

“The Saints’ Subtle Sins”

James 4:11-17

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I. Introduction

- A. The story of the Prodigal Son
 - 1. “A certain man had two sons...”
 - 2. What about the elder son?
 - a) Two kinds of sin
 - b) Flesh and Spirit
- B. In our text today, we come face to face with two common sins committed by Christians
 - 1. They are subtle sins
 - 2. Sadly, they are often acceptable sins because they are sins of the Spirit and not sins of the flesh
 - 3. What are these sins?
 - a) Leaving God out of your speech
 - b) Leaving God out of your plans

II. The Sin of Leaving God Out of Your Speech (James 4:11-12)

- A. How does the sin of leaving God out of your speech manifest itself?
 - 1. In a critical, faultfinding, judgmental attitude and speech toward fellow Christians
 - 2. James issues a command, and it’s in the present tense (v. 11)
 - a) “Stop speaking evil of one another” (v. 11)
 - 3. What does James mean by “speaking evil of one another”?
 - a) He is not forbidding all forms of judgment by Christians
 - 1) We can judge a person’s actions as sinful if they are contrary to God’s Word
 - 2) We can and should confront a sinning brother
 - a. (Matthew 18)
 - 3) Jesus said, “You will know them by their fruit”
 - 4. What then is James condemning?
 - a) To speak evil of a person is literally “to talk against,” “to slander,” “to defame,” “to gossip,” or “backbite”
 - 1) Illustration- “I don’t mean to be critical but...” or “perhaps I shouldn’t say this but...”
 - 2) We often put others down to make ourselves look good
 - b) This is the sin Jesus forbids
 - 1) (Matthew 7:1-5)
 - 2) It’s the love of finding fault
- B. James gives us two reasons why this evil speaking is sin
 - 1. You’re putting yourself above the Law (v. 11b)
 - a) You are breaking the Law
 - 1) “Thou art not a doer of the Law” (v. 11)
 - 2) What Law?

- a. “If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well” (James 2:8)
 - b. (Leviticus 19:8)
 - b) You’re judging the Law as being no good (v. 11b)
 - c) You’re setting yourself above the Law
 - 1) You are saying, “I am above the Law”
 - a. Illustration- Driving the speed limit
- 2. You’re putting yourself above the Lawgiver who is God (v. 12)
 - a) “...who art thou that judgest another?” (v. 12)
 - b) Who do you think you are?
 - c) There is only one lawgiver (God)
 - d) God can save and destroy
 - e) You are usurping a prerogative which belongs only to God
 - 1) We don’t have all the facts. Only God knows everything.
 - a. Illustration- Charles Swindoll
 - b. (1Corinthians 13)

III. The Sin of Leaving God Out of Your Plans (James 4:13-17)

- A. These verses condemn an arrogant independence of God
 - 1. It is living in an arrogant self-sufficiency without God
 - a) Illustration- Christians living like Atheists
 - 2. They love God and do as they please and say they love God
 - a) We plan, but we don’t pray. If we do pray, it is only to ask God to bless our plans
- B. Why is it so foolish to live in an arrogant independence of God?
 - 1. Because of the complexity of life (v. 13)
 - a) Life is complex
 - b) We think we know better than God and what is best for our lives
 - c) We set our own time
 - 1) Today or tomorrow
 - d) We select our own path and place
 - 1) “We will go into such a city”
 - e) We decide the duration
 - 1) “Continue there a year”
 - f) We arrange the activities
 - 1) “Buy and sell”
 - g) We predict the outcome
 - 1) “Get gain”
 - 2) But we forget God
 - 2. Because of the uncertainty of life (v. 14)
 - a) “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow”
 - 1) Illustration- Job
 - b) We don’t know what tomorrow holds, but we know who holds tomorrow
 - 1) “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Proverbs 27:1)
 - a. Don’t forget God

- b. We need His wisdom, strength, guidance, provision, and protection
 - c. Don't forget to live in the present
 - i. Not past or future
- 3. Because of the brevity of life (v. 14b)
 - a) "For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away" (v. 14)
 - 1) "A declining shadow" (Psalm 102:11)
 - 2) "A vanishing cloud" (Job 7:9)
 - 3) "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field" (Psalm 103:15)
 - b) About the time your face clears up, your mind gets fuzzy
 - c) Life is short, don't forget God
 - 1) Teach us to number our days, that we may..." (Psalm 90:12)

IV. Conclusion

- A. How then should we live?
 - 1. In dependence upon God
 - a) Seeking to do the will of God (v. 15)
 - 1. (Matthew 6:33)
 - 2. Don't live in self-boasting
 - a) It's evil (v. 16)
 - 3. If you know the right thing to do and don't do it, it is sin (v. 17)
 - a) "Trust in the Lord..." (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- B. Have you forgotten God?
 - 1. He hasn't forgotten you!