



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

PRESUMPTION...LIVING INDEPENDENTLY OF GOD- PART 1- JAMES 4:13-14

COLORADO

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James zeros in at an individual level as he addresses the harsh, critical, malicious spirit of constantly finding fault with others. You who live side by side, you who are called to love one another, you who will live eternally together in heaven are involved in such sin. And James demands a response of humility and love towards our neighbor that God calls us to. Romans 12:3 reminds each one: “not to think more highly of himself than he ought.” This behavior must stop and requires a deep felt repentance from such sinful pride. James 4:6-10 reminds us how to deal with it. And our conduct must be replaced by the behavior described in James 3:13-18, “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

PRESUMPTION: LIVING INDEPENDENTLY OF GOD- JAMES 4:13-14

James 4:13-14: “(13) Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” (14) Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”

James proceeds to deal with a very practical issue in these next verses as he addresses the self-ambitious attitude of living and planning without regard to God and His Providence. He rebukes living independently of God with a self-sufficient mindset. This stands in direct contrast to living dependently upon the Lord in all of our life’s pursuits and living in light of God’s sovereignty and providence. It is making decisions with regard to His will and purpose for our life. You might think that as a believer this doesn’t apply to you. But you must remember that James was writing to believers here and he warns and rebukes those who would seek to walk independently of God.

I. WHAT IS PRESUMPTION?- JAMES 4:13

James 4:13: “Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.”

You see, we can go to church on Sunday and worship the Lord as though we are dependent on Him for our every life and breath. But then, Monday through Saturday, we can so easily live independently of Him. Our lives are so fast paced and we are consumed and completely absorbed with our plans and schedules. These plans of life can totally consume our days and in fact, we are living in total disregard of God. Here, James confronts and rebukes the self-sufficient attitude we can all have as we plan and live our life without regard to God and His will.

A. PRESUMPTION DEFINED

Psalm 19:12-13: “Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not rule over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression.”

In Psalm 19 David is extolling the virtues of God’s revelation through His Creation and His written Word. David emphasizes that Scripture reveals God’s glory and Scripture reveals God’s heart. In Psalm 19:10-11 David explains that God’s Word is our greatest possession, our source of greatest pleasure, our source of greatest protection and our source of greatest profit. And then in Psalm 19:12, David explains that Scripture is our greatest purification as His Word calls us to obedience from ignorant sins (19:12), presumptuous sins (19:13) and weak areas in our life where we fall prey to temptation and sin (19:13). What does David mean by presumptuous sin?

%presumptuous+Hebrew %zed,” an adjective meaning proud and arrogant. It refers to proud and arrogant living.

The Hebrew word for presumption refers to proud and arrogant living that’s deliberate. It is taking for granted, an overstepping of proper bounds. It refers to a way of living that presumes to know with some certainty but that position belongs to God alone. God alone is sovereign and God alone is in control of life and all things. Presumption is a sin because it is an arrogant attitude of self-sufficiency in planning daily life in total disregard to God.¹ Planning our life without regard to God is arrogant because it ignores His providence, His sovereignty.

Presumption comes from a wrong understanding of our lives/ambitions and God’s will. Presumption would say; you can do whatever you put your mind to, you can do it...as though we are in charge, we are in control and we live independently of God, as though life were our right, as if our choice were the only deciding factor, as if we had in ourselves all that was needed to make success of things—as though making money and doing well were life’s sole objective.²

Presumption is a sin that comes from a wrong understanding of Who governs our lives and pursuits. We can live as though God doesn’t exist believing that destiny is in our hands and totally rely on ourselves. That’s ignoring the truth of God’s providence and living independently of God. We can live life knowing that God exists but refuse to submit to Him or His will. This only demonstrates that our desires are valued greater than God’s purpose and will for our lives. We ignore His sovereignty. That’s living independently of God. And we can live as though we acknowledge God and His will are supreme yet still disregard it. Many Christians can so easily live in this mindset. They acknowledge by words and apparent understanding

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that they affirm God's will, yet by their life and planning, they disregard it. That's living independently of God. When we live and plan our lives without regard to God and His will, we sin. So James addresses this critical issue by taking a practical approach as he looks at a businessman's strategy which at first glance appears wise, but actually disregards God and His will in planning.

