

## **Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

### **Central Truth**

Whoever boasts in themselves will perish, but whoever boasts in the Lord will prevail.

### **Purpose**

James writes these verses to continue to encourage the believers there to not become part of the world and to remind them of what worldliness looks like. James uses direct and specific language to display how to react and behave as Christians, and warns those who look to the world and who boast in themselves. The theme of the surrender of our will flows out of these verses and to be aligned to the will of the Lord's is encouraged.

### **Outline**

#### **4:13 – 5:6 Boasting in self.**

The reliance and prideful agenda of relying on self to achieve outcomes comes from an inability to see how God has been working to bring about his purposes. This selfish and sinful practice leads to so many other dangers, and James wants to knock it on the head by pointing out that we need to look to God for our direction.

#### **4:15 – 4:17 Knowing God's will.**

Now we start to look at things from another view point – in particular God's! James take us through an interesting section here as he identifies a problem we all have, submission of our will to God's. This shows the separation that we have with our Heavenly Father and the grace that we have been shown in Jesus.

#### **5:1-6. Where is your treasure.**

James doesn't let us off the hook he continues to build momentum to this point where again we have some tension, where exactly is your heart. As God knows our hearts this is frightening! We see here in these demonstrations of misused wealth just how damaging sin is and how it hurts others. We also see the danger to looking to things created rather than the Creator!

### **Reading**

**James 4:13 – 5:6.**

**Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

James 4:13 – 5:6

- We all know people who boast about things all the time.
- They just can't wait to offload all the wonderful things that they do.
- Want to do and are going to do.
- When we see them we know it's coming.
- Not only do they boast in themselves
- But they seem to have all these outlandish plans of I'm gonna do this this or I'm gonna do that.
- These are the people whose talk always seems to be around.
- Where they are going and what they are going to do when they get there.
- There's also always the idea that they are in control of what happens in their lives
- And what they pursue.
- Tends to be geared towards what that pursuit gives them.....materially.
- And in this quest to get those things.
- They have treated people unfairly in order to get what they want.
- We may know these people at our work places.
- And in our circle of friends
- And as James shows us here in this passage before us.
- They may even be in our churches.
- Our text tonight starts as a continuance from our previous weeks here at Trinity.
- Where we have been looking at the book of James.
- If you've just joined us tonight for the first time.
- The letter of James is a fantastic practical letter.
- Full of wonderful advice in how to live as a Christian.
- In a world where that can be at times difficult.
- It was probably written around the mid 40's AD.
- It has a very pastoral feel to it.
- And the author is as most commentators or scholars seem to agree.
- Is James the Lord's brother.
- It was written as like a two ways to live.
- As a model that Jesus set out before us.
- To choose the narrow gate.

## **Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- And to not take the wider easier gate in Matthew 7:13.
- In fact James has modelled for us a striking similarity to Jesus’ direct teachings from the Sermon on the Mount in this letter.
- James obviously considered it a very important talk
- He has on 16 occasions reused what Jesus spoke in that famous talk.
- And has repeated it to the audience here in this letter.
- As I was preparing this talk Its very obvious there are lots of different views on Jesus and the things that he said.
- As you can imagine.
- Some of which are from Atheists or Agnostic in their beliefs about God
- Whatever the particular world view is on matters of faith and religion.
- One thing that rung true became apparent.
- They all have considered the sermon in chapters 5-7 from the book of Matthew.....
  - as perhaps the greatest speech ever given by anyone – ever!
- They go on to say Its central teaching is still studied and recounted.
- Not just in Academia and religious institutions.
- But by the secular population all over the world.
- This is fascinating people who say they don’t believe in God.
- Or that Jesus was the Son of God.
- Regard the words of Jesus as perhaps the greatest in wisdom and teaching on how to treat our fellow man.....
  - that has ever been spoken.
- As Christians and believers here tonight this comes as no surprise to us.
- As we know these are the words of God in human form. (pause for 5 seconds)
- When Jesus said “When people revile you and persecute and utter all kinds of evil against you....
  - rejoice and be glad” in Matt 5 verses 11-12
- James reminds us.....
  - “Whenever you face trials of any kind consider it nothing but joy” in ch 1 verse 2.
- Jesus in Matthew 5:3 says...
  - “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”

