

“Judge Not”

September 9, 2012

Text: James 4:11-12

**At the end of the Civil War, Conf. president Jefferson Davis
was captured by Union soldiers at Irwinsville, Georgia.**

Afterward they reported that he'd disguised himself as a woman.

Northerners loved this story because it seemed to prove what they
already believed=> that he was a traitor/thief/coward.

The public even embellished it, claiming Jefferson Davis
had actually been wearing a petticoat at the time,
a/w/a pantaloons and other articles of women's
clothing.

This is how he was vilified in one of the North's popular
songs of the time=>

Jeff took with him, the people say,
A mine of golden coin,
Which he, from banks and other places,
Managed to purloin;
But while he ran, like every thief,
He had to drop the spoons,
And maybe that's the reason why
He dropped his pantaloons.

None of this was true, but Davis' enemies didn't care.

They were just savoring the opportunity to slander him.

The truth was that Jefferson Davis, his wife, & his cabinet had
fled from Richmond when it fell to the Union Army.

When he was captured, he was wearing trousers, a coat,
riding boots & spurs.

Because he couldn't find his hat in the dark when the
Union soldiers closed in on him, his wife, Varina,
had thrown her small black shawl over his head.
It was because of that shawl that Davis was accused of
wearing women's clothes.

Davis' actual clothes were later turned over to Edwin Stanton
(the Union's Secretary of War), who hid them away &
locked them up, just so the public wouldn't discover the
truth, but could continue to mock/slander him.

The word “*devil*” (translation of *diabolos*) means slanderer.

Slander is the work of the devil, & it is a cowardly effort to hurt
someone in his absence, when he can't defend himself.

Jefferson Davis was a vanquished foe who was ripe for
slandering.

The world accepts that as par for the course, but God hates it, and
compares it with the sin of murder in Lev 19=>

*“You shall not go about as a **slanderer** among your people,
and you are not to act against the **life** of your neighbor; I
am the LORD” (Lev 19:16).*

Xns can always expect to be slandered by Satan's world, & our
only defense is to prove they're wrong w/ our good deeds.

1 Pet 2=> *“Keep your behavior excellent among the
Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they **slander**
you as evildoers, they may on account of your good
deeds, as they observe them, glorify God” (2:12).*

Xns expect slander from the world, but it hurts far more when we
have to endure it, from our own brothers/sisters in X.

In verse 11 of today's text, James uses the word "*brother*" 3 times to make that point, & to confront/rebuke this most hurtful form of slander, which takes place right w/i the family of God.

This makes it especially grievous, & the present tense verbs James employs, indicate that it goes on continually.

He is confronting believers who go around w/ a sour/bitter attitude, slandering fellow Xns, unfairly judging them & their lives, as the North slandered Jefferson Davis.

For example, you overhear conversations like this=>

"Do you know where she had that baby?

"On a freeway offramp!"

"He should have known they'd never get to the hospital in time, through rush-hour traffic!"

Our text forbids our slander of fellow Xns, & the judgmental attitude that always accompanies such slander.

Then it provides 2 powerful reasons for this prohibition=>

- * It disregards the law

- * It disregards the Lawgiver.

*** The Prohibition**

[James 4:11a]=> "*Do not speak against one another, brethren.*"

"*Speak against*" lit. means "down speak"—to run down someone else with our words/speech.

- * We can do that by lying about him.

The devil lied about God to Eve in the Garden of Eden, telling her "*You surely shall not die*" (Gen 3:4).

This was a direct contradiction of God's words=>

*"You **shall** surely die."*

Satan implied that God had lied to Adam.

Satan's lie was slander against God's character.

Ex 20 commands us=> *"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor"* (Ex 20:16).

Whenever we lie directly, or even shade the truth, about someone, to make him look bad, we slander him.

This is a habit of the old sinful self, that we are to put off.

Col 3=> *"Do not **lie** to one another, since you **laid aside the old self** with its evil practices"* (3:9).

* We can also slander by making true statements about others, that are motivated by malice.

Satan is the "slanderer of the brethren," not because he tells

God lies about them, but because he tells the truth.

But he selects the facts he thinks will do the most harm to their case.

He does it out of his murderous hatred, which is exactly what motivates most human slanderers as well, pointing out other people's faults/foibles to undermine them, and their reputations.

This is the "tale-bearing" that Lev 19:16 forbids.

1 Pet 4=> *"Keep fervent in your **love** for one another, because love **covers** a multitude of **sins**"* (4:8).

Instead of slandering others, love hides their sin from public ridicule.

