plan for the future?
 - who needs money; you might die tomorrow?
 - passivity is to be preferred above productivity?
 - to promote a paranoid fear of the uncertainty of life?
 - to encourage dependency upon God?

- Vs. 15**
- How is the "Jacobean condition" of "if the Lord wills..." different from...
 - the Muslim phrase, "Inshallah," meaning "if Allah wills..."?
 - a prefatory cliché or slogan: "Lord willing, and the creek don't rise"?
 - a superstitious protective talisman that seeks God's blessing?
 - a repetitive verbal formula or fetish?
 - What does James mean by the encouragement to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall do this or that"?
 - take the Lord into consideration in the midst of all that you do?
 - seek the Lord's permission for everything you do?
 - don't act until you know God's specific will for everything you do?
 - God is sovereign, and the future is in His hands?
 - recognize your dependency and contingency upon God for all things?

- Vs. 16** • How does this verse relate to the previous theme in verses 13-15?
- Explain how James' readers were "boasting in their arrogance":
 - presuming that they were in control of their lives?
 - pretensions of self-sufficiency?
 - planning their own lives according to their own blueprints?
 - thinking they were independent and "gods unto themselves"
 - selfish pride that they were "masters of their own fortune and fate"?
 - Why is "all such boasting evil"?
 - such self-oriented independence is of the Evil One (cf. Isa. 14:14; Ezek. 28:2,6)
 - this is the temptation of the Evil One, to "do your own thing"?
 - the "pride of life" (cf. I Jn. 2:16) is not from God?
 - if you are going to boast, boast only in the Lord? (cf. I Cor. 1:31)

- Vs. 17** • Who is the "one knowing the right thing to do..."?
 - the one who has studied the deep things of God?
 - the one who has a correct belief-system?
 - the one who understands God's moral order?
 - the one who knows God's particular will for his life?
 - every Christian who has received the revelation of God in Christ?
 • What is the "good thing to do, that is not done"?
 - to stay aligned with the will of God? (cf. 4:15)
 - to submit to God? (cf. 4:7)
 - to plan for the future with proper reference to God? (cf. 4:15)
 - to act in humility, rather than in proud independence? (cf. 4:10,16)
 - to recognize that God's good can only be done by God's grace?
 • Why is the failure to do this good regarded as sin?
 - it is the sin of omission – failing to do what we should do?
 - like the first sin of Adam and Eve, we believe that "we, too, can be like God" (cf. Gen. 3:5)
 - the "love of money" is the root of all sin? (cf. I Tim. 6:10)
 - proud, independent self-sufficiency is the basis of all sin?
 - the failure to be receptive to the expression of God's character is sin? (cf. Rom. 14:23)

- Conc.** • If you had to put a heading on this paragraph, what would it be?
- Do you have any practical suggestions for applying these verses in one's everyday life?