

A Word to the Arrogant and Self-Sufficient

Sermon 15 in the James Series

James 4:11-16

What would be the opposite of dependence on the Lord based upon His sovereignty?

Arrogant Self-Sufficiency!

A couple of Linguistic points:

The key word is **ARROGANCE(S)** – a noun – which we find in verse 16.

1. Boasting is found twice – and boast is a good translation -- almost all translations use this word because it seems to best describe the Greek word which appears twice in verse 16.

καυ-χα-ομαι -- **To Boast** -- *To express an unusually high view of confidence in someone or something.* Lowe and Nida

Remember **James 3:5**

The tongue is a BIG TALKER.

The tongue is small – but a spark is small too – large raging fires often start with just a small spark!

Now boasting itself is not wrong. It depends on the context and depends upon the one or thing being boasted about.

1 Cor. 1:31 – *He who glories (boasts) let him glory (boast) in the Lord.*

The Corinthians had a huge **BOASTING** problem – but it wouldn't have been a problem had they been content to boast about Christ instead of boasting of their gifts and abilities over one another.

“Boast” is a common word – Paul uses it 30 times – like I said, sometimes in a positive way – sometimes in an ironic way – and sometimes negative -- while James uses it only twice – both times negative and right here in v. 16.

Here – those being rebuked are **BOASTING** in their **ARROGANCES**. (it is a plural noun).

“A state of pride or arrogance but with the implication of complete lack of basis for such an attitude – false arrogance – pretentious pride.” Lowe and Nida

The word arrogance is used only one other time in the NT.

1 John 2:16 -- *pride*

Pride of life = **pride of possessions**.

This is not the normal word for “life”. **3:17**

Let me read you a compilation of comments on 2:16 given to us by John Stott in his commentary on 1 John.

“The *alazOn* (the Greek word for the arrogant one) is a braggart who seeks to impress everyone he meets with his non-existent importance. He boasts of what he has and what he does. His arrogance relates to his external circumstances. Whether wealth or rank or dress; it is a pretentious ostentation – the desire to shine or outshine others in luxurious living. “

Jesus said in **Luke 12:15** – *“One’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possess”*.

So this word translated in James as “arrogances” is a rather rare word, but not a rare concept.

We have all seen it.

We have probably all taken part in it, one way or another.

With that introduction to boast and arrogance – let’s go back to James 4.

I. Arrogance in Judging 4:11-12

No one likes to be judged – but there is something in us that likes to judge others.

One of the things the internet has done – it has cause MILLIONS to be able to judge you – instead of just the folks you know.

-- And judge you they do!

-- Dare to express an opinion on a message board or chat room – and there will be no shortage of folks ready to tell you what they think of you!

Those in the Christian Church must be very cautious about judging one another.

Gossip.

Misreading motives – or trying to read motives.

Speaking evil of your brother.

James is speaking to the Christian church.

v. 4 was HARSH language – adulteresses

Idolators.

Those of you worshipping false gods.

Here – it is “brothers” – those in the church.

In the church – would brethren REALLY speak evil of one another?

It sounds rather confusing – judge the law?

There is no doubt – as we have seen throughout the book – that James tells us the primary teaching of the Law is to LOVE GOD – and LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR – the same as the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are to keep that law.

We are not to sit in judgment on the truth of that law.

James talks about OBEYING that law.

I believe James argument goes like this:

How do you dare say that you LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR -- when you don't even LOVE your BROTHER?

How can say you love him while you are speaking evil of him?

This does not negate other truths.

- Sometimes we have to expose sin.
- Church discipline is not evil speaking but true speaking.
- Church discipline is not meant to be punitive but corrective.

But if all we are doing is BAD MOUTHING someone – we aren't correcting a thing. We are just showing OURSELVES to be arrogantly assuming that WE ARE THE JUDGE and arrogantly trying to make ourselves look better than someone else.

v. 12 – do you DARE put YOURSELF in the place of God?

There is ONE lawgiver.

God – in fire and smoke on Mt. Sinai is the OT lawgiver – and giving to Moses the laws that Israel was to live by and we see Jesus Christ as the one in the NT who brings us the law by which we are to live as Christians.

The ceremonial laws – gone – because they spoke of him – no need for types and shadows when the reality has come.

The governmental laws – good laws – just laws –
But not all these laws will be applicable to us.

Israel was a THEOCRACY – whereas Christianity goes into all the world – into every society and social structure and we, as Christians now live in TWO KINGDOMS – the City of Man and the City of God.

II. Arrogance in Self-Confidence 4:13-14

A. Boasting of Tomorrow

Here is presumption.

I am going to do this and that.

I will go into that city for a year and make my fortune.

Nothing wrong with planning.

Hardly anything worthwhile happens without planning.

Everything wrong with PRESUMPTION.

THIS is a Christian – thinking like a lost man.

A Christian who is not thinking in accord with what GOD would have him to do – but only thinking in the same way a lost man thinks.

-- I'll tear down my barns and build bigger.

-- I'll relax and say to my soul – take your ease – not knowing that THIS NIGHT your soul will be required of you!

The Christian remedy to this will appear in v. 15.

But before we elaborate on that – James reminds us of another truth.

B. The Frailty of Life

We lost our last American WWI veteran recently.

He lived through the horrors of WWI and came home to set up his own life. Some estimate that nearly 20% of the men – on both sides – who participated in WWI – died in WWI.