The way we can best overcome the habit of slandering, is not to keep our lips sealed, but to carefully examine our own hearts, for sour/sinful attitudes about others.

If what we find there is hatred/bitterness towards other people, or a readiness to make careless/uncaring remarks about them that could damage their reputations, we should repent of it and confess it to X.

We should pray, “Lord, I know that you have commanded me to love others as I love myself, but frankly, I don’t, and I know that’s wrong. “Forgive me, & help me to become more loving.”

Those who love others will protect their reputations from any harmful words that might hurt them.

They’ll let no unwholesome word proceed from their mouths, but only what is good for edification, and what will give grace to those who hear it (Eph 4:29).

Now James proceeds to the 1st reason for this prohibition.

*** Reason 1—Slander Disregards the Law**

[Verse 11b]=> *“He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it.”*

A slanderer sins at several different levels=>

1st, his speaking against others is sinfully judging them.

He is verbalizing a negative assessment of his Xn brother’s character/judgment/person/value;

And (for that matter) the value of his whole life.

This is someone God chose before the world began, and
whom He created in His own image;

He is also a soul for whom Jesus X died.

This slandered Xn looks to Jesus as his Savior, his Master, and
the One who will someday be his Judge.

But the slanderer acts as if he were the person's lord/judge,
and certainly his better.

He ignores Paul's words in Rom 14=> *"Who are you to
judge the servant of another? To his own master he
stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able
to make him stand"* (Rom 14:4).

He also completely ignores Jesus' own words in Mt 7=>

*"**Do not judge** lest you be **judged**. / For in the way
you **judge**, you will be **judged**; and by your standard
of measure, it will be measured to you"* (7:1-2).

A slanderer's specific statements may criticize something the
brother does/says, but the real target of his criticism is the
person himself—his reputation, his dignity, his good-
name/character, & ultimately, his soul's inherent worth.
He seeks to lessen the person's esteem in others' minds.
He conveys the message that this person doesn't amount to
much, & should be ignored/despised by the rest of
the world.

The slanderer expresses his hatred of whoever he slanders,
because he is at heart, a hater.

Prov 22=> *"A **good name** is to be more desired than great*

*riches, **favor** is better than silver and gold” (22:1).*

But a slanderer is out to murder the other person’s good name, & his words inflict deep wounds.

Ultimately, slander itself manifests a much deeper spiritual problem—a murderous heart.

Jesus said=> “*Out of the **heart** come evil thoughts, **murders**, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, **slanders***” (Mt 15:19).

A heart like that needs the spiritual surgery of circumcision as

Deut 10:16 says: “***Circumcise** then your **heart** [from sin].*”

Righteous people don’t slander others.

Psa 15 says of a righteous man=> “*He does **not slander** w/ his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor*” (15:3).

Xns especially are not to slander (Eph 4)=> “*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and **slander** be put away from you, along with all malice*” (Eph 4:31).

The 2nd sin of the slanderer is that, when he speaks against other people, he also speaks against law, & disobeys it.

He slanders the whole principle of law, saying in effect that it’s not of much value, and that he’s opposed to it, not bound by it.

Instead of bridling his tongue, he blasphemes the law w/ it. He’s not a doer of God’s Law, because he doesn’t believe he has to be, viewing himself as superior to it, & viewing the law as unworthy of his obedience/consideration.

His readiness to slander/judge His fellow believers simply
proves that he disregards the law as unimportant—
thus he “down-speaks” (slanders) the law itself.

This reflects an even deeper character flaw—his own proud
sense of superiority.

When individual freedom trumps submission to law, the law can
no longer prevent one citizen from hurting another (which
is the most basic function of the law).

He then becomes a law unto himself, & there is no real law.

Moreover, as Jesus said, when *“lawlessness is increased,
most people's love will grow cold”* (Mt 24:12).

The 3rd sin of the slanderer is that he judges the law.

He says in effect, I know the law forbids all men to slander
others, but I’ve judged the law to be defective/wrong about
that.

I’ve decided that its prohibitions don’t apply to me, because
I’m an exception, & my slandering others is justified,
contrary to the law’s prohibition.

He judges the law to be invalid & discredits it whenever it
disagrees w/ him.

This person’s tendency to slander is a manifestation of his own
lawlessness—his disregard of any law outside his own will.

I Jn 3:4 says that such lawlessness is the essence of sin.

