

CALL TO REFLECT HUMILITY

James 4:11-12
October 24, 2010

INTRODUCTION: In this passage James is emphasizing how a believer will reflect humility through his surrender. In **James 4:7-10**, the imperatives are all God-ward, now the attention turns man-ward. James begins with a prohibition and then gives an eye-opening rebuke to those who criticize others.

In the Psalms, David links slander to a lack of humility

**Psalms 101:5, “Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor,
Him I will destroy;
The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart,
Him I will not endure.”**

In **James 4:7**, we are told to **“resist the devil.”** The word **“devil”** is sometimes translated **slanderer**. The chief work of the devil is to slander God’s people. While most of us will never set out knowingly to do the work of the devil, that’s exactly what we are doing when we speak evil of our brothers. (family members).

I. HUMILITY REFRAINS FROM SLANDER. 11

A. SLANDERING. 11a

“Do not speak evil of one another” – to slander is to make false charges or misrepresentations that damage a person’s reputation. The word refers to any form of speaking against a person.

Webster defines slander as *“a false tale or report maliciously uttered, and tending to injure the reputation of another by lessening him in the esteem of his fellow citizens, by exposing him to impeachment and punishment, or by impairing his means of living.”* Slander strikes at people’s dignity, defames their character, and destroys their reputation; their most priceless worldly asset

**Proverbs 22:1, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
Loving favor rather than silver and gold.”**

Ecclesiastes 7:1a, “A good name is better than precious ointment”

Kent Hughes: Spiders

He explains that a female spider is often a widow for embarrassing reasons, she regularly eats those who come her way. A fly, for instance, will be caught in her grip, she injects her digestive juices into the fly so that his insides are broken down and turned into a warm soup. Bottom line, she then sucked out the insides (gross).

Metaphor that describes the destructive power of slander; words do not dissolve organs and nerves, but *souls*. Many lives have been sucked empty by another's words.

Again, the word used for **slander** actually forbids more than slander. Slander is malicious speech that is untrue. But the command here forbids any speech (whether it is true or false) which runs down another. The challenge to refrain from any speech which intends to run down someone else, **even** if it is totally true.

Most people think it is okay to convey negative information if it is true. We understand that lying is immoral. But is passing along damaging truth immoral? It seems almost a moral responsibility.

By such reasoning, criticism behind another's back is thought to be all right as long as it is true; likewise, denigrating gossip (of course it is never call gossip) is okay if the information is true. Thus many believers use truth as a license to righteously diminish others' reputations.

Related to this, some reject running down another behind his or her back, but believe it is okay if done face-to-face. These persons are driven by a "moral" compulsion to make others aware of their own faults.

What people like this do not know is that most people are painfully aware of their own faults, and would so like to overcome them, and are busy trying.

Gossip and criticism may be rooted in an overweening sense of self-righteousness. Our spirituality and sensitivity, we think, equips us to pull others from their pedestals and unmask their hypocrisies.

B. JUDGING. 11a

"He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law."

When you speak against other believers, you exalt yourself above the law. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

CLARITY: James is not saying Christians are never to make judgments about others or tell them what is what. James does not forbid *evaluation* but *condemnation*. It does not forbid exposing sin with righteous intent, but rather lying and malicious intent.

Some reason that the greatest Christians never judge anyone.

Matthew 7:1, "Judge not, that you be not judged."

However, they neglect to read on and note the context.

Matthew 7:2-5, “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

Jesus does not forbid judgment; rather, He forbids mean-spirited believers from exercising it while refusing to deal with the sin in their lives.

Read on in **Matt 7** and you see the Christian's duty to exercise judgment.

Matthew 7:15-16a, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.”

What the scripture forbids is **judgmentalism**, a critical spirit that judges everyone and everything seeking to run others down.

By the way, the law James refers to is the principle and law of **James 2:8**

“If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well”

“But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge” – God gave His law to regulate people's love for Him and their neighbor. James does not condemn slander only as a violation of personal affection or of basic human kindness, but of God's holy law .

Since slander is a violation of the law of love, a slanderer speaks **against** the law, and **condemns** the law, showing utter **disregard** for the divine standard. You show you're superior to God's law, not bound by it, or subject to its authority. This in essence is **blasphemy** against God.

Experiencing victory over slander requires us to take our proper place under the law's authority.

Not only does humility refrain from slander

II. SLANDER REFRAINS FROM HUMILITY. 11

It violates the law of love; for God and for others.

III. HUMILITY RESPECTS THE LAWGIVER. 12

Ultimate judgment is reserved for God alone.

LAWGIVER:

- ◆ He is in *position* to give it
- ◆ He has *power* to enforce it
- ◆ He has the *prerogative* to punish violators

Matthew 10:28, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

“There is one Lawgiver” – one is the Lawgiver (& Judge); stressing that God alone is the sovereign ruler and judge of the universe. It refers to the One who puts the law in place and the One who applies the law.

“Who is able to save and to destroy” – He is mighty to save!

“Destroy” – from *apollumi*; not annihilation, but eternal destruction in hell.

“Who are you to judge another?” “But who” – an exaggerated view of their own importance.

Who in the world do you think you are? You are setting yourself above the **Law** and above **God**. What arrogance and pride!

Ignorance mars our best judgments. We can judge external sins to be sins, but only imperfectly. We certainly do not know what is in the heart of another.

1 Corinthians 4:5, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.”

CONCLUSION: God help me to be kind in my evaluations and merciful in my judgments.

James 2:13, “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

GOOD WORD:

Ephesians 4:29, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

Colossians 4:6, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”