That is almost unimaginable carnage.

Nearly 10 million deaths!

Frank Buckles, the last living U.S. World War I veteran, died on Feb. 27, 2011. He was 110.

110?

That's incredible.

But, he's gone.

To my knowledge – and according to the internet – there are no longer ANY LIVING veterans who served in WWI.

And we are rapidly losing our WWII veterans too.

Why do I bring that up?

100 years is a long time – but it is also a short time.

It goes by quickly.

Time keeps marching on – it just doesn't stop.

For the Christian – the sands in the hourglass are nothing to fear.

The sands will move – we will age – but God remains the same and eternity is *STILL* eternity – compared to this temporal life.

Turn please to Psalm 39:4-6

-- Was James thinking of this particular Psalm?

-- Is James making an allusion to this passage which is saying much the same thing in different words?

It is impossible to know – but this much we can discern – the thoughts of the Psalmist and the thoughts of James are running along similar lines.

Psalm 39:4-6

The shortness of life.

The transitory nature of riches.

We even find the desire to bridle one's tongue in v. 1.

III. Arrogance in Self-Dependence

This is really a continuation of what we saw just said:

As we have said many times – James was an expert in the OT.

In fact, James could not be an expert in the NT – the Book of James is a very early book – and it is possible James never even read *ONE* NT book in the form that we have them today.

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

A. If the Lord Wills

We ARE NOT in control.

God is absolutely sovereign – and so whatever plans we might make – whatever prayers we would offer must always be with the understanding – **IF THE LORD WILLS.**

Acts 18:21

Acts 21:14 – Go back to v. 11

Some of our Christian friends do not understand this.
They say -- God tells us **TO COMMAND HIM.**

If you pray – “Your will be done” – you are giving God a way out and ultimately showing that you don’t really have enough faith for your prayer to be answered!

EVERY PRAYER – EVERY PLAN - -should be “if the Lord wills.”

Now, that’s not some **MAGIC FORMULA.**
And – you shouldn’t even have to **SAY IT** every time.

- But you better believe it every time.
- It should be a part of every one of our prayers, even if it goes unsaid.
- It needs to be our heart’s attitude.

HE IS GOD and WE ARE NOT.

-- If you are praying for someone to get well from an illness – nevertheless – not my will but thine be done.

-- If you are praying for a job – NEVERTHELESS

-- If you are praying for any situation – NEVERTHELESS

Who was the great example of that?

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself – in the Garden of Gethsemane
Facing the cross
Cringing at the thought of being made sin for us:

Father – remove this cup from me – a good and godly prayer – because He followed it with – NEVERTHELESS.

No – praying in such a way IS NOT a lack of faith.

Praying in such a way shows ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE upon a GOD WHO is ABSOLUTELY sovereign – and we are admitting HIS WAYS are better than ours.

Let me flash-forward to a text we will examine in full in a few weeks. **5:13-15**

Is this an iron-clad guarantee?

If this were absolutely true – how could any Christian ever die?

If it is ALL DEPENDENT upon OUR FAITH – with no qualifications whatsoever – then a person COULD live to be 150, 200 or even older and be raised up in good health.

Obviously – James is not saying that.

So we pray.

We pray for THE BEST OUTCOME that we desire – NTL

News account -- *“Paul Crouch died on November 30 after a decade-long fight with degenerative heart disease.”*

If you can be healed from anything if you have enough faith – what would we think of every person who was sick – or every person who dies?

-- Kathryn Kulman died.
-- Oral Roberts died.

No matter how much you “name it and claim it” – there is something that cannot be denied.

Life is a vapor.

Paul Crouch was 79 – a good long life.
He built the largest “Christian television Network” in history.

But – true to Scripture his life is a vapor – just like mine and just like yours.

For a Christian – knowing our life is a vapor IS NOT a negative.

To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

What Christian would want to live in this present world – the way that it is for all eternity?

We, like the Apostle Paul are GLAD TO BE HERE – as long as the Lord wills – and when He wills to call us home – be it unexpectedly or from a 10 year battle with an illness – blessed be the Name of the Lord. His will be done!

B. The Sin of Neglect

“Therefore” – James ends by going in a direction we probably didn’t expect.

Arrogant boasting about tomorrow is evil.
There is another evil – to refuse to do good – when we know that we should.

To presumptuously figure we always have more time.

Neither you nor I have ANY IDEA how much time we really have.

We must not delay in doing what is right – when we have the opportunity – we should and MUST take it.

It is easy to be a Pharisee and think of all the sins I do not commit.
But what did Christ tell them?
“You have omitted the weightier matters of the law.”

JUSTICE – MERCY – FAITH

All POSITIVE actions.

Who is sufficient for these things?

Not only do we sin by what we do – **we sin by what we don't do.**

Thank the Lord Jesus Christ for His so great salvation.
Thank Him for His work that satisfies in both His active and passive obedience.
God is satisfied because of His Son – and we are in Him.

We could never hope to merit salvation – in fact if God had ordained that salvation must be earned by our merits – we would have failed miserably – by sins of commission and omission -- daily – after already having failed in daddy Adam.

Think about Christ.
Since He was sinless – not only did He never commit a vile act –
He did WHAT WAS RIGHT every time.

It's amazing.
But that is our great Savior – and ALL our trust must be IN HIM.
I only ask –
Do you know Him? Is He YOUR Savior?

PRAY

Hymn 94

Benediction: 4:14-15