

THE PERIL OF PRIDE

James 4:13-17

INTRODUCTION

Hummingbirds have incredibly ferocious metabolisms. To drive their metabolism, they have race car hearts that eat oxygen at a staggering rate. Their hearts are built of thinner, leaner fibers than ours. Their arteries are stiffer and more taut. Their hearts are stripped to the skin for the war against gravity and inertia, the mad search for food, the amazing idea of flight.

They are tiny little birds and their hearts beat 10 times a second. So even if you were to put your ear to its chest, it would be hard to discern the heartbeat.

The price of their ambition is a life closer to death; they suffer more heart attacks and aneurysms and ruptures than any other living creature. It's expensive to fly. You burn out. You fry the machine. You melt the engine.

In the same way, this is a picture of many lives in America

James' "Letter to America"

Proposition: Prideful Arrogance vs. Humble Dependence

I. Prideful Arrogance 4:13-14

Point – presumptuousness, ignorance, frailty, pride and ignorance

- the result when humility is lacking and pride reigns

Proof

A. Pride

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.’

At this time the Roman Peace, *Pax Romana*, created an environment for trade and travel

- trade in ivory, ebony, purple dyes, wines, cedar wood, gold, pearls, emeralds, silk, and embroidery
- James is writing about merchants

“**come now**” – challenge – also in **5:1**

- this phrase used only these two time in NT
- “sit up and take notice”
- what he is going to say is very important thing.

Will go ... this city ... year ... business ... profit

- merchants were making plans and planning on results
- nothing wrong with making money – wealth
- the business is not the problem – the audacious presumption is the problem

Where is God in this equation??? Answer: no where

- there is no room for God

It has been said that pride is the king of vices. . . it is the first of the pallbearers of the soul. . . other vices destroy only their opposite virtues:

- greed destroys generosity
- anger destroys gentleness
- lust destroys purity
- but
- pride destroys all virtues.

B. Ignorance

4:14 – “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.”

The visual image of a “**vapor**” is used of the migration of birds and also an eclipse – it come and goes quickly

- also used to describe your breath on a cold morning
- here it is used as a metaphor of → your life!

Job 7:7 – “my life is *but* breath,”

Job 7:9 – “When a cloud vanishes, it is gone, So he who goes down to Sheol does not come up.”

Psa 39:4 - “LORD, make me to know my end, and what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am”

- it is a good thing for a transient creature to be dependent on his Creator

Psa 90:5 – “You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; in the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew”

Psa 102:11-12 – “My days are like a lengthened shadow; And I wither away like grass. But You, O LORD, abide forever, And Your name to all generations.”

- sad and despondent in v. 11 turns to hope in v. 12

Psa 103:15 – “his days are like grass; As a flower of the field”

- man’s transitory nature

That is the backdrop when we read James addressing this issue, we realize there is a backdrop of a biblical anthropology, a biblical right understanding of man, how we are here one day and gone the next, and a biblical theology proper of God and His eternity.

➔ You’re making arrogant presumptuous claims for an entire year when you can’t even see into the future one day!

Prov 27:1 – “Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.”

- Same wisdom from OT as we read in James

It can come – accident, illness, a collapse of the market, a devaluation in south-east Asia, a take-over, a cutback, or a reorganization, and it changes everything.

Illustration: Men who trap animals in Africa for zoos in America say that one of the hardest animals to catch is the ring-tailed monkey. For the Zulus of that continent, however, it’s simple.

They've been catching this agile little animal with ease for years. The method the Zulus use is based on knowledge of the animal. Their trap is nothing more than a melon growing on a vine. The seeds of this melon are a favorite of the monkey. Knowing this, the Zulus simply cut a hole in the melon, just large enough for the monkey to insert his hand to reach the seeds inside. The monkey will stick his hand in, grab as many seeds as he can, then start to withdraw it. This he cannot do. His fist is now larger than the hole. The monkey will pull and tug, screech and fight the melon. But he can't get free of the trap unless he gives up the seeds, which he refuses to do. Meanwhile, the Zulus sneak up and nab him.

In the same way, when we get caught up in the pursuit of things, we lose sight of the dangers.

Application: In contrast, how should you fill your day?

George Whitefield, was asked what he would do if he knew for certain Jesus was returning 3 days from now. He brought out his schedule of the next 3 days, looked at it, passed his diary to his questioner and said, "Sir, this is what I would do."

