

Message #14**James 4:11-12**

Last year a University in California surveyed Americans to determine their top ten fears:

- 10) Animals like dogs, snakes, etc.
- 9) Blood
- 8) Flying
- 7) Germs
- 6) Needles
- 5) Small Enclosed Claustrophobic places
- 4) Deep Lakes and Oceans
- 3) Heights
- 2) Insects
- 1) Public Speaking

Now the survey polled all kinds of areas, more than just personal fears. There were different categories of fears: Fear pertaining to government; fears pertaining to the economy; fears pertaining to crime; fears pertaining to natural disasters and fears pertaining to sickness.

But of all of the people polled about fears, not one said my greatest fear is facing God.

Now let's say we poll Christians about facing God and we ask them this question, what is your greatest fear about facing God?

- 1) Some might say, well my biggest fear is that I get before God and never really did deal with some sin.
- 2) Some might say, well my biggest fear is that I get before God knowing I never gave regularly what I should have given.
- 3) Some might say, well my biggest fear is that I get before God knowing I never really tried to do much of anything for God.
- 4) Some might say, well my biggest fear is that I get before God and did not witness.

James said, I have something else in mind and that is getting before God knowing that you have used your mouth to judge and destroy your brother and sister in Christ.

On the