



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

TIMELESS INSTRUCTION- JAMES 4:16

COLORADO

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“The Scriptures give many marks of a true Christian, such as love for God, repentance from sin, humility, devotion to God’s glory, prayer, love for others, separation from the world, growth, and obedience. But nothing more clearly summarizes the character of a genuine believer than a desire to do the will of God.”

TIMELESS INSTRUCTION- JAMES 4:16

James 4:13-15: “(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. (15) Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that. (16) But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.’”

Just as all life is at the mercy of God, so all our activities are dependent on His will. We must acknowledge that all our intentions and our future dreams are in God’s hands alone and are subject to His will. We must recognize both our human finiteness and God’s divine sovereignty. To have acquired the habit of submission and resignation to the Divine Will is all important for man.² This must be a principle fixed in our mind that we live by. It must be the perspective from which we view life. James exhorts us to evaluate our planning in accordance with the Lord’s will as expressed in Scripture and live by those principles. The question we must ask is whether we have set aside God’s will and work in our lives for our own plans, goals and pursuits?

I. THE HEART OF THE MATTER- JAMES 4:16

James 4:16: “But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.”

The truthful and sobering reality is that even as Christians, we can tend to forget that God is in control of everything. A person’s life is not within their power to control. It is fragile. We all live within the providence of God whether we acknowledge it or not. He holds our life in His hands and that life is a gift.³ And if there is a continual disinterest in the will of God, that clearly reveals a mark of pride and arrogance because it shows a disregard for God’s rightful sovereignty and rule. We cannot ignore His will. And if our life is an outpouring of God’s will and work, what do we have to boast about in any way? Nothing, for all is His work and will, not ours. Instead, we are brought humbly to our knees before our Lord in grateful submission and thanksgiving for the privilege of being used in His service.

Here in this verse James makes clear the attitude that underlines the presumptuous planning in the prior verses. We do not control the duration or direction of our lives. When we think we are in control of either, it

reveals our heart. James addresses the seriousness once again of the sin of presumption.

A. “BUT AS IT IS”- JAMES 4:16A

James 4:16a: “But as it is...”

Another way to say, “*But as it is*” would be to say, “*But now*”. This phrase then is in present tense by design as James brings the heart of the matter back to the present problem. Rather than living dependently on God as exhorted in the previous verse, the present boasting stands in sharp contrast. Lest we forget, James is addressing believers here as well.

B. “YOU BOAST IN YOUR ARROGANCE”- JAMES 4:16B

James 4:16b: “But as it is, you boast in your arrogance...”

James says, “*you boast*”. This word is used over 30 times in the New Testament.

“boast” Greek “*kauchaomai*” means to speak loudly or loud mouthed.

This can refer to a legitimate boasting such as in Romans 5:2-3 where Paul refers to exulting or boasting in “*our hope of the glory of God*” and “*exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;*” What makes boasting right or wrong is the attitude of who is speaking and what you boast in.

What are these believers boasting in? James says, “*in your arrogance*”. The issue here in James is that their boasting was in their own arrogance about the future, about their planning.

“arrogance” Greek “*alazoneia*” - the root word means to wander about, used to describe swindlers who travelled selling phony goods. Refers to one bragging about what they don’t have or can’t obtain.

This noun is plural meaning that it was a repeated act and stands in sharp contrast to one who has a wise understanding of the frailty of life and the Giver and Ruler of all life which results in submission to God. The word picture here is of a fraud who brags about something he doesn’t really have and can’t acquire. In other words it’s like boasting about what I have done, my plans and what my work has accomplished. You may even acknowledge that God is the One Who has given you the ability, and even the life to do such things. But your boasting is not really in God, rather in the accomplishments that you think you have made. All the while forgetting that we are bragging about what we don’t have and can’t obtain *without* the will and work of God.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

STAFF, LOBBYISTS, JOURNALISTS & SERGEANTS: TUESDAYS AT NOON, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0107

Colorado

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1 John 2:16 uses this same word in referring to the “*boastful pride of life*”. We have nothing to boast in apart from God. Be honest, most of us probably wouldn’t boast out loud, but inwardly what are you really thinking??? And this arrogance denies the will of God. When even in little, secret, almost unrecognizable ways, we forget how frail we are, and stop short of conscience, dependence on our God, it is an element of the proud, boastful, vaunting human spirit, flaunting its’ supposed independence and self-sufficiency.⁴ Sadly, that is amazing arrogance.

