

Sermon Outline

THE SIN OF PRIDE (2): SELF-CENTRED PRESUMPTION

James 4:13-17

1. What is this presumptuousness of which James speaks? (verse 13).

- a) A picture of a man strategizing where he would set out to do his trade in a city where there would be great trade opportunities. Three assumptions in his strategy:
 - It touches life: he assumed he could continue alive at will.
 - It touches life choices: he assumed he was the master of his own life.
 - It touches his ability: he assumed he could do the business and make a profit.
- b) Is there something ethically wrong with planning and making assumptions like that?
- c) John Calvin: “we read everywhere in the Scriptures that the holy servants of God spoke unconditionally of future things, when yet they had it as a principle fixed in their minds that they could do nothing without the permission of God.”
- d) Careful planning and making assumptions are essential and are expected of all of us.
- e) The issue is that the planning mentioned by James is very self-centred. No mention of God, no mention of asking for God’s guidance and permission.
- f) The planning forgot eternity and God (see Parable of the rich fool: Luke 12:16-21).
- g) God is interested in our daily ordinary affairs, not just in things supernatural.

2. How can we avoid this sin of presumptuousness?

- a) To recognize who we actually are (verse 14a).
 - Proverbs 27:1, “*Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.*” We are ignorant of the future.
 - Augustine said, “God will not suffer man to have the knowledge of things to come: for if he had prescience of his prosperity, he would be careless: and understanding of his adversity, he would be senseless.”
- b) To recognize the frailty of our lives (verse 14b).
 - Job 7:7, “*Remember that my life is a breath.*”
 - Psalm 78:39, “*remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again.*”
 - A vapour usually attracts attention. The world give special attention to the people who are wealthy and prosperous.
 - But life that is like a vapour cannot stay in that state for very long, constantly attracting attention. In a little while it will vanish.
 - Success without God makes only temporary friends and admirers but makes eternity very black.
- c) To recognize that God is in control of our lives (verse 15).
 - When we recognize that we are not in control of our own lives, but God, we will put God at the centre of our plans and the ordering of our lives.
 - Life is not simple, but complex, we cannot fully understand.
 - So when we plan without God, what we are ignoring is not just the existence of God’s will but the benefit of it.
 - Proverbs 3:5-6, “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*”

- In suffering, Paul can say confidently, *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us”* (Rom 8:18). And his reason is: *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose”* (Rom 8:28).
- Secularism has penetrated all spheres of our life and has made us delete God even in our conversation.
- A Christian desires to do the will of God. Psalm 40:8, *“I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”*
- Every Lord’s Day we pray the Lord’s Pray together as a congregation: *“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

3. It is a sin to ignore his warning (verses 16 and 17).

- a) The merchant whom James describes was a boastful man.
- b) As a Jew, he should know well that God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, is the One who blesses him and makes him prosperous.
- c) But he made his plans without God and boast about his success in making profit.
- d) It is a greater sin to fail to do what you ought to do (sins of omission) than to do what you ought not to do (sins of commission) for you sin not in ignorance but in contempt and caused by pride:
 - The reason a person is lost to hell today simply is because he has failed to do what he ought to do. John 3:18, *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”*
 - You think wrongly (negatively) because you are not thinking rightly. Philippians 4:8, *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”*
 - To close a church, we do not need to have members who are fighting and quarrelling with one another, but just to have majority members who don’t do anything, who really do not care.

Conclusion

1. Our ignorance of the content of tomorrow does not mean that we ought not to think about and make provision for tomorrow. Matthew 6:34, *“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”* It is not a call to neglect duties and evade responsibilities, but a call to trust in Providence when the time only to trust has come. But our ignorance warns us of the seriousness of the sin of presumptuousness. It is a most direct challenge to the life of humility before God, for it involves taking into our own hands the reins of planning and command.
2. We should take full advantage of today and the opportunities of today as we do not know what will happen tomorrow. Today God speaks to us in His Word, that we harden not our hearts. Today is the day of salvation.

How have we ordered our life; where is God in our life, in our family, in our work and in our study?