

James 4:13–17

The Arrogance of Living for Our Profit Plans

Thursday, February 15, 2024 • Read James 4:13–17

Questions from the Scripture text: What do the people addressed in v13 say to themselves? Why are such self-assured plans silly—what don't they know (v14a)? How weighty and long is their life in this world (v14b)? What ought they to say instead (v15)? Since they are not, in what are they actually boasting (v16)? In what should they be spending their lives (v17)?

In what should a man spend his life? James 4:13–17 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these five verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **a man should spend his life in that which does good before God.**

How dreadful a thing is our pride (v16)! It makes us judges of God's law and of our brother (cf. v11) and leads us into living for earthly/worldly profit (v13). Notice that buying and selling and profiting are not the evil here. The passage highlights several evils about the approach in this hypothetical situation.

Assuming that our life is under our control, v14a. We don't know what will happen tomorrow. There are many plans that we might make that serve God, enjoy Him, and do others good. But, we mustn't make plans as if we have power in ourselves to bring them about. We don't know about tomorrow.

Attributing too much to our life in this world, v14b. Our lives in this world are light ("vapor") and momentary ("a little time and then vanishes away"). We do not resolve this by assuring us of how great our impact may be.

Attributing too little to what the Lord wills, v15. Rather, we trust that what is weighty and lasting is not a man's accomplishments (v13–14) but the Lord's will. Apart from His will, we won't even be alive tomorrow! If the Lord wills, we will continue to live. If the Lord wills, He will establish and employ our lives' work in a lasting way. The way of thinking in v13 is completely ignorant of this. It boasts in one's own work, rather than giving itself to humble diligence in whatever part the Lord wills to give us in His own work.

Assessing what to do by what pleases us, v17. Often, v17 is taken in isolation. Its principle does stand on its own, but it is also for us to heed it in the context of v13. It reveals one last thing about the error in v13: this buying and selling and profiting was not because it was good, but rather instead of some other good that ought to have been done.

We live in a culture in which much that God says is good is set aside for the purpose of profit: marriage, children, living where there is a faithful church, participating well in the life of that church, doing spiritual or temporal good to our brother or our neighbor, etc.

But it is foolish for those whose lives are short vapors to live for profit. God's Word establishes priorities that should shape our choices. It overrules what our flesh calls good with what His Word calls good. And if we know the good to do it, but do not do it, that indeed is sin.

What plans do you have? What is your hope for accomplishing them? What gives them lasting significance? How have these plans proceeded from what the Bible teaches you is good?

Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for the arrogance of living for earthly profit over-against what Your Word teaches us is good. And forgive us for thinking that we can bring about whatever future we wish. Truly, Your will, O Lord, rules and determines all that will happen. Your will gives to us our very life. Forgive us, and restore us to trusting in You, delighting in You and serving You, we ask through Christ; AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP1 "How Blessed the Man" or TPH538 "Take My Life, and Let It Be"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

James chapter 4 verses 13 through 17. These are God's words. Come. Now you who say today or tomorrow? We'll 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?

There's even a vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away. Instead, you want 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.

And man, so far, the reading of God's inspired and an errant word. In which he continues to teach us to live with humility. To live under God. And for Those things that please him, you remember the chapter began. With those who are having quarrels and fights with one another.

Asking the question where those things come from. And the problem was they were living according to their own pleasure. Instead of living according to what? Pleases God. Uh, and by living, according to their own pleasure, they're putting themselves in a place that belonged to God. It was Uh, it was An example or a symptom.

Of an inherent. Putting ourselves. Where God belongs. And he then pointed out in the portion that we had last week in verses 11 and 12 Uh, that this is evident especially when we are judgmental. Uh, with our brothers. Uh not being under the law together with them, and if they transgress God's law, then seeking to help them in the way that Um, Uh, in the way that, that Matthew 18 and Galatians 6.

And even the end of this book, Uh, James 5 verse 19, through 20 to teach us. Uh, but the refer judgmental with the brother. Uh, we put ourselves above him. Uh, him God has called our brother and God has called Saint made righteous with himself through Christ. Therefore, we're putting ourselves above God's law sometimes even adding to Uh, to God's law judging the law insufficient as well as our brother.

Uh, and Uh, so pride has been a big problem and now he comes to another way that Pride appears in our lives. Uh, and there are Um, four aspects. Uh, of the Pride here in verses 13 through 17. Which is exemplified by verse 13. The statement in verse 13, come.

Now you who say today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city. Spend a year there by and sell and make a profit. And the first aspect of this Pride is, Assuming that our life is under control. Not only that, we know what will happen tomorrow but that we determine what will happen tomorrow.

Uh, so tomorrow, we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy sell, make a profit. But the scripture immediately answers where as whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. So how can you determine what will happen tomorrow? Um, if you can if you don't even know what God has determined, And so, we put our place put ourselves in the place of God, in knowing, and in determining, rather than humbly submitting ourselves.

Uh, both in. Um, The ability to cause what happens if the Lord Wills. Uh and and also even in just our knowing No, surprise does not just assume that our life is under our control. In the first part of verse 14. Uh, but it attributes too much to the worldly life and Uh, to worldly effort and prosperity.

Notice the ones in verse 13 are not just. Indicating that they know, and Get to determine what happens. Uh, but they think that this buying and the selling and

making a profit is is Stuff in which they are going to live their lives. And that's what they're giving weight to do.

