

You are well aware of the theme of sovereignty by now.

**This morning I want to talk to you about
Understanding God's sovereignty in a practical way in your life.**

**Some of you have reached the point, others are about to
Where you will be encouraged to make decisions regarding your future.**

At school they want you to decide where you're going to college.

This entails having an idea of what sort of career you want.
This is determined typically by two things

- Your desires
- How much money you want to make

**This morning I want to go against the flow a little
AND ASK YOU A DIFFERENT QUESTION.**

*In all your searching and seeking regarding your career in life and your
college selection, have you yet asked God what His will is for you in life?*

*The book of **Ecclesiastes** is a great book
Where an old preacher gives practical advice to a young man
About decisions he is making in life.*

One of my favorite passages to share with teenagers is:

Ecclesiastes 11:9 "Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things."

I'm sure you've heard it, I heard it way back when I was in school:

"Follow your heart"

Or perhaps it is more like **"Do what you want"**

And the writer of Ecclesiastes said, "That's true, you can, but you had better understand that you are going to answer for those decisions to God."

See, God is sovereign over your life.

His plan is not optional.

He created you and intends to guide you.

If you seek to defy His will then you will answer to Him for that.

Perhaps you should consider God's advice regarding the future.

Matthew 6:31-34 "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

That might be different than anything you've ever heard before.

- **The world** constantly pushes planning ahead, certainly it pushes college, it emphasizes the importance of landing a good job.
- **The world** even emphasizes the importance of finding something you love to do so that your life isn't miserable.

But what does God say?

**Don't worry
Seek His kingdom & seek righteousness**

And God will take care of the rest.

Jesus said the **Gentiles eagerly seek the things of the world.
WE ARE TO BE DIFFERENT.**

**Now, that doesn't mean that college is out of the question,
Or that the career you desire is not the career God has in store for you.**

**But what I would say to you is that it would be a foolish move
Not to submit all of those plans and desires
To the sovereign God of the universe who created you.**

THIS MORNING we are going to look at a brief analogy
That James gives to the church.

James calls it BOASTING.

**Often times we think of boasting as someone who brags all the time.
And that is certainly a part of it.**

But the boasting James has in mind here

- Is not just the bragging type of boasting,
- But rather the man who thinks he has it all figured out
- And is going to follow his own plan with no interest in seeking God's will.

That is a dangerous move.

Jeremiah said:

Jeremiah 9:23-24 "Thus says the LORD, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the LORD."

**We are talking about the type of individual
That not only thinks they know everything,
But who is unwilling to listen to anyone else – even God.**

And don't want to get into some sort of list of examples,

But let me just put it this way:

Any time you do not follow
God's ordained plan, command, pattern, or example
(and instead follow what seems best to you)
That is the type of arrogant boasting that James is referring to.

It is to estimate that your wisdom is better than God's
And that your ability is better than God's.

Sound arrogant?

That is the type of strong-willed, arrogant, boasting person that James is dealing with here.

I want to show you 5 things.

#1 AN ACCOUNT OF BOASTING

James 4:13

*It could be that James has a specific incident in mind,
But more than likely he is simply giving a hypothetical
Of what arrogant, strong-willed, boasting looks like.*

You find an individual that is dripping with confidence in their own ability.

*There is no prayer
There is no seeking
There is no submission
This person has it all under control*

And if you want to break it down a little further
You can easily see the 5 areas that they are so confident in.

1) THE TIME

"Come now, you who say, "Today or Tomorrow"

They have already determined the time table
In which they are going to carry out their plan.
They didn't seek the counsel of the Lord,
They are doing it WHEN they feel it is right.

2) THE TRAIL

"we will go to such and such a city"

They have already determined where they are going to go.
They have picked this on their own.

**How can we possibly know where the best place for us is,
If we have not first sought God's will?**

3) THE TENURE

"and spend a year there"

They are surely confident how long their trip will take.

They seem surely confident that they can accomplish
All they need to accomplish in a years time.

4) THE TACTICS

"and engage in business"

They also determine **how they are going to accomplish their goal.**

They already know the strategy they are going to impart
In order to do what they think must be done.

5) THE TARGET

"and make a profit"

There goal was set by them, and it was all about what they wanted.

Now, this statement by this man MAY NOT SEEM STRANGE to you at all.

In fact, we hear statements like it all the time.

- After I graduate, I'm going to attend "such and such" university.
- I'm going to study and after 4 years I'm going to get my degree in "whatever".
- That's what I want to do, because it's a good paying job, and I can work here and here and here.

Our young people are actually encouraged to make such a plan.

