



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

CRITICAL SPEECH/CONDEMNING WORDS: PART 2- JAMES 4:11

COLORADO

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Dan File, P.O. Box 1088, Lake City, CO 82135-1088/303-345-8830 / filefamily@centurytel.net

Humility and the right attitude toward God will and must give us the right attitude towards other people, especially fellow believers. But is this the attitude we find towards each other? As James proceeds into these next verses, it is with the chief call to humble ourselves before God and submit to Him for the mark of true faith will be humility. Yet, because of malicious attitudes and actions in the church, obviously humility is seriously lacking. Here in these verses, the issue of habitual slander becomes a test of genuine faith and a measure of spiritual maturity. James once again addresses critical speech and condemning words because slander is so widespread. In fact, it may be so common that we fail to recognize its significance unless we are the other end of the slander, but James demands a reality check for all believers because this is such a destructive sin.

CONDEMNING WORDS/JUDGEMENTAL ATTITUDES

James 4:11: "Do not speak against one another, brethren. 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."

I. FIRST ISSUE – JAMES 4:11A

James 4:11a - "Do not speak against one another, brethren."

As we saw in our last study, James calls for the immediate termination of malicious evil talk against one another. This warning is addressed throughout God's Word, communicating the seriousness of such evil speech. James is not saying to stop dealing with sin in the body of Christ! It is imperative that we pursue holiness and hold one another accountable to sin. But James is addressing speech that has the intent to hurt and harm, deliberately calling attention to the fault of others while minimizing their virtues. It is an evil intent aimed at eroding the character of our brother or sister. It is thoughtless, careless, critical derogatory speech against one another. What we are saying might even be true; we don't have to tell a lie to defame. And usually, the one who is spoken against with harsh critical remarks often isn't present. Remember, humility and the right attitude toward God will give us the right attitude towards people. And the issue of habitual slander towards others in the community of believers becomes a test of genuine faith and a measure of spiritual maturity.

II. SECOND ISSUE - JAMES 4:11B

James 4:11: "Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law;"

James now continues the picture but moves from the malicious slander of your brother or sister to the vindictive condemnation of them. James says,

"or judges his brother..." where "or" is a conjunction that denotes the same type of slanderous activity but just from a different angle. Note the emphasis James places on "his brother" in this verse. Essentially, this intensifies the evil practice that is so condemning directed against your brother whom you are called to love.

%his+Greek %autou, possessive pronoun that stresses oneness of brothers.

The pronoun "his" in the Greek stresses the oneness of brothers and sisters which should exist amongst fellow believers. It is as though James is saying; this is your brother so how could you do this to your own flesh and blood?

So what is James referring to here when he demands that we stop judging one another? Is James saying that we shouldn't hold each other accountable? Is he saying that we should prohibit rebuking those who persist in unrepentant sin? Is James forbidding exposing sin with the intent of calling our brother or sister from sin to repentance and righteous living? Of course not for that would be contrary to Scripture itself. For James, himself, is addressing sin in these verses and not with sweet and tender words. Let's see what that word actually means here in these verses.

%judge+Greek %krino, means to separate, distinguish, discriminate between good and evil, select, choose out the good. To form or give an opinion after separating and considering the particulars of a case.

Depending on its use, it could mean one of the following: ¹

1. To judge in one's own mind as to what is right, proper, expedient; to deem, decide, determine.
 2. To judge, to form and express a judgment or opinion as to any person or thing, more commonly unfavorable, condemn.
 3. To judge in a judicial sense.
 4. To let oneself be judged, have a lawsuit; go to law, before or toward someone.
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At first glance, it would seem that "to judge" is the right and prudent course of action. Of course we are to distinguish between good and evil. Yes we should judge what is right, proper and expedient. So James certainly wouldn't be calling for an immediate termination to that kind of wise living. What was going on in the church was not a true and serious appraisal of one's conduct or condition. Quite the opposite was happening. James addresses their sin of condemning words and judgmental attitudes. These people were maliciously condemning one another with the intent of eroding their position or character with such slander.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

STAFF, LOBBYISTS, JOURNALISTS & SERGEANTS: TUESDAYS AT NOON, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0107

Colorado

CRITICAL SPEECH/CONDEMNING WORDS: PART 2- JAMES 4:11

Judging here in James 4:11 does not refer to evaluating, but rather it means condemning and James clearly rebukes this kind of critical evaluation because of the evil intent.

Jesus Himself spoke against this same condemning action in Matthew 7:1-5 where He said, *“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. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”* Essentially, Jesus is saying, don’t judge and condemn others but rather attend to yourself. This kind of judging can mean a false condemnation of one’s character or conduct or an improper condemnation of one who is truly guilty of what is being said. Again, I don’t get a pass even if it’s true. Either way, the sin is the same. The evil intent and malicious, disparaging words tear down, crush destroy and hurt. The effects are devastating.

It is this kind of conduct that was ravaging the church and so James deals with these personal attacks and judgmental attitudes. We cannot have a casual attitude towards such condemning words. And yet, this had become a habitual practice among them. This reveals a pride and arrogance that would so denigrate others. Remember, humility and the right attitude towards God will give us the right attitude towards people. We need a high view of God, submit to Him and a proper humble view of ourselves. This is where we must start.

James calls on believers to terminate immediately all such malicious evil slander and condemning, judgmental words and actions against one another, our brothers and sisters in Christ whom we are called to love. For this is a serious rebuke of such unbrotherly practice. We will always be tempted to judge and condemn others and we must be careful.

Jesus Christ gave His life for each and every believer. We are loved and honored by God Himself and we will spend eternity with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Here in this life we are called to honor, love and protect fellow believers. Is that what marks our life together in the body of Christ? Will the watching world *know God* by our love for one another? Or will they *not want to know God* because of our critical speech, personal attacks, condemning words and judgmental attitudes?

***“Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way.”***

Psalm 139:23-24

¹Zodhiates, Spiros, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*. AMG Publishers: Chattanooga, TN, 1993, Pg. 888-889.