He rejects the law’s authority over him, because he judges
the law to be in-error/worthless.

“The law” here could refer to the Mosaic Law, because it specifically forbids slander, as we saw in Lev 19:16.

On the other hand, it could refer to the “law of love,” which fulfills the whole Mosaic Law.

Jms 1:25 called it “*the perfect law of liberty.*”

Jms 2:8 called it “*the royal law*” that “*You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself*” (Jms 2:8).

But instead of either the Mosaic Law, or the Royal Law of Love, James seems to be emphasizing law as a general principle to which humble/heavenly-wise people willingly submit; But against which the sinfully lawless always rebel, by their very nature.

The text itself speaks of “*law*”—not “the law.”

You see the phrase “*the law*” 4 times in verse 11, and in every case “the” is absent in the original text.

This is the general principle of law, on which both the-Mosaic-Law/the-law-of-love are founded.

The slanderer is opposed to all law in general.

He doesn’t want anyone (including God) telling him what he can/cannot do.

*** Reason 2—Slander Disregards the Lawgiver—God**

[Verse 12]=> “*There is only one **Lawgiver** and **Judge**, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are **you** who judges* [a singular pronoun, that is confrontively addressed to any individual who presumes to judge another] *your neighbor?*”

A more literal/accurate translation would be, “*One is Lawgiver and Judge.*”

There is only one, and anyone else who presumes to assume that role is trying to take God’s place, w/ his insubordination.

That arrogance is a very dangerous business, because the same One who gives the Law, and will judge man on the basis of his obedience to that Law, can either save or destroy him.

He is infinite/omnipotent God, and He will allow for no rivals, who claim to be His equal in any way.

He is the same One about whom Jesus said (Mt 10:28)=>

*“Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather **fear Him** who is able to **destroy** both soul and body in hell.”*

But He is also the One who has the power to save souls.

Rom 1 says of the gospel=> *“It is the **power of God** for **salvation** to everyone who believes”* (1:16).

When man arrogantly tries to overthrow God’s authority by disregarding His law, he simply makes a fool of himself.

Psa 2=> *“The rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed: / ‘Let us tear their **fetters** apart [the restrictions of God’s law], And cast away their cords from us!’ [“Let’s free ourselves from God and His Law”] / He who sits in the heavens **laughs**, The Lord **scoffs** at them. / Then He will speak to them in His anger And **terrify** them in His **fury**”*
(2-5).

Those who judge God’s law as worthless and ignore it, also put themselves in league with Satan, who said in his heart=>

*“I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. / I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will **make myself like the Most High.**”*

To which God responded=> *“Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit”*
(Isa 14:13-15).

Someone=> I didn't mean all that, when I merely said a few unkind words about my neighbor!

Scripture's answer=> You may not have intended to actually defy God and treat Him as your enemy the way Satan does; But by ignoring His law, that's exactly what you did, & that's how God Himself viewed it.

James points out the foolishness of challenging God in this way by asking, “*Who are you who judge your neighbor?*”

This is like the question God asked Job, when He answered all Job's complaints, out of a whirlwind=>

*“**Who is this** that darkens counsel By words without knowledge? / Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!”* (Job 38:2-3).

I.e., So you want to challenge My right to test/try you?

Then gird up your loins, & let's go One-on-one.

Who do you think you are, in comparison with Me?

Who are you to say to Me, what Pharaoh of old said=>

“Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?”
(Ex 5:2).

You know how that worked out for Pharaoh!

James has taught us to humble ourselves before God, not to proudly oppose/challenge Him, because *“GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE”* (Jms 4:6).

But there’s also another way to look at this question=>

“Who do you think you are, compared to your neighbor, so that you feel free to pronounce judgment against him?”

Jms 2:8 said that a believer does well if he fulfills the royal law, by loving his neighbor as himself.

And Paul went even farther, commanding Xns to humbly

*“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit but w/ humility of mind let each of you regard one another as **more important than himself**”* (Phil 2:3-4).

* Paul went on to show, this was the humble attitude of X.

* James would add that this is the attitude of godly wisdom.

It is not our prerogative to hold critical/negative attitudes toward other people, or to “down-talk” them w/ our judgments.

Scripture repeatedly reminds us of that=>

* Jesus said=> *“**Do not judge** and you will not be **judged**; and do not **condemn**, & you will not be **condemned**; pardon, and you will be **pardoned**”* (Lk 6:37).

* Paul taught that we are not even competent to judge=>

*“Do not go on **passing judgment** before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's **praise**”*

will come to him from God” (I Cor 4:5).

