

**Faith That Works**  
**“The Saints Subtle Sins”**  
**James 4:11-17**

**Introduction-** We all know that a boat is designed to go on the water. It is very dangerous when the water gets into the boat. So also, we are to be *in the world*, but it’s a great danger when the world gets in the Christian.

James is addressing the problem of the world in the believers. In chapter three, two kinds of wisdom. In chapter four, they were fighting and quarreling. Because of them, selfishness; worldliness; and pride.

We often think of worldliness as sexual immorality, drunkenness and the party life. However, it can be far more subtle than that. **Illus.:** The Prodigal Son, but also the elder brother. So sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit.

James points out two subtle sins often committed by the saints. They are a symptom of the world in the believer.

**I. A Critical, Faultfinding, Judgmental Attitude Toward Fellow Christians** (vv. 11-12)

In one word, “ensorious”- severely critical of others.

**A. Verse 11 opens with a present imperative.** So James is commanding them to stop speaking evil of one another.

**B. How does this relate to what has gone before in James?**

- It could be a short post-script on the tongue.
- An illustration of what happens in a proud heart void of humility, (vs. 10).
- It is another way worldliness expresses in a believer’s life.

**C. What does James mean by “speaking evil against each other?”**

- He’s not forbidding all forms of judgement by Christians.
- We can judge a person’s actions as sinful if it’s contrary to the Word of God.
- We can and should confront a sinning Christian. Matt. 18

James is not forbidding that. What James is forbidding is two kinds of evil speech:

**1. Slandering-** Malicious speech that is untrue. The Greek, “to talk against”; “to defame”, literally “to talk down.”

Why do we do this?

1. We are following worldly wisdom.
2. Revenge over some slight, real or imagined.
3. To make ourselves look better than we really are.
4. Simply too much empty people talk.

**2. It’s also a critical, faultfinding, censoriousness attitude toward others.**

Illus.: Jesus forbid this (Matt. 7:1-5). Also Paul (Romans 14:4, 10, 13).

**Criticism is one of the worst expressions of human pride. James points out two reasons it’s sin.**

**1. It’s self-elevation about the law (vs. 11b).**

A. You are breaking the law.

Ask, what law? Lev. 19:18, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Also see, 2:8.

B. You are judging the law as being no good.

C. You are setting yourself above the law.

When you deliberately break the law, you are in effect saying, you are above the law.

**2. It’s self-elevation above the lawgiver (vs. 12).**

N.L.T. “*God alone, who gave the law, is the judge. He alone has the power to save or destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbor?*”

You are usurping a prerogative which belongs only to God. (You don’t know everything.)

God permits no man to share His judgment seat or to modify His laws. God is the sovereign judge of all and can save and destroy.

## II. An Arrogant Self-Sufficiency that Ignores Our Need to Depend on God and Submit to His Will, vv. 13-17.

These verses give another example of the worldly spirit. We get busy with our lives and forget to depend on God or seek His will for our lives. We change Augustines, “Love God and as you please. To do as you please and say you love God. We plan, but we forget to pray, If we do pray, it’s only to ask God to bless our plans. The big lesson, *don’t forget God!*

Why should we depend on God and seek His will?

### 1. Because life is complex (vs. 13).

Note the details this man thought about:

- The time- today or tomorrow
- The personnel- we
- The place- such and such a city
- The duration- continue there a year
- The activity- buy and sell
- The results- get gain

But he forgot God! Apart from the will of God, life is a mystery.. So young person, mid-life, senior, *life is about knowing and doing the will of God!*

### 2. Life is uncertain (vs. 14a)

We need to depend on God for wisdom, strength, guidance, provision and protection.

“Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.”

Don’t boast, but do trust.

Two great errors people often make:

1. We forget that life is now.
2. We forget about God.

### **3. Life is short (vs. 14b)**

1. The complexity of life.
2. The uncertainty of life.
3. The brevity of life and frailty.

Life is so short and also frail.

Ps. 102:11- “a declining shadow”

Job 7:7- “a whiff of breath”

Job 7:9- “a vanishing cloud”

Ps. 103:15- “as for man, his days are grass; as a flower of the field”

### **Illus.: The Rich Fool.**

1. He thought life was long.
2. He thought life was things.
3. He forgot God, he planned for the temporal, but forgot the eternal.

So teach us to number our days, so we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

### **What is wise?**

- Seek God and His will (vs. 15). Trust the Lord. Don't worry. Seek God (Matt. 6:33).
- Don't boast. It's sinful and worldly (vs. 16).
- The sins of omission (vs. 17). Living as though God didn't exist. Not proud, self-seeking. See 3:17, God's wisdom.