
JAMES 4:13-17

PRACTICAL ATHEISM IS UNACCEPTABLE FOR FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

SACRED
SECULAR

MAKING PLANS WITHOUT BIBLICAL SUBMISSION TO GOD'S SOVEREIGN PURPOSE IS ARROGANT (4:13-15)

Commercial and career endeavors are not our own calls (4:13-14a)

Come now, you who say,

- “*come now*” - meant to awaken their attentiveness to the admonition they are going to hear
- The man-centered and secular decisions about work being made by some in the church have been made known to James.

Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit -

- Following their conversion, they went about their business as usual.
- They are making plans, setting goals, and strategizing for growth and success.
 - Making money is an important part of life and survival.
 - Their working wisdom worked well for them prior to Jesus and it seems to be working well after coming to faith in Jesus.

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- Work and worship are not two different things for followers of Jesus.
- Some of the believers in these churches are going about their work and business life like practical atheists.
 - 1 Corinthians 10:31
 - Colossians 3:17
 - Colossians 3:23–24
- It is typical for the godless to go about their lives and business with little or no thought to God and His ways.
 - Matthew 24:38–39
- Followers of Jesus should be worshipfully conscious of Jesus at all times.

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“¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.”

- Godless plans for the future, made by limited human beings who have no ability to accurately predict the future, is another manifestation of arrogance.
- God places many unpredictable twists and turns into life to show no one has any guarantees outside of Him.
 - Proverbs 27:1
- There is no way Job understood the reasons for the loss of property and the loss of his children.
 - Job 1:20–22
- Christians should understand that God is operating in all the stuff life brings.

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Humans live uncertain lives guided by God's sovereign hand (4:14b-15)

What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

- Life is unpredictable, fragile and brief.
- All the denials in the world will not alter our God-given date with death.
 - Hebrews 9:27
- Even for those reaching 100, life is shockingly short.
 - Psalm 39:5–6
- With the brevity of life in mind, we should live each day with an eternal perspective.
 - 2 Corinthians 4:16–18

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¹⁵ *Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."*

- The necessity for every follower of Jesus is the conscious surrender to the sovereign purpose of God and the glory of God in all things.
- Submission to God's purpose does not mean we deny hardship and affliction.
- It means we take every occurrence as coming from the hand of God.
 - Proverbs 16:9
 - Proverbs 19:21

AFFIRMATIONS OF EARTHLY COMPETENCE ARE AUDACIOUS AND SINFUL (4:16-17)

Self-glorification is morally corrupt (4:16) - ¹⁶ *As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*

- The world loves to see self-assured and confident people.
 - But God doesn't!
 - God wants to see our hearts assured of His promises, displaying confidence in His purpose, so that His name glorified in all that happens.
- James says pride and boasting is evil.
 - When people boast about their independent wisdom, personal ingenuity, or social sophistication they are involved in arrogant mutiny against God.
 - To feel such self-confidence is to rejoice in a suit of fig leaves.

AFFIRMATIONS OF EARTHLY COMPETENCE ARE AUDACIOUS AND SINFUL (4:16-17)

Failure to turn from pride and affirm the all-sufficiency of God is sin (4:17) - ¹⁷
So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

- We are instructed to take God and His truth into account in all our planning.
- We are to praise Him when things go well and trust Him when hardships abound.
- Failure to follow these instructions is sin.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How many of you have plans for the week, the month, the year, and your retirement somewhat put in order?
- How is your mind segregating your life into categories of secular and sacred?
- How are you living life as a practical atheist?
- Are you willing to ask God for humility to see work and all of life as worship?

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