We cannot see men’s hearts, to judge them
justly/accurately.

But we’re also incompetent to judge, because we
can’t find anything to praise, about some Xns.

God will, & He will give “*each man*” praise.

**Neither James, nor any other writer of Scripture ever says
that we are never to confront other people’s sins
(including those of other believers).**

The writings of OT prophets are a litany of such confrontations.
And there’s a good bit of that in the NT as well, including this
whole 4th chapter of James itself.

Jesus said=> “*If your brother sins, go and **reprove him** in
private*” (Mt 18:15).

But we are never to confront others’ sins with a proud/judgmental
attitude, like that which characterized the scribes/Pharisees.

That’s fun for our flesh, because we can vent our
frustration & do it all with a feeling of
superiority/invulnerability.

But Paul taught=> “*Brethren, even if a man is caught in
any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a
one in a **spirit of gentleness**; each one looking to
yourself, lest **you too be tempted**” (Gal 6:1).*

And Paul himself reminded the Ephesian elders that=>

*“for a period of three years I did not cease to
admonish each one **with tears**” (Acts 20:31).*

Paul's tears were a sign of his humble yearning for the
Ephesians' spiritual wellbeing;
Not of any proud judgmentalism.

We can/must confront others' sins out of love, not speaking down
to them, as if from a position of authority/superiority.

**The sin of pride is always behind our judging other people w/
a judgmental spirit.**

To deal with that pride, we ask ourselves what makes us different
from them, & where does that kind of difference come
from.

* From the eternal perspective, there is no significant difference
between us, because every man/woman is created in the
image of God.

* But from a temporal perspective, there are differences between
us, in terms of our unique abilities/strengths/weaknesses.
More/less attractiveness of personality, of intelligence, of
beauty or good-looks, or wealth/position.

And each of these represents a sovereign choice by God,
for us/our-lives.

Rom 9, which describes us as clay and God as our Potter,

asks=> *"Who are you, O man, who answers back to
God? The thing molded will not say to the molder,
'Why did you make me like this,' will it? / Or does
not the potter have a right over the clay, to make
from the same lump one vessel for honorable use,
and another for common use?"* (Rom 9:20-21).

Not only are there significant differences in
advantage/disadvantage among Xns, God is the
Author of those differences.

It would be ridiculous for a vessel to boast about how beautiful
and well-made it was, as if it had fashioned itself.

The glory goes to the Potter, not to the pot.

I Cor 4:7 asks “*And what do you have that you did not
receive?*” & Xns should very quickly answer,
“Nothing!”

**So let’s compare ourselves w/ some of the other “pots” we are
tempted to “down-talk” and judge=>**

1st, there are believers in 3rd world countries who are much poorer
than we are—some with barely enough to eat.

Are we justified in looking down on them?

Or judging them?

Others of God’s children once enjoyed wealth, & many
people looked up to them;

But now, for whatever reason, they’ve been plunged
into poverty, & no one thinks about them at all.

We, by contrast, have plenty, & can say w/ David, “*The
lines have fallen to me in pleasant places*” (Psa
16:6).

Where does this difference come from?

It comes from the grace of our Good Shepherd, who
has led us “*beside quiet waters*” (Psa 23:2).

Does the fact that God has differentiated between us/them make us superior, or give us the right to judge/tell the unfortunate they're the cause of their own troubles/problems?

Absolutely not! Many of them are holier/far-better Xns than we are, because necessity has caused them to draw much closer to their Lord.

This simply places a responsibility on us, to "*not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly*" (Rom 12:16). seeking ways in which to help/encourage/love them the more.

2nd, there might be someone sitting near you right now, who has heard the gospel as often as you, but has never responded to it.

He comes as often as you come, sings just as you sing, but his heart has become hardened w/ time, whereas yours has grown soft/warm towards X as your Savior/Lord.

Originally, you were both dead in your trespasses/sins, but you have become a child of God, a joint-heir w/ X of the Kingdom, while his soul has remained hard/lost.

What's the difference, & does that give you the right to judge/condemn him?

No, you are what you are, simply by God's grace.

You must say w/ Psa 115:1=> *“Not to us, O LORD,
not to us, But to Thy name give glory Because
of Thy lovingkindness, because of Thy truth.”*

And it should encourage you, knowing that if God could
save scoundrels like us, He can still save that other
person, or any of our other friends/family-members,
for whose salvation we continually pray.