B. EXAMPLE OF PRESUMPTION- JAMES 4:13

James 4:13: "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."

James begins with "Come now"; an insistent, imperative call to listen up and give James all your attention. There is a disapproval implied with a sense of urgency. James tone is to admonish and it is clear that he regards the attitudes of these Christians as unworthy of who they really are.³

You will note that James doesn't use the word "brothers" here as he addresses this next issue. Rather, "you who say". James targets his rebuke to "you who say." James uses the present tense which indicates habitual living without regard to God's will. The phrase here is interesting in the Greek, "hoi legontes" and you will note a familiar word.

%say+Greek %lego means to say something based on reason or logic.

James refers to the ones who are planning with careful logic. At first glance you might think this is great, but James is rebuking those who consistently, carefully and logically think through their plans without regard to God. James is not condemning wise, strategic and careful planning. The problem lies in what they did not do. They did extensive planning, but in the course of their planning...they totally ignored God. God was not part of their agenda.⁴

James says "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow ...". Clearly, this one is not thinking about God's time. We can have the false perception that time is on our side and at our disposal and even presume that there will be a tomorrow. But we don't know that, only God.

James goes on, "we shall go to such and such a city and spend a year there..." James isn't concerned about the city here but rather the presumption that is involved as though our choice were the only deciding factor. It is as though we can choose our direction and duration and that the whole year is at our disposal and choosing.

Then James says, "and engage in business and make a profit." Remember, James is referring to those who plan with careful logic ("lego"), without regard to God. They plan a business and choose the objective for that business...to

make a profit. James is talking about an industrious person who ambitiously carries out his/her plan without regard to the Lord and His will. The problem is in their planning. It isn't wrong to engage in business nor is it wrong to make a profit. It is wrong to plan without regard to God and foolish to presume the outcome of those plans in regards to the affairs of life. Making a profit isn't the mark for true success and the issue James points to is the self-centered planning that is done in exclusion of God and His will. Only God has the authority and sovereignty to do what He says. We don't. To plan and live without regard to God's will is presumptuous and sinful because it is done in exclusion to God.

Luke 12:16-21 illustrates a man who reasons, plans and prepares for the future without regards to God. This man assumes that as a result of all his careful planning, his life will be secure in the future and so he invests his life in storing up treasure for this life. What he couldn't control was the length of his days. Presuming he would enjoy his wealth for many years to come, his life comes to a quick end and Jesus calls that man foolish for investing his life in earthly wealth and not true eternal riches. This man was foolish for thinking he was the master of his fate and in control of his own destiny but that choice belongs to God alone. We must not live without seeking His will in all affairs of life.

What James is saying is that presumption is self-sufficient, self-important planning that keeps God for Sunday but views Monday through Saturday as mine.⁵ It is an arrogant attitude of self-sufficiency in planning daily life in total disregard to God.⁶

James calls us not to live independently of God but rather dependent on Him alone. John Calvin said that we can do nothing without the permission of God. No one can, even if they presume differently. Christ must be honored as Lord in all aspects of our life knowing that every moment we live is a gift from God Himself. Presumption on the other hand sees life itself as a continuing right rather than as a daily mercy.⁷ But we must be determined to commit ourselves to be decisively submitted to God in all our planning through all our life realizing we live only by the permission of God called for His purpose and not ours.

¹Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 249.

²Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.160.

³Moo, Douglas J., *The Letter of James*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000. Pg.202.

⁴MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.231.

⁵Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.161.

⁶Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 249.

⁷Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.162.