But the scripture answers in verse 14, what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. And so, our lives in this world are light. Uh, um. A vapor. And momentary. Have quickly, vanishes Away. After a little time, vanishes away.

So, our lives are short and even As they are short, they are not so weighty and impactful as we think they are not in themselves. Uh the Lord's work is weighty and impactful in the Lord, assigns us apart in his work and so we Delight to run just like the sun.

In Psalm 19, Delights to run across the sky. That's the part, the Lord assigned to it. We Delight to do the part. The Lord has signed to us because we know his work is is wait. And so though, as those who, Who then do? Labor and seek to enjoy God's blessing on our labor seek to employ.

Uh, the ourselves in his service and in other service, that Glory would come to him, that good would come to others. That good would also even come to ourselves by this means that God has appointed for it. Yet, all of these things are under God. Uh, if we live merely under the Then our lives are vanity.

Um, a puff of vapor, a puff of mist, That. As soon as the sun rises a little Vanishes. There's Pride here in assuming that life is under our control. There's Pride here in attributing too much weight to uh worldly prosperity and effort and even to ourselves in it. There's Pride here in attributing too little To what the Lord Wills.

So he continues to correct in verse 15. He says, instead you ought to say if the Lord Wills we shall live and do this or that now, this is a submission both. To the decreative will of God, what he has ordained and will happen in his degree. We say, if the Lord Wills And that's the right use of insha Allah, but It also corrects the wrong use of insha Allah because when we say, if the Lord Wills, we're not just Submitting ourselves to what God has ordained in his decree.

We're remembering that we don't live to please ourselves. That he has preceptive will he has given us his precepts, his instructions. Uh, and so it may be Work is ordained by God. Accumulating things to Do good to others is ordained by God enjoying. Even from the fruit of our hands is a blessing that belongs to the man who fears God in Psalm 128.

Praise God. It may be that you go to that City and you buy and you sell But you don't do it in service to your pleasures. You do it in service to the Lord and in accordance with his word. So there's submission to God's will in both of those ways.

Uh, in verse 15. Uh and Pride however attributes too little to what the Lord Wills too little to what the Lord ordains too. Little To what the Lord commands. And so, we must Be careful. Be humble before him. Not to boast an arrogance for 16. Um so our pride appears and assuming that our life is under our control or our pride appears and attributing too much to our life in this world.

Our pride appears in attributing too little to the will of the Lord both in his ordaining and his commanding. And then, Our pride also appears in assessing what to do. By what pleases us and this corresponds to that second part of what we're discussing under the Lord's, will that we should seek to do what God commands.

Uh, but here in verse 17, therefore To him, who knows to do good and does not do it to him. It is sin. And this is reminding us that there is much good. That we are commanded to do by scripture that a focus on living for self or living for profit will make us omit or Overlook many people.

Uh, in order to make more money. Uh, decide to delay marriage. Whereas God calls marriage, good or try, not to have children. Where the great thing in this creation or the image bearers of God. And so he tells us to be fruitful and to multiply Or they don't participate Faithfully in the life of the body of Christ.

Uh, either preparing to make a profit or in the process of making a profit or they've made profit. Now, they're trying to enjoy what they're able to attain of the things in this world. And so they don't attend well upon. Public worship or prayer, meetings are not immediately. Available for service.

Uh, thinking and receiving the various Occurrences of God's Providence in the congregation as opportunities and even assignments for the service of Christ in the service of his body. Um, Now, for Much of what God says is good, is set aside for the purpose of prophet marriage children. Uh, even living where there is a faithful church, people will move somewhere.

Uh, where there is not the faithful preaching of the word of God. And congregation where they're able to obey the commands of scripture in the New Testament. Um,

For the sake of prophet. Uh, the they will move. Um, To do that. Uh, there's so much of what his word calls. Good. That people will. Uh, will neglect. For the sake of pleasing themselves, but he says, therefore to him, who knows to do good and does not do it.

To him, it is sin. And so does. To assess what to do. By what pleases us or what profits us. In an Earthly way. So, several things that we don't normally think of as Pride. Um, And we usually think of Pride as the haughty look and boastful statements and treating others as small.

But here are four arrogant boastings or four symptoms of arrogance and boasting. Assuming a lot that life is under our control. Attributing too much To temporal profit to our life in this world, attributing too little To what the Lord Wills. And assessing what to do not by the good that we know to do from the Bible.

But by what pleases and profits us. In an earthly way, may the Lord spare us. From such boastful or arrogant, living before him. And spray. And thank you Lord, for this portion of your word. We thank you. Forgiving us your word as a mirror in which we Can diagnose.

Symptoms of things like pride. We pray that you Forgive us our sin. And give us to live. Uh, humbly and joyously. Since it is so much better. That you are in control. And the things that you command are better than the things that are flesh desires. We pray particularly that when it comes time to make big decisions.

That you would Grant to us to make those decisions. Not according to how much money we can make. But to serving you and the things that your word calls, good, We pray that you would, Help us to do so today. Give us to remember and meditate upon now. As we go throughout the rest of this day.

Up. How what we are doing in each moment, serves you and follows your word. I pray that you would keep us from doing anything. That I would sin against you. Or that would be. Unthoughtful of you and the purpose that you have given us in the precepts that you have given us.

But we do entrust ourselves to your hands. Knowing that only you can make it fruitful. And that we are not the ones who determine what will happen. We're glad to do so O Lord for your continually good to us. Help us all O Lord to serve you. With the time that remains in our lives, we ask in Jesus name