

**JAMES SERIES #20:
Now You See It, Now You Don't
James 4:13-17
Grace Community Church
Kingston, Tennessee
Sunday, May 19, 2019**

1. INTRODUCTION:

a. **EX:** A magician, after a slight of hand will say, "Now you see it, now you don't"

b. James says that life is like that

2. **TEXT:** James 4:13-17, "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"; 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. 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. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."

I. PRESUMPTIVE ATTITUDE (v. 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. The merchants of James' day would forsake family and friends in order to take prolonged business trips to sell their wares

B. James rebukes this "put-off-until-tomorrow" mindset

II. PROCLAIMED ADMONITION

A. WARNING TO AWAKE FROM SLEEP (v. 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'")

1. James began his rebuke of these presumptive people by saying, **COME NOW:**

a) The Greek word translated as **COME** is an "interjection implying disapproval"¹

b) "The added adverb 'now' (Gk.: *nun*) increases the sense of urgency."²

c) James is telling those who are oblivious to imminence of tomorrow to **WAKE UP**

¹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistle of James*, p. 273.

² D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistle of James*, p. 273.

B. WHY THEIR ATTITUDE WAS SINFUL

1. TOMORROW'S EVENTS (v. 14, "... whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow.")

- a) Prov. 27:1, "Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth."
- b) Mt. 6:34, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

2. TRANSITORY EXISTENCE (James 4:14, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.")

- a) EX: Life is like an east Tennessee fog
- b) James is saying that the totality of the years we spend in this world is as tenuous and brief as a morning fog
- c) Job 7:6, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, And are spent without hope."
- d) But, the Bible uses the designation DAYS to refer to our time upon this earth

1) Psalms 39:4, "LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am."

2) In Gen. 47:

(a) V. 8, "Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How old are you?"

(b) V. 9, "And Jacob said to Pharaoh, 'The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.'"

C. WHAT THE ALMIGHTY SEES (v. 16, "But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.")

1. ARROGANT

- a) The word arrogance is plural (arrogances).
- b) The Greek term translated as ARROGANCE denotes pretentiousness that goes beyond what is justified

- c) James uses this word to refer to the arrogances of people who assumed that they could plan the future according to their own personal desires. They assumed the attributes of deity.

2. EVIL

- a) Greek: wicked
- b) It is EVIL because it stands in contradiction to the sovereignty of God

D. WHY THE ATTITUDE IS SINFUL

1. James does not tell us why presuming about the future is wrong, but Christ in a similar discussion lets us know why such an attitude is presumptive

- a) Luke 12:16-21, "Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
- b) What Christ by this parable rebuked was the main character's emphasis upon the PHYSICAL to the neglect of the SPIRITUAL

III. PROPER ATTITUDE

A. James and Christ were not condemning making plans for the future. They were condemning making plans for the future without a realization that God is the only person Who is sovereign over tomorrow.

B. It is not wrong to make plans for the future, if you have a spiritual awareness in the present

C. In fact, Scripture tells us that there are some things concerning the future for which we *should* plan in the present

1. YOU SHOULD PLAN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S FUTURE IN THE EVENT OF YOUR DEATH: Prov. 13:22, "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children"

2. YOU SHOULD LAY ASIDE MONEY IN THE PRESENT FOR FUTURE OFFERINGS TO THE CHURCH: 1 Cor. 16:2, "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come."

3. YOU SHOULD MAKE PLANS TO BE AT CHURCH, Heb. 10:25, “ ... not forsaking the assembling our ourselves together, as is the manner of some ”

D. There are other places in Scripture where God’s people made plans or were exhorted to make plans

1. 2 Cor. 1:15-17, (15) And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit—(16) to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea. (17) Therefore, when I was PLANNING this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I PLAN, do I PLAN according to the flesh”

2. Lk. 14:28, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it”

3. What James condemns in our text is a presumption of the certainty of having a tomorrow and not considering the importance of today

E. In James 4:15, James tells us in what our attitude should be concerning the future, “Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’”

F. OTHERS WHO USED THIS EXPRESSION:

1. The Apostle Paul

a) 1 Corinthians 4:19, “But I will come to you shortly, IF THE LORD WILLS, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power.”

b) 1 Corinthians 16:7, “For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, IF THE LORD PERMITS.”

2. In their writings, the old divines used a similar expression when referring to the future (D.V., Latin for *deo volente*, “Lord willing”)

G. James concludes his rebuke about presuming about the future with v. 17, “To him therefore who knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.”

CONCLUSION

- 1. We are prone to put off the important things of life until TOMORROW so that we can do the less important things TODAY**
- 2. Don’t presume on the future. It’s dangerous, sinful and evil.**
- 3. EX: Various stories of sudden deaths**
- 4. What would you be doing if you knew today was the last day of your life?**