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In James 4, we have been studying of the need for the child of God to draw near to God by submitting to Him, and resisting Satan, the adversary of God and His people. As we continue beginning at verse 11 through the end of the chapter, we are reminded of the importance of giving God His rightful place in all things.

Verse 11 warns the believer against the ills of speaking evil against a brother in Christ. It has been said that before criticizing others, we should examine whether is for good: the brother's good, our good, and most of all, is it done for the glory of God?

God gave His law as a means of judgment, and only God is superior to the law. He is the one Lawgiver, and only God is ultimately able to save or destroy (v. 12). God will have the final word, and His word will stand through all eternity.

We need to remember God's rightful place and never usurp what is His. One example is *"Vengeance is Mine, says the Lord"* (Romans 12:19). And here in James 4, we are reminded that God is the rightful Judge and the only One who is superior to the law He has ordained.

Beginning with verse 13, the remainder of the chapter cautions us against self-confident, boasting planning that ignores God and His sovereign will. The example is given of one in business who plans out everything without any thought of God.

The Lord Jesus told this parable in *Luke 12:16-21*.  
*16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. 17 And he began thinking to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?'" 18 And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and I will store all my grain and my goods there. 19 And I will say to myself, "You have many goods stored up for many years to come; relax, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself!"' 20 But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is demanded of you; and as for all that you have prepared, who will own it now?' 21 Such is the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich in relation to God."*

So many people go through life ignoring God as they make big plans to address their selfish desires. But, as *Mark 8:36* says, *"What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his own soul?"*

In this passage, James reminds us of some reasons it is very foolish to ignore God and His will. First, he reminds us of the complexity of life (v. 13). Apart from God and His will, life is a mystery. We don't know the future (or even every detail of the past and present), but God does. When we know Christ as Savior and seek to do His will, life makes so much more sense and takes on a new, richer meaning.

Secondly, life is uncertain (v. 14a). *Proverbs 27:1* says *"Do not boast of tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth."* The foolish rich man in the Luke 12 parable boasted in his wealth and big plans - not knowing that he would die that very night. Life is not uncertain to God, but it is to us.

Thirdly, life is brief (v. 14b). Compared to eternity, it is likened to a vapor - not even really a blip on the screen. *"Our days upon earth are a shadow"* (*Job 8:9*) is only one of many Scriptural references to the brevity of life. God tells us to *"number our days"* (*Psalms 90:12*) - they are a precious few and should be invested toward eternity rather than wasted on frivolous living.

It is very foolish to ignore the will of God - worse than undergoing a dangerous journey to unknown territory without any map or guide. Our Guide knows all things past, present and future - and the wise, mature believer stays close to Him!

Verse 17 is a stern reminder to one who knows God's will and chooses to disobey Him. He is sinning, and sin has bad consequences. A maturing believer should always want to be in the safest place possible - in the will of God.

## James 4

## Pride Promotes Strife

<sup>4</sup> What causes fights and quarrels among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that battle within you? <sup>2</sup> You lust after something and do not have it, so you commit murder. You covet something and cannot obtain it, so you fight and quarrel. Yet you do not have because you do not ask God. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup> You adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you think that the Scripture says without purpose that the Spirit that indwells us yearns (to be loved) with a jealous love? [Jer. 3:14, Hos. 2:19]

<sup>6</sup> But God gives more grace. Therefore, He says:

“God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”  
[Prov. 3:34]

## Humility Cures Worldliness

<sup>7</sup> Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Grieve (*your sin*) and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

## Do Not Judge a Brother

<sup>11</sup> Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. <sup>12</sup> There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge another?

## Do Not Boast About Tomorrow

<sup>13</sup> Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”. <sup>14</sup> But you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. <sup>15</sup> Instead you *ought* to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we shall live and do this or that.” <sup>16</sup> But as it is you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, anyone who knows what is right to do and does not do *it*, is sinning.

## Memory Verse

*“What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his own soul?” (Mark 8:36)*