

James

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James 4:11-17

Vss. 11-12

- Here James shifts gears...sort of. He's still talking about the sin of Pride. In the previous verses he's addressing how our pride gets in the way of our relationship with the Father. Here he begins by speaking of how our pride gets in the way of our relationship with one another and causes disruption in the church.
- The Greek word James uses here is *katalalein*, meaning to slander someone who is not there to defend themselves. And this is pride. When we tear someone down behind their backs, almost always it is to bring them down so that either we are built up or at least we are pulling them down to our poor level. James is pointing out that there is no place in the church for this kind of talk and behavior toward a brother or a sister. And being a good Jew, his mind is immediately taken back to the Psalms. Psalm 50:20, "You sit and speak against your own brother. You slander your own mother's son". Psalm 101:5a, "Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy". Paul included slander in his list of the sins of the pagans in Romans 1:30. Indeed, there are few other sins that the Bible so severely condemns. And James says that this is so for two reasons. First, Jesus said one of the two great commandments was from Leviticus 19:18, "...you shall love your neighbor as yourself". Clearly, you are not loving your neighbor as yourself when you are maliciously tearing him or her down. And to do so is to brush aside the Law as being unimportant or too small to pertain to one so wonderful as you, thus you are making yourself a judge of the very Law of God and thereby condemning yourself. Second, you are so overstepping that you are putting yourself in God's shoes. Only God and God alone can judge. So, with a single slanderous line we neither love our neighbor or God.

Vss. 13-17

- Still attacking our pride, James shifts from our interpersonal relationships to where pride has made a home – our hearts. Pride tends to be the source of our pronoun problem. We so easily say, "I will do this!" or "Look what I have done!", pointing to

ourselves rather than to God. The Jews were the great commercial traders of the ancient world and as the Romans built cities the Jews were often offered instant citizenship, for they would always bring money and commerce. So it was not uncommon for the Jews to be making travel plans as those plans related to business. But what is the saying? “Man proposes but God disposes!” A man named Saul had business in Damascus, but God had other plans. That same man years later had plans to go into Bithynia, but God had other plans, plans to send him to Macedonia. Proverbs 27:1 reminds us, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what the day may bring forth”.

- But the uncertainty of life is no reason for fear or inaction. Life’s uncertainty IS the reason for our complete dependence and trust in God. Paul says it correctly when he tells the church in Corinth, “But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills...”. As followers of Christ, we should never be afraid to go into the future, paralyzed and unable to move forward. Rather, we should seek God’s plan for us and move forward, placing all our plans in His hands and always be willing to adjust our lives as His plans for us change.
- The one who doesn’t do this is then guilty of arrogance and boasting. The word James uses is *alazoneia*. This is funny because it’s the word for a snake oil salesman, the one who promises all kind of things he really can’t deliver on.
- James ends with a warning. Now that you *KNOW* the right thing, to continue to live *self-confidently* rather than putting your confidence, your faith, in God, is in fact a sin. A sin because you are living as if the future, your future, was in your hands and not God’s hands.