*It's not always college.
It could be military or marriage or trade school or whatever...*

The point is, they have it all figured out, even their success.

They have a plan for life.

Now it is certainly not wrong to be prepared and plan ahead
And those types of things.

James is not endorsing some "fly by the seat of your pants" type of
lifestyle where you don't plan anything.

James is merely talking about the type of person who
Makes all these plans without consulting the word or will of God.

*They aren't interested in what God would do or have them do.
They've already got a plan and they don't need God's advice.
It is arrogant.*

#2 THE ABSURDITY OF BOASTING

James 4:14

So here we have a person who has adamantly and confidently
Made their own plans.

You particularly notice the confidence, **"we will...and...and...and..."**

They've got it all figured out.
And here is why that is so absurd.

"Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow."

They are acting with certainty in an area
They can't possibly know anything about.

No one knows what tomorrow holds.

Proverbs 27:1 "Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth."

Proverbs 16:9 "The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps."

Anyone who confidently asserts what they will do is foolish,
For it is impossible for them to know what tomorrow will bring.

Furthermore, you don't even know if you will be here tomorrow.

"You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."

The point to that being:
Life is Brief
Life is Temporary

Psalms 103:15-16 "As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer."

It is like the rich man and his barns:

Luke 12:16-21 "And He told them a parable, saying, 'The land of a rich man was very productive. 'And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 'Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 'And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.' "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Psalms 90:1-12 "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man back into dust And say, "Return, O children of men." For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night. You have swept them away like a flood, they fall

asleep; In the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; Toward evening it fades and withers away. For we have been consumed by Your anger And by Your wrath we have been dismayed. You have placed our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your presence. For all our days have declined in Your fury; We have finished our years like a sigh. As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away. Who understands the power of Your anger And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You? So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom."

It just doesn't make sense that anyone would confidently assert
What they will do in the future.

And again this isn't saying that if you tell someone,
"I'm going to Lubbock tomorrow" that you are sinning.

What James is referring to is the person
Who follows their own plans and will in spite of God's.

This would be a person whom God told them not to go
And they stubbornly said, **"Well we are!"**

It is foolish arrogance.
And it is absolutely absurd.

Isaiah 30:15-17 "For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength." But you were not willing, And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses," Therefore you shall flee! "And we will ride on swift horses," Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift. One thousand will flee at the threat of one man; You will flee at the threat of five, Until you are left as a flag on a mountain top And as a signal on a hill."

All of their boasts proved to be absurd.
So is everyone who is strong willed and boasts against God.

An Account of Boasting, The Absurdity of Boasting

#3 THE ALTERNATIVE TO BOASTING

James 4:15

Here is what ought to happen:

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

Instead of arrogant boasting
Instead of strong will and defiance
There should be humble submission.

It is the simple reminder that
You don't even know if you are going to live tomorrow.

I know it APPEARS that you have control over a lot of things,

But stop and think about all the things you don't have control over.

- 2020 SHOULD'VE TAUGHT YOU THIS
- You don't have control **over any other person** (gov't might shut you down)
- You don't have control **over nature** (fire or hurricane or plague)
- You don't have control **over your organs** (you could die)

And if you think about it, those are some pretty big loose ends
You are failing to account for.

Not to mention if you raise your odds of death

By riding in a car, or turning on a power tool, or sticking your face in a fan.

**You ought to back up and realize that your life is a gift from God
And it is all up to His sovereign control.**

Psalms 139:16 "Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them."

Acts 17:26 "and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,"

There is a sovereign God who has numbered your days
And appointed your limits.

I think it wise then that you consult His will for your life.

So instead you ought to walk with humble submission.

Instead you ought to seek **His kingdom and His righteousness**
AND NOT BE LIKE THE WORLD.

**I HOPE NOW YOU ARE SEEING THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE
WE ARE TALKING ABOUT.**

There is a way in which **THE WORLD** views the sovereignty of God.

- They totally reject it.
- They don't acknowledge God's sovereignty.
- They don't submit to God's sovereignty.
- They don't seek God's will.

Instead, they view themselves to be sovereign over their own domain
And they seek their own will.

*And that works ok for right now, but as we said, it all ends in judgment.
God has fixed a day in which He will judge.*

But then there is the way in which **THE CHRISTIAN** views the sovereignty of God.

- They totally submit to it.
- They acknowledge God to be the supreme sovereign.

- They submit to God's will and trust His will in all things.
- They seek God's will.