3rd, you may know people whose lives are marred/scarred by the
disastrous consequences of their sin—divorce, drug-
addiction, alcoholism, prostitution, jail-time,
physical/mental illness, and who knows what else?

Are we superior to them, and do we have a right to judge
them?

In view of God’s sovereignty, we must say to ourselves,
“There, but for the grace of God, go I.”

If we hadn’t been graciously brought near to X by the H.S.,
we would live each day as close to hell, as they do.

4th, what about those whom we’ve known (maybe grown up w/)
who are now actually in hell, because they have died in
their sins?

They have been damned, but we have become truly saved.

If you could see them just for a moment right now, in
torment where the worm never dies, and the fire is
never quenched, your hair would turn white, in
horror.

But instead, by God's sovereign grace, if you truly know X,
you have a crown/inheritance awaiting you in
heaven.

And that's the only difference—the only real difference=>
God's grace to you.

Could you judge such a person, if you saw him again right
now?

**The conclusion=> We have no right to judge others, but every
reason to praise God humbly for His gracious goodness
to us.**

* He is the Lawgiver/Judge who chose-us/commands us—praise
His holy name.

* Jesus is the Savior, whose death redeemed us—praise His
name.

* The Spirit has washed/renewed/saved us—praise be to His
name.

“Judge Not”
September 9, 2012

Text: James 4:11-12

1. Slander is the work of the devil, a cowardly effort to hurt someone in his [16 absence] when he can’t defend himself.

Lev 19:16; 1 Pet 2:12

Our text forbids our slander of fellow Christians and the judgmental attitude that always accompanies such slander; then it provides two powerful reasons for this prohibition...

*** The Prohibition**

[James 4:11a]

***“Speak against”* literally means “down speak”—to run down someone else with our words...**

- *2. We can do that by [12 lying] about him.

Gen 3:4; Ex 20:16; Col 3:9

- *3. We can also slander by making true statements about others that are motivated by [14 malice].

1 Pet 4:8; Eph 4:29

*** Reason 1—Slander Disregards the Law**

[Verse 11b]

A slanderer sins at several different levels...

- *4. First, his speaking against others is sinfully [18 judging] them.

Rom 14:4; Mt 7:1-2; Prov 22:1; Mt 15:19; Deut 10:16; Ps 15:3; Eph 4:31

- *5. Second, the sin of the slanderer is that when he speaks against other people, he also speaks against law, and disobeys it.

Mt 24:12

- *6. The third sin of the slanderer is that he [14 judges] the law.

Jms 1:25; 2:8

7. Instead of either the Mosaic Law or the Royal Law of Love, James seems to be emphasizing law as a [16 general] principle to which humble, heavenly wise people willingly submit.

*** Reason 2—Slander Disregards the Lawgiver—God**

[Verse 12]

Mt 10:28; Rom 1:16

8. When man arrogantly tries to overthrow God's authority by disregarding His [8 law], he simply makes a fool of himself.

Psa 2:2-5; Isa 14:13-15

9. James points out the foolishness of challenging God in this way by asking, "Who are you who [12 judge] your neighbor?"

Job 38:2-3; Jms 4:6; 2:8; Phil 2:3-4

10. It is not our prerogative to hold critical, negative attitudes toward other people or to "down-talk" them with our [20 judgments].

Lk 6:37; I Cor 4:5; Mt 18:15; Gal 6:1; Acts 20:31

11. The sin of pride is always behind our [16 judging] other people.

Rom 9:20-21; I Cor 4:7

Let's compare ourselves with some of the other "clay pots" we are tempted to "down-talk" and judge...

First, believers who are much poorer than we are.

Psa 16:6; 23:2

12. Does the fact that God has differentiated between us and them make us superior or give us the right to judge the unfortunate?
Absolutely [8 not]!

Rom 12:16

Second, there might be someone near you who has heard the gospel as often as you but has never responded.

13. What's the difference, and does that give you the right to judge him?
No, you are what you are simply by God's [12 grace].

Psa 115:1

Third, you may know people whose lives are marred by the disastrous consequences of sin.

14. If we hadn't been graciously brought near to Christ by the Holy Spirit, we would live each day as close to [10 hell] as they do.

Fourth, what about those whom we have known who are now in hell because they have died in their sins?

By God's sovereign [12 grace], if you truly know Christ, you have a crown awaiting you in heaven; and that's the only difference.

Conclusion: We have no right to judge others but every reason to [14 praise] God for His gracious goodness to us.