- he was consumed and focused in a regular and habitual way in ministry and business for the Lord
- as a Christian, everything we do is a ministry unto the Lord when we view it the right way – that is what the Lord has for us

II. Humble Dependence 4:15

Point – 100 years ago, people used to end their letters with the letters "D.V." The abbreviation stood for *Deo Volente* – "God willing"

Proof – **James 4:15** – "Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.'"

→ Put Off and Put On – Replace Pride with Humility (**4:10**)

The psalmist said, "My times are in your hands" (**Psalm 31:15**).

Daniel declared to King Belshazzar that the Lord was “**the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways**” (Daniel 5:23).

- Acknowledgment that your very heart-beat, all your movements, your times - however short or long - in sickness and in health, even your very breath depend upon the will of the Creator of the Universe.

Jay Adams, *A Thirst for Wholeness* – “*James’ concern is not about some formula. He is concerned about you - the inner you. He wants you to say ‘D.V.’ in your heart, to yourself, before or whether you ever say it to another. He wants to replace self-confidence with a confidence in the providence of God. It is an inner matter - a matter of heart. Saying this to yourself is reminding yourself that God is running the world, not you, and that he has something to say about your plans*”

Exod 33:15 – “If Your presence does not go *with us*, do not lead us up from here.”

- this is not an excuse for inactivity
- this is not intended to discourage us from planning
- this is not an excuse for laziness
- this is not an excuse for a sloppy, undisciplined life

James is not here to bless the half-hearted work and life of a sluggard.

Work is a(n):

- ordinance of the Lord
- gift from the Lord
- ministry unto the Lord
- mission field before the Lord

Work is a Creation Ordinance of the Lord

- It is part of God’s design.

From the very beginning, in **Genesis**, God instructed man to

- subdue the earth - **1:28**
- no man to cultivate **2:5** → to cultivate it and keep **2:15**
- it is not a result of the curse

Work is an gift of God

- **Eccl 2:24** – **Gift** from God - this verse is surrounded by strong warning of Solomon about the vanity of the fruit of labor

Work is a ministry unto the Lord

- Reformation Principle
- sanctity of all Callings – the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker
- the denial of the medieval distinction between secular and sacred, clergy and laity.
- the difference is one of function and appointment, not spiritual status.

Work is a form of worship

- service, labor, toil in the name of Christ

Work is a mission field before the Lord

Matt 10:16 - “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.”

- if you are a Christian, you are a sent person
- God sends you into your places of work, school etc

Shrewd

- **šrj**– insight *wise, intelligent, sensible,*
- opposite of **amj**

Innocent

- **šrj**– without any mixture of evil, pure, **undefiled**
- tied in with witness

III. Prideful Arrogance

Proof – James 4:16-17 – “**But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.** ¹⁷Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

ἔγωγε – emphatic – “But now!”

“boast” – presumptuous self-congratulatory boasting

empty, braggart talk, swagger. “an insolent and empty assurance, which trusts in its own power and resources and shamefully despises and violates divine laws and human rights.”

“arrogance” – Only here and ...

1 John 2:16 – “**For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.**”

the self-made man

- “God helps those who help themselves” ... right? ... wrong?
- God helps those who surrender themselves.

“**Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.**” 4:17

- shift to 3rd person – emphasizes the general truth of the sin of omission
- emphatic order – “Sin, to him it is”
- Here, the sin of omission

Illustration: – Puritan illustration of the conscience compares it to a sundial. That is, it operates effectively only when it is bathed in the light from the sun. It will give you a reading if you shine your torch upon it. It will tell you a time but it is inaccurate, because it only works effectively by the light of the sun.

So our consciences will work best when they are illuminated by the Bible. We only work when we are bathed in the Word of God, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit – when He has more of us (not we have more of Him). When our thinking, our ministry, our life is saturated with the Word of God, when we are praying without ceasing.

Application

So often I will talk to people who are moving from one city to another. A man must provide for his own household, but what is amazing is that they will take a new job, then consider the neighborhoods, then choose a new house, and then, almost as an afterthought, finally think “let’s find a church”. Where is God in that?? That should be done first. Maybe before we take the job, we need to consider finding a solid, godly, Bible-believing church as part of the equation.

Or when sending a child to college, especially a daughter, find a godly church with godly men who can provide a shelter of protection for her before considering the college.

CONCLUSION