**They deny themselves and lay it all at the feet of Christ
That He might be glorified.**

*The two trains are polar opposites.
You can't do both at the same time at all.*

**And this is really the decision that we lay before you this weekend.
WHO IS THE SOVEREIGN OVER YOUR LIFE?**

You may walk out of here today saying, **"I am!"**

And James would say, *"Then you're a fool. Because you can't even extend your life let alone control it."*

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

An Account of Boasting, The Absurdity of Boasting, An Alternative to Boasting

#4 THE ARROGANCE OF BOASTING

James 4:16

*So we know what boasting looks like, we know how foolish it is,
And we know what we should do instead.*

**The tragedy is that some will totally disregard all that
And still determine to be the master of their own fate.**

- They know what boasting is
- They know that it is foolish
- They know what they should do instead

"But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil."

Despite all they know, they still choose to boast.
They remain strong willed about their own plans and abilities.

AND THAT IS ARROGANT!

Jeremiah 6:16-19 "Thus says the LORD, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.' "And I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!' But they said, 'We will not listen.' "Therefore hear, O nations, And know, O congregation, what is among them. "Hear, O earth: behold, I am bringing disaster on this people, The fruit of their plans, Because they have not listened to My words, And as for My law, they have rejected it also."

- It is a person who thinks they have found a better way.
- It is a person who throws the will of God behind their back.
- It is a person that disregards the plans and counsel of the Lord.

Do you realize that there is not a more arrogant thing you can do than disobey the word of God?

That is to adamantly tell God that you know better than Him.

That is to tell God that even if His way is right,
That you aren't afraid of what will happen if you disobey.

It is brash and arrogant.

In fact James has a different word for it.

"all such boasting is evil."

That is a blatant comparison to Satan.

Listen to this Old Testament passage.

It refers to the King of Babylon, but many agree that it is also a reference to Satan.

Isaiah 14:12-16 "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! "But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit. "Those who see you will gaze at you, They will ponder over you, saying, 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms,"

Did you hear that?

5 times

"I will" – "I will" – "I will" – "I will" – "I will"

That was the mentality of Satan.

- I don't care about God's will
- I don't care what God wants
- I'm going to follow my plan,
- I'm going to trust my ability.

It is arrogant and it is evil.

**And obviously you can see why James has such a problem
With a person who would call them self a Christian
And then live more like the devil.**

He has a problem with the Christian
Who can ignore God's will and follow their own.

Someone once said that there are two words in the English language that can not be put together: **"No – Lord"**

Jesus said:

Luke 6:46 "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

And why would it be that people actually in the church
Would still refuse to read God's word and obey God's word?

That is evil.

And that brings then to the final point

#5 THE APPLICATION OF BOASTING

James 4:17

There it is, the mighty **"Therefore"**

Here is the conclusion.

"to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin."

Taken in context with what we have been studying,

You could read that like this:

**"The one who knows what God's will is,
But does not do it, to him it is sin."**

- It is one thing to be the ignorant heathen in distant corners of Africa
- It is one thing to be the secluded native in the deep jungles of South America
- It is one thing to be the Hindu forbidden to ever hear the truths of God

That is one thing

But to have been fortunate enough to have understood God's will
And then to totally disregard it is a greater problem all together.

Luke 12:47-48 "And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."

It is a dangerous thing to know God's will and still disregard it.

In fact, **"it is sin."**

And maybe that broadens your understanding of sin a little this morning.

**Many times sin is associated with us doing things we shouldn't.
Sin is seen as us doing bad things.**

And some people even adopt the view that
As long as they don't do bad things, then they aren't sinning.

- As long as I don't drink
- As long as I don't cuss
- As long as I don't steal
- As long as I don't commit adultery
- As long as I don't murder

Here we find that a failure to do what God desires is also a sin.

- *Things like not forgiving when He says to*
- *Things like not participating in missions when He says to*
- *Things like not humbly submitting to His will in all things*

Those are just as sinful to God as if you were getting drunk and cussing.

For both are an example of disregarding God's will for your life.

One adamantly does what He forbids

One adamantly disregards what He commands

They both are arrogant

They both are evil

- *You must not stiffen your neck before God.*
- *You must not seek your will over His*
- *You must not be arrogant.*

Proverbs 1:20-33 "Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square; At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: "How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate knowledge? "Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. "Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but they will not find me, Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD. "They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. "So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated with their own devices. "For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them. "But he who listens to me shall live securely And will be at ease from the dread of evil."

It is a foolish thing to choose your will over God's.

And so the application is obvious.

- *Humble yourself before God*
- *Seek His will in all things*
- *And when His will is revealed, then do it.*

Don't force your own agenda

Don't force your own plans

Humbly submit to God.

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

Put another way:

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 your paths straight."