"FAITH WITH BOOTS ON"
BIG IDEA . . . Part 11: The Peril of Playing God (Jam. 4:11-17)

INTRO. – Eric Berne wrote best seller *Games People Play* (1964). It exposes subtle ways we manipulate people, often w/o realizing it. Three years later (1967) *Games Christians Play* came out, taking readers into the *Christian* community to the games *Christians* play beneath a religious veneer. For example . . . Such games are not unique. *James warns his readers about a widely played game Christians play, then and now, PLAYING GOD*. "Why are we so eager to play?" Since Garden, all of us have been born with the desire to be God in our own lives and in the lives of others. This innate desire to play God is one we all fight to control. Poem "Invictus" . . . **Christians should avoid the peril of playing God with others and with self**. *In these verses, James identifies two aspects in the perilous game of playing God.*

I. THE *PROBLEM OF* PLAYING GOD (vv. 11-16)

A. With *OTHERS* (vv. 11-12)

1. *Description* of HOW we do this: Back to tongue problems (1:26; 2:12; 3:1-12): *slander* and *speak against* are similar to defame, denigrate, backbite, bad mouth, talk down to. We lie about or spread their faults to others. When we do this, it lowers the listener's estimate of that other person. We tend only to play this game when the one being talked about is not around to defend. We also *judge*, here means to be critical and condemning. We play God in life of others when we try to elevate ourselves over them. Here's some examples of phony words we use to cover up: "Stop me if I'm wrong, but . . ." or "Maybe I should not say this, but . . ." or "I don't want to be critical, but . . ."
2. *Danger* WHEN we try to play God in another's life, we are guilty of *disobeying the Word* (v. 11b). Scriptures teach us to fulfill the law of love (2:8). Whenever we fail to obey the Word, we are judging it to be of no value at that point. We are also in danger of *displacing the Lord* of His rightful position. He alone is Judge and able to save or destroy (12a). Besides, we are all on same ground as fallen sinners (12b). Jesus condemned a judgmental spirit (Matt. 7:1-5). It's okay to discern, evaluate, and judge sin, but only after self-judgment and with motive to restore. Scott Harris . . .

B. With *OURSELVES* (vv. 13,14,16) – Even more disturbing and perilous is how this game plays out in our lives as *Christians*.

1. *Description* of HOW we do this (v. 13). This person planned it all (when, where, how long, what, why). When we live and plan without God, we become the final authority and state "I control my life!" The condemnation is not for hard work. planning or profit, but for an attitude of self-sufficiency and superiority toward others. Worse than an intellectual atheist, but a *practical* one, claiming to know God yet leaving Him out. He was even arrogant about it (v. 16). God's people are guilty of this in business, education, marriage, etc. Then, we wonder why it becomes so difficult. K. Hughes writes . . .
2. *Danger* to play God in our lives James says for two reasons:
   - *uncertainty of life (14a)* – We just don't know about tomorrow. Life is so unpredictable – accidents, illnesses, disasters, etc. The best we can do is guess. ILLUS: 10 pennies . . .
   - *brevity of life (14b)* – We are only a mist (atmos); like morning fog; no idea how long we'll live. Life is short regardless – go fast from hot wheels to wheel chair! Prov. 27:1. . . just one virus, germ, swerve of wheel, etc. Live daily as the last.

II. THE *SOLUTION TO* PLAYING GOD (vv. 15, 17) – James has three suggestions as a solution to playing God:

A. (v. 15) *SUBMIT TO HIS WILL* - Life is a precious gift from God. God alone knows the future and when we'll die. It should cause us to trust Him more. Live and plan "if it is the Lord's will" (deo volente). Nothing more characterizes a true believer than the desire to find and follow the will of God (Mark 3:31-34; 1 Pet. 4:2).

B. (17a) *KNOW HIS WILL* – What is right and good? His will (Rom. 12:2 says . . .). Most recorded in this Word (known and gray). All the knowledge we need to find God's will is found in it. James is saying the solution is to include God.

C. (17b) *DO HIS WILL* – First, find it, next is follow it. James already addressed (1:22-25; 2:18; 3:13). Jesus summarized these two rules in John 13:17 "Now that you *know* these things, you will be blessed if you *do* them." Don't procrastinate – delayed obedience is disobedience. Sins of omission. Plan to: witness, give, etc.? Do it now!

SUMMARY – James warns us to, "Stop playing God with others and ourselves." It is a perilous game. When we do this, we: disobey the Word and displace the Lord of His rightful position. Instead, let's include God, find His will and commit ourselves to follow it!

ILLUS. – M. Luther was lukewarm until friend killed. . .

CONC: Are you playing God in someone's life by slandering or having a critical attitude? How about your own? Have you knowingly/unknowingly made yourself the final authority in your life and your plans? Is God on the edge or at the center in your life and plans? Have you consulted Him about your business, education, finances, marriage, etc.? Let's pray this . . .