There is a lesson to learn from the great King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar who stood on his balcony overlooking his city and empire in Daniel 4:30-33. “*The king reflected and said, Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty.*” Yes God used this heathen king to accomplish great things. Babylon itself was an incredible feat with the well-known Hanging Gardens, one of the seven ancient Wonders of the World. But Daniel writes in 4:31, “*While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared; sovereignty has been removed from you,*” And then this great king was reduced to crawling on all four limbs, eating grass like an animal until the king “*raised my eyes toward heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever,*” (Daniel 4:34) This pagan king eventually came to the end of himself, and saw God for Who He is and Nebuchadnezzar saw the truth about who he was and wasn’t.

What if God has allowed you to be a part of something great, where He used you, your gifts, your time, your leadership to accomplish His purpose He is the One Who gave you life, gave you time, gave you gifts all for the purpose of His will. You may be tempted to think that your position as a Legislator came as a result of your accomplishments and hard work. Yes, it certainly required that of you, but your position as a Legislator was given to you by God for His purpose. It was given to you for His honor and glory and not yours. And as you serve, your life must reflect the Lord and His will in every vote, every decision, and every discussion. And all that is accomplished must be with the realization that it is done through God’s work in you. It is a privilege and honor to be a tool in the tool box for whatever job is needed. We have nothing to boast or brag in for it is God Who accomplishes all things for me.

Contrast this with the self-reliant, prideful attitude which clearly presents itself through William Ernest Henley’s well known poem, *Invictus*:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning’s of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

Wow, William Ernest Henley now knows Who is the master of his fate and the captain of his soul. It wasn’t him. We can so easily leave God out of our planning and brag about it as well. This attitude will never fit with the Christian perspective where God is sovereignly directing the course of human affairs.⁵

C. “SUCH BOASTING IS EVIL”- JAMES 4:16C

James 4:16: “But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.”

The verdict from James regarding presumption and “*all such boasting*” is very simple, clear and severe; it is evil and sin.

%evil+Greek %pornero - wicked, a title given to Satan, the original boaster.

Those who arrogantly deny God’s will as pre-eminent, emulate Satan’s sin.⁶ We are not victims, nor masters of our fate. That is foolish. We dare not be filled with our own self- importance and pride –boasting- the essence of sin and a term for the antithesis of the life of faith. (Romans 3:27, Philippians 3:3-11, 2 Corinthians 10:17-18) All boasting is vain as 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 says and our hope rests solely on the cross of Christ.⁷ (Galatians 6:14) This arrogant, sinful behavior is so common in our world today. The presence and providence of God have been lifted out of consideration. And, in the end, what do we have to show for what all our wealth and pride have done? We will have nothing apart from our relationship with Jesus Christ for everything we have will have passed away.⁸

¹MacArthur, John F., *James: Guidelines for a Happy Christian Life*. Word Publishing: Nashville, TN. 2001. Pg. 95.

²Mayor, Joseph B., *The Epistle of St. James*. Zondervan’s Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954. Pg. 229.

³Martin, Ralph P., *Word Biblical Commentary: James*. Word Books: Waco, TX., 1988. Pg.170.

⁴Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.162.

⁵Moo, Douglas J., *The Letter of James*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000. Pg.207.

⁶MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.235.

⁷Martin, Ralph P., *Word Biblical Commentary: James*. Word Books: Waco, TX., 1988. Pg.170.

⁸Martin, Ralph P., *Word Biblical Commentary: James*. Word Books: Waco, TX., 1988. Pg.168.