## **Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- James again repeats for us....
  - “Has not God chosen the poor in the world....
  - to be heirs of the kingdom” in ch 2 verse 5.
- And the list goes on I haven’t the time to list each other example
- But please do take the time at some point to see how James very core of what he is preaching.
- .....Is modelled on what Jesus taught.
- This example is here for us to also be taught by Jesus.
- James starts his letter in ch: 1 v 1 addressing those in the dispersion.
- Those who are scattered due to being persecuted.
- And he continues to teach them and guide them in what to do in these times of trials.
- He goes on to encourage those to persevere
  - To remain steadfast.
  - And to display numerous characteristics of what that looks like.
- He encourages those to be active in their faith.
- Let their words have meaning.
- May they live out their lives in the light of the truth of the gospel.
- In Ch 2 he goes on to teach that we must be looking out for others in our lives that are poor.
- And in fact tells us to show no distinction at all in what we have.
- But tells us to be merciful as we have been shown mercy.
- The rest of ch:2 and into chapters 3 and 4 he again encourages us to do the work of the Lord.
- James tells us don’t be complacent or idle and lazy,
  - and to watch what we say and do.
- This leads us into ch 4 and the warning to not become part of the world.
- As in don’t look to earthly things for your foundation.
- Looking to these things lead to death.
- And as James says in ch 4 verse 7 is a temptation.....from the devil.
- This comes straight after v 6.
- Which states that “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble”

## **Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- In fact the whole theme of the letter revolves around our surrender.
- Take a look with me at verse 10 from ch 4.
  - “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you”
  - He.....will.....lift you up. (Pause for 5 seconds)
- Now because of that we pick up our text here.
- As the shift goes from warnings to not be lovers of the world in the early part of ch 4.
- To not look to self and to not boast in ourselves in v 13.
- It would be good to have your Bibles open to our passage tonight.
- As we go through the text starting in ch 4: verse 13.
- There are 3 sections which you have in the outline before you.
- The first one ch 4 verses 13-14 - Boasting in self
- The second point ch 4 verses 15-17 - Knowing God’s will
- And the last point ch 5 verses 1-6 - Where is your Treasure?(pause for 5 seconds)
- So boasting in self let me read these verses 13-14 again for you
- Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.”
- These first 2 words “now listen” have a real relational type feel to them.....don’t they.
- You can just imagine James gathering in those around them.....can’t you.
- He is really appealing to them.
- Almost pleading with them.
- “Now listen” he says.
- James after speaking about what causes quarrels and fights at the start of Ch 4.
- Has identified that turning away from God is the problem.
- And actually drawing nearer to him is the answer.
- We see that in v 8 of ch 4 where he tells us to draw near to God.
- James now here wants his readers.
- Those who are going to receive this letter.
- To not only highlight their error in judgment.

**Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- But bring a resolution as well.
- We will see this as we go further into the passage.
- You notice he does this again at the start of ch 5 in v 1 where again he begins with “Now listen.”
- James knows the purpose of those who are thinking like this.
- And wants them to reconsider their agendas.
- And he wants to realign them with the Lords.
- The problem doesn’t mean that actually having an agenda is a problem.
- It’s the heart issue behind it that needs addressing.
- V 13 speaks of going to a place and carrying on with some business and making some money.
- Seems pretty harmless.
- I know of plenty of people here hearing this tonight.....that have those same exact intentions.
  - Having a purpose and planning a journey.
  - Or moving around to find work is a sensible and quite a normal thing to do.
- And being confident and knowing what you are doing is a necessity in achieving all of these things.(Pause for 5 seconds)
- I recently made a plan to go to Sydney for training purposes.
- I went onto the website to book my plane ticket.
- I was making a plan.
- And the outcome of this plan was to be able to further my training.
- With the purposes of working in the field I am pursuing and hoping to do.
- So what’s the issue here
- What is the problem that James *is* addressing.
- Incidentally due to my inadequate internet skills.
- I had to actually ring virgin airlines and get the person there to complete my online efforts.....but that’s not important here.
- Sadly that is a true story.
- James here in this situation gives us a clue to the main issue.
- The person here in v 14 cannot see into the future.
- They cannot not possibly know what the next day will bring.

**Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- They are not God.
- The description here is of someone that is making all of these plans.
- But God doesn't seem to be included in any of these decisions.
- The people here in v 14 have relied on themselves to bring about outcomes.
- And God is not mentioned in these plans.
- God has not been counselled.
- We know this by earlier on in ch 4 in verse 4.
- Where James says to this same group of people he is referring to here.
- He says that they have become friends to the world.
- And have become enemies to God.
- Think about the language James uses here
- Enemies to God!!!!!!
- He likens this to adultery.
- I'm wondering if this is how we would view this situation.
- James goes on to say.
- These people have gone on to talk about a lot of things.
- But it's been done in their own strength.
- These people here have boasted in self.
- And haven't boasted in God.
- I think that James wants everyone to know.
- That whoever boasts in themselves will perish.
- But whoever boasts in the Lord will prevail.
- I'll repeat that again.
- Whoever boasts in themselves will perish.
- But whoever boasts in the Lord will prevail. (Pause for 5 seconds)
- The attitude here is there seems to be believers in Jesus.
- Behaving like those who don't know him at all.

**Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- James then goes on to say that our lives are like a mist.
- James.....is.....right.
- Our lives are passing before us at an amazing pace.
- It's already Oct of this year.
- Where did the time go.
- We are here for a very short time.
- Like a flash of lightening in the sky.
- Is our lifetime in the scope of eternity.(Pause for 3 seconds)
- An important thing to remember is.
- What we do here and now in our lives cannot alter or change time.
- I'll repeat that.
- What we do here and now in our lives cannot alter or change time.(Pause for 3 seconds)
- Now please don't hear me say that there are no consequences for our actions.
- Or it doesn't matter what we fill our time with.
- But let's be more concerned with the things that we can do.
- Rather than what we cannot.
- Our Lord taught us this on the great sermon on the mount in Matt 6:27.
- When he said..... "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life"
- In other words we can be concerned with the everyday things.
- but the attitude James is speaking of here.
- Is as if we can be in control of the broader things, eternal things.
- We must live our lives as James has helpfully pointed out for us in these verses.
- Not as though we have achieved what we have in arrogance.
- But we must give the credit to God for what we have been given.
- And honor God with our lives.
- This is in not just what we do have.
- But also in what we don't have.(Pause for at least 5 seconds)
- The second thing knowing God's will.



## **Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- If you have a look once again at verses 15-17 with me it reads
- Instead you ought to say
  - “If it is the Lord’s will we will live and do this or that.”
  - As it is, you boast and brag.
  - All such boasting is evil.
  - Anyone then who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it sins.
- James after reminding people of where their hope is.
- Then goes on to give an alternate response to what the right action.....for people in the Lord Jesus must be.
- James brings us back to the foundation of our faith “if it is the Lord’s will”.
- Again Jesus modelled this to us all as he was just about to go to his death.
- His crucifixion in Luke 22:42.
- When he said
  - “Father, if you are willing remove this cup from me.
  - Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done”
- James is realigning the direction of this group.
- For they seem to be a little bit lost.
- Again the agenda isn’t the concern here, James repeats basically the same thing in v 15.
- He acknowledges the intentions of the claims of “we will live and do this or that.”
- Do notice that before he says that he adds one important thing.
- A point which wasn’t at the forefront of the message that he is responding too.
- He simply says “if it is the Lord’s will.”
  - “We will do whatever it is that we are going to do.”(Pause for 5 seconds)
- .....It can be hard at times to know exactly what the will of God is.
- In verse 16 it seems.....it’s the opposite of looking to self and boasting in the arrogance of that.
- He repeats the spirit that is driving this self-proclamation.
- Is once again evil.(use hands to illustrate)
- Promotion of self and not acknowledging God
  - Wanting to make self on the same platform as God.

**Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- In fact making self like God most high.
- That sounds like someone I know to me.
- That does sound like the devil.(Pause for 3 seconds)
- .....Of course I don't think James is saying that anyone who boasts in anything
  - Or doesn't exactly know God's will is
  - is a satan worshipper.
- No.....he says that is the origin of where this comes from.
- And that element still can be present in the lives of the believers there.
- And it can be present in the lives of believers now.(pause for 5 seconds)
- James then confirms this line of thought with v 17.
- "Anyone then who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it sins"
- You could argue that anything outside the Lord's will is sin.
- In fact the Bible says in Romans 3:23 that
  - "We all have fallen short of the glory of God"
- This gives us a hint of our inability to save ourselves.
- That we have all sinned in some way, shape or form
- This introduces the need for a savior.
- Someone to stand between sinful man
  - and a Holy and completely righteous God.
- This displays God's grace in sending Jesus into the world as the sacrifice for sin.(use your hands)
  - For your sin
  - For my sin.
  - And for the sins of the whole world.
- In fact God sending Jesus into the world tells you something about us.
- .....We need saving.(Pause for 5 seconds)
- I recognize that there are some here tonight.....who are just checking us out.
- You may have come with a friend or you may have just wandered in off the street.
- Whatever brought you here tonight.
  - If you are here

**Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- and you haven't got the hope of Jesus as your Lord and Savior.
- Please.....speak with someone here about that.
- Either come or have a chat with me or one of the regulars here.
- We would only be too happy to answer any questions that you might have.
- About how Jesus takes away your sin.
- The division between you and God.(Pause for 3 seconds)
- Make no mistake.....please consider the claims that Jesus made about who he was (Pause for 3 seconds)
- Here at Trinity City we have a great opportunity for that to occur
- There's a Jesus Works course which is about to start soon.
  - This looks at the life of Jesus.
- And what he said he was here to do as the Son of God.
- Again.....please speak with someone about that
  - perhaps who you come here with tonight.
  - Take the time to see for yourself who Jesus said he was.
  - What he was here to do.
  - And the massive impact that has on our own individual lives.
  - There will come a time when the opportunity to do so will not be available.**(Pause for 5 seconds)**
  - **As** for those that James is referring to here in our passage.
- It's the same for believers now.
- Sin doesn't give glory to God.
- What we need is to be humble in our ambition.
- Being humble means to be obedient.
- As believers being obedient to God's word.....honors God.
- And as believers.....we respond to the grace that has been shown to us.....in obedience.(Use your fingers to display)
- So.... we must strive to be humble.(Pause for 2 seconds)
- Being humble means obedience.(Pause for 2 seconds)
- Obedience brings honor to God(Pause for 2 seconds)

## **Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- And obedience is the response to grace. (*Pause for 5 seconds*)
- Now this doesn't mean we are saved by what we do.
- In actual fact it's not what we do at all.
- It's what Jesus has done.....in dying on the cross that puts us right with God.
- James addresses this issue earlier on in the letter.
  - And gives us an example of what works and faith looks like.
- In ch:2 v 22 when speaking about a man called Abraham he writes.
- "You see that his faith and his actions were working together
  - and his faith was made complete by what he did"
  - **Now** the last point James is just pushing us a bit more in ch 5: verses 1-6.
- This section challenges us to examine our actions.
  - And to see where our hearts are.
  - What are we worshipping
  - Where is our treasure(Pause for 3 seconds)
  - **Jesus** told us in Matt 6:21
  - "For where your treasure is.....there your heart will be also"
- James seeing what some people have done pleads with them again like he did in v 1
- He says "listen now."
- Remember I pointed out earlier this plea to those around him.
- Listen now he says.
- "You rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you."
  - "Your wealth has rotted and moths have eaten your clothes".....in v 1.
- In v 3 he goes on to say
  - "Your gold and silver are corroded"
  - "Their corrosion will testify against you..... and eat your flesh like fire."
- James isn't mixing his words loosely here.
- This is strong deliberate language.
- James compares to misdirecting your faith towards wealth
  - As being consumed by fire.

**Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- It will destroy you.
- It will eat your flesh like fire.
- I wonder if you've ever thought of it.....quite like that before.
- He then adds "You have hoarded wealth in last days."
- He seems to be suggesting that having enough for what you need
  - hasn't quite cut it.
  - There's been a desire to put away more than what is required.
  - So much in fact that "hoarding" is necessary.
  - **The** 'Last days' that James is referring to here .....is the time from when the Lord Jesus first arrived.
- These last days are not completed.
- That time will come when the Lord Jesus returns.
- This day of the Lord....is mentioned by other New Testament Apostles like Paul and Peter.
- And teaches us something about us.....as Christians.....who are waiting for the return of Jesus.
- They were encouraging us to live "Holy and Godly" lives.
- As we look forward to the day when this occurs.
- Our behavior should reflect this truth.(Pause for 3 seconds)
- James again is displaying the futility of the things that we own.....and what we have.
- We know from what we have found out earlier on in this text.
- That.....these people have trusted in their own strength.
- They boasted in their own arrogance.....in v 16 of ch 4.
- They have boasted in.....their own ability.
- And the result of that.....has been the collection of things.....that they have purchased.
- These things.....have been the direct result of what they have invested in.
- What they consider as worth investing in.
- Their treasure or what their works has produced.....is only this.
  - The things of this world.
  - What they have purchased will perish.
- These things can't make you right with God.(Pause for 3 seconds)

## **Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- In fact these things James informs us can bring you misery.
- They can't fully or completely satisfy you.
- At this point we can ask are these people believers.
- Believers who have gained wealth and misused it.
- Or are they non-believers.....who are now facing the wrath of God for sin.....without the saving grace of God in Jesus.....well.....
- There's arguments for both cases.
  - What we do know is that James seems more concerned with the misuse of wealth.
  - Rather than having wealth at all.(Pause for 3 seconds)
  - **We** know that from further on in the passage in v 4 it states.
- Look!.....The wages you failed to pay.
  - The workmen.....who mowed your fields.....are crying out against you.
- So.....there has been direct manipulation of not paying someone fairly or honestly.
  - For the work that they have done.
- These people have been so concerned with accumulating wealth.
- That they have ripped of other people in the process.
- Those who have mowed the fields.(*Pause for 5 seconds*)
- I was trying to think of a similar situation that we might come across today
- And I remembered something that I observed recently.....something of what James might be referring to.
- I love to watch documentaries and current affairs programs.
- Quite often a theme that comes up with this type of show is.....
- People who manipulate others for selfish gain and treating them unfairly.
- This one situation was a Plumber who had.....it seems deliberately lied to an elderly man.....about the state of his property
- This plumber had told this retiree.....someone who had worked all his life for the house he was now living in
- That the pipes in his house were so bad.....that he has to dig up his whole back yard.
- Apparently the total cost of this job which included many visits over an 8 month period .....was going to be over 200 000 dollars.

**Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- He then proceeded to tell him that if he didn't
- His house would have to be bulldozed by law
- And that he would have to let the council know.
- Now it turns out that this was all a lie and it wasn't anywhere near as bad as that at all(Pause for 3 seconds)
- **Now** I know that this is an extreme example.....and in this case it was the hired worker doing the manipulating
- But the main point is.....
- God wants our words to be true.
- If someone is hired to do something for them.
  - Or if they are hired themselves to do a job
  - Its expected to be done with honesty and integrity.
  - This is the example James is using.....
  - This has been dis-carded with.
  - And self indulgence and the desire to live in luxury has replaced it.
- And what has happened is people have been taken advantage of
  - People were not in a position to stand up for themselves.....
  - James is concerned with this pattern of behaviour
- He goes on to say in v. 5-6
- That they "have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence."
- They have fattened their hearts.
- They have condemned and murdered those who didn't oppose their oppression.
- But more importantly it reveals that.
  - God who sees and hears all....has heard those who have cried out to him.
- For whoever boasts in themselves will perish.
  - But whoever boasts in the Lord will prevail.(Pause for 5 seconds)
  - **Again** we see as we do so many times in Jesus' teachings.
  - The roles are reversed in what the world says and does.
  - And how God sees and acts.
- I will repeat that.
- In Jesus' teachings.....the roles are reversed.

**Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- From what the world says and does
- And how God sees and acts.
- The people here who God has heard
  - Are the ones who have been oppressed.....who have not resisted what is being done to them.
- Like in the last sentence of our text here tonight.....but have called upon their Lord and God to deliver.
- To save them.
- These people God hears.
- The laborers here are laboring in the Lord.
- For whoever boasts in themselves will perish.
- But whoever boasts in the Lord will prevail.
- They have put their hope and faith and trust in not what is going on around them.
- But they have looked to the Lord of Hosts.
- The people here crying out.
- Their treasure is knowing the Lord.
- Not worrying about where they will go or what they will do.
- They haven't been concerned with boasting in themselves
- No.....the people here have humbled themselves before the Lord.
- Their ambition has been to be humble. **(Pause for 5 seconds)**
- If your heart has been drifting between focusing on what your next day will bring.
- If you're feeling like every day is just another day
- Remember.....that God isn't so concerned with what car you drive.
- Your social standing.
- Or what house you live in. **(Pause for 3 seconds)**
- I know that in this congregation.
  - There are many very busy people.
  - People who work very hard and work very long hours.
- The roles and responsibilities of the people here are amazing and outstanding.
- We have Doctors.....Lawyers.....Teachers among many other professional occupations.



**Talk – James 4:13-5:6 – Humble Ambition**

---

- And I know that they are very passionate about what they do.
- When you talk to them about their jobs they display this passion.....Its obvious
- And I also recognize that God has placed them there to do so.
  - But in all that please remember that what we do as a job.....isn't where our identity lies.
- Our identity revolves around what we believe and who we are in Christ.
- James wants us to know something about our relationship with God.
- James wants us to humble ourselves before God.
- But more importantly.
- God wants us to humble ourselves before him.
- We need to display this humble ambition.
- God warns those in the letter of James of trusting in their possessions.
- Their silver and gold.
- He says that only leads to misery.
- The only thing that we need to trust in is His son Jesus Christ.
- For whoever boasts in themselves will perish.
- But whoever boasts in the Lord will prevail.
- Let's pray.