



Refusing to Speak Evil of One Another!

January 17, 2016

Text: James 4:11-12

Thoughts:

Hopefully, with our hearts more tender and humbled after the last several weeks, these verses will make sense and become a joy to us! To understand them, we must again look at our **context**. James now returns to dealing with a sin that must have been prevalent in this church...sins of the tongue (Jam 3:2-10). Back in August when we shared on these verses, we said:

- This was very serious. Tongue-based dissension was obviously an issue in his congregation. Recall from chapter one...
- *James 1:22-26 ESV But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (23) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. (24) For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. (25) But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (26) **If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.** (Emphasis Mine)*
- And it continues to be a main theme throughout the rest of this Epistle...
- *James 4:1 ESV What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?*
- *James 4:11 ESV Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.*
- *James 5:9 ESV Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.*
- This is one of the key issues the Holy Spirit wanted to address in this first century church, and by extension, to us and all churches since then...the command to constrain and rightly utilize our tongues...for His glory.
- **Although this is difficult, be encouraged precious saints. God is merciful and kind to us. May we, in His mercy and great power, study these verses and glean from them His holy heart, and may we bring our tone, tenor, and words in line with that heart in love and grace.**

In teaching through chapter three, we were struck by the metaphors James uses to describe inappropriate speaking: a horse's bit or bridle, a ship's rudder, a forest set ablaze by such a small member, a fire, a world of unrighteousness, and a stain on the whole body! (Jam 3: 3-6)

The tongue is called **untamable**, a restless evil, full of deadly poison. (Jam 3:8)

James writes, *"With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so."* (Jam 3:9-10)

Obviously, he was strongly exhorting practical change in how his congregation spoke to one another!

Connection to James 3:1-10

- Did you notice that although James strongly condemned evil speaking in the most colorful terms in James 3:1-10, no solutions were given?
- I submit his teaching on “wisdom from above” (Jam 3:13-18) and humility as opposed to worldliness (Jam 4:1-7) is key.
- Think about it. If a believer is drawing their practical application of knowledge from the Scriptures (true wisdom), refusing to be a friend of the world, submitting to God and resisting the devil, wouldn't they be in a wonderful position to better control the “restless evil” called the tongue?
- And isn't the opposite also true? If a believer imitates so-called worldly wisdom in their lives, sees intimacy with the *world* (i.e., a harmonious arrangement or order of the ungodly multitude that fights against our LORD; a satanically inspired system of ideologies, philosophies, governments, and jurisdictions) as a good thing, refuses to submit to God and therefore cannot resist the devil...does that believer have any chance to tame the untamable?
- In other words, if we learn the lessons of the past few verses with **humility**, we will better be able to obey this command.

James 4:11-12

1. We should be able to clearly see that this is a **command**. It is sin to do what James is describing here. The Holy Spirit declared through Him, “Do not...”
2. In this context, “to judge” is better understood as “to slander or defame.” According to the Vines Expository Dictionary, the word here in Greek for judge, *krinō*, can mean many things depending on context:
 - a) To assume the office of a judge
 - b) To undergo the process of judging
 - c) To give sentence
 - d) To condemn
 - e) To execute judgment upon
 - f) To be involved in a lawsuit
 - g) To administer affairs
 - h) To form an opinion
3. The context helps us decide. In our text, James calls judging, “speaking evil.” The Greek word for *speaking evil*, *katalaleō*, means to “to slander.” This suggests that the judgment in question is essentially, “an inappropriate opinion formed, made more evil by a slanderous tongue.”
4. Right judgments among brothers is biblical and **good!**

In 7:24 - Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.

1 Cor 5:9-13 - I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

5. But unjust judgments of the heart, especially followed by gossip and slander is “speaking evil” and **sinful**.
6. What does the next part of verse eleven mean? What does it mean to “speak evil against the law and judge the law?”
 - The Law declares, “*You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take*

vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” (Lev 19:16-18)

- So the law declares slander is sin. What many don't understand is that the Law of God promotes **love**.

Rom 13:8-10 - Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

- **Important:** To speak against or judge the law (constituting both heart and action) is to disobey it, treat it with contempt, to revile it.
- As John MacArthur wrote on the verse, “By refusing to submit to the law, slanderers place themselves above it as its judges.”

7. In essence, ANY TIME we know what Scripture declares and willfully, stubbornly do otherwise, we “speak against and judge the law.”

- We, in that moment, place ourselves above it as its judges. (Note: this truth makes me tremble.)
- This is the attitude James has been condemning throughout this entire epistle!!

8. “There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?” (Jam 4:12)

- God is the one who gave the law, both the Moral Law and the Law of Christ (love).
- He alone is our authority, and He is supreme. He is Lawgiver, Judge, and King. (Isa 33:22)

Final thoughts:

Because of His rule; because of His power; because of His love in sending Jesus to die for sin...we must not slander our brothers and sisters. We must govern our tongues and refuse to speak evil.

Yes, **there is a place for correction and discipline and legal judgments. But there is never a place for slander, judging others' unstated motives, or condemnation.** Let us fully embrace the words of Paul to the church at Ephesus:

Eph 4:25-32 - Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Amen. Be glorified in how we speak to each other Lord Jesus!