

SPEAK NOT EVIL ONE OF ANOTHER **(James 4:11-12)**

1.The command (James 4:11a).

- a.The book of James is the wisdom book of the New Testament, comparable to Proverbs of the Old Testament.
 - i.In this section of James, he gave us some ideas of the problems we have with pride.
 - ii.We don't have things because we don't ask God, all because we have not submitted ourselves to Him (James 4:1-8).
 - iii.We need to see our state and mourn with repentance and show that repentance by humbling ourselves (James 4:9-10).
- b.He then tells us to not speak evil of one another.
 - i.The phrase translated "speak evil" is used three times in this one verse.
 - ii.It is found two other times, both in 1 Peter (1 Peter 2:12; 3:16).
- c.We can get the idea of what James is telling us by looking at those two verses in 1 Peter.
 - i.Peter wrote to Christians that were enduring persecution for being Christians.
 - ii.1 Peter 2:12 tells them to live above board so that when non-Christians speak evil of them, they will only see the good works of the brethren and this will bring the Gentiles to glorify God.
 - iii.1 Peter 3:16 tells them to live with a good conscience so that those who speak evil of them will be ashamed for falsely accusing them of wrongdoing in the way they are living.
 - iv.The idea is that the non-Christians were falsely accusing brethren of wrongdoing.
 - v.They were slandering Christians because they hated Christianity.
- d.James is telling us not slander our brethren.
- e.The word translated "speak evil of" is a compound word in the Greek.
 - i."Kata" means "against".
 - ii."Laleo" means "to speak".
 - (1)There is another word that means to speak also, "logo", which is used as a title for the Lord, also translate "The Word".
 - (2)That word carries the idea of logic.
 - (3)This word, "laleo", carries the idea of sound, while words may be involved, they are mindless.
 - (4)So it literally means to denigrate, slander.
 - (5)Thayer used the word "traduce" which I had to look up to know what it meant.
 - (6)It means, "to speak maliciously and falsely of; slander; defame".
 - (7)A form of this compound word is found in Romans 1:30 - backbiters.
 - iii.Something else that is interesting about this word is that it when it is used it implies the absence of the person being spoken against.
 - iv.We won't talk about the person to his or her face.
- f.James, by inspiration, is commanding us to not speak falsely and maliciously about our brethren.
- g.Speaking in such a way is putting ourselves above our brethren and believing

that we are better than them, which is the exact opposite of humbling ourselves as James 4:10 commands us to do.

h. You might ask, "What are some examples speaking evil of someone?"

i. It is talk that runs down a brother in Christ.

ii. It is talk that defames his reputation.

iii. It is talk that is critical of her.

iv. It is talk that is derogatory.

v. All of it done behind his or her back.

i. Think of how damaging this sin is to the one being defamed.

i. He or she has no ability to provide a defense.

ii. It leaves false impressions in the minds of the ones hearing the slander.

j. This type of speaking has to be stopped and James now tells us why.

2. The concern (James 4:11).

a. When words of this nature are used against brethren, they are very damaging to them.

b. However, there is more damage done to the speaker than the brethren.

c. James tells us that when we speak evil of our brethren, we are really speaking evil of the law.

i. What law is this?

ii. Two previous times James has mentioned the law (James 1:25; 2:8).

iii. This is not the Old Testament, but the law of Christ.

iv. In particular, the law of loving our brethren.

v. However, if we break this part of the law of Christ, we are in violation of all of it.

d. As we have been stating throughout this series of sermons, if we don't love one another, we won't fulfill any of these other commands about how we are to treat one another.

e. If we speak about a brother or sister with the intent to do harm to his or her reputation, there is no way that we truly love that brother or sister.

f. Notice James says that we are really judging our brother or sister when this is being done.

i. We know that we have no right to judge unrighteously (Matthew 7:1-2).

ii. We do have a command to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24).

iii. When we act in this way, there is nothing righteous about it.

g. What we are doing is elevating ourselves to the position of a judge.

i. We are saying we are above God's law.

ii. This does not apply to me.

iii. I can say what I want is the attitude we are showing to the one's to whom we are running our mouths.

h. James has commanded us to be doers of the law (James 1:22).

i. If we are busy being judges, we are not doers.

j. We should be greatly concerned about our own souls.

k. We can't be busy looking into everyone else's lives, when we need to be doing the law of God ourselves.

l. B.J. Clarke said, "If I occupy my time finding fault with others, I have little time left to look at me".

i. What is happening when we engage in this type of talk is that we don't really want to look at ourselves.

- ii. We are too busy elevating ourselves to truly think about ourselves.
- m. In reality, our souls will be lost by engaging in this type talk about others and that ought to be of great concern to each of us.

3. The consideration (James 4:12).

- a. Something we need to consider when tempted to engage in speaking evil of brethren is that there only one Judge, or Lawgiver.
- b. This, of course, is God.
- c. God is the one who is able to save or destroy.
 - i. He's talking about the soul.
 - ii. God can save the one about whom we are speaking evil and He can destroy our soul for doing so.
- d. Again, James is not talking about righteous judgment and pointing out real sin.
- e. He then closes with the statement, "Who art thou that judgest another?"
- f. Basically, James asks, "Who do you think you are?".
 - i. We have a highly elevated self-image when we speak this way about our brethren.
 - ii. We are putting ourselves on the level of God, the Lawgiver.
 - iii. We are putting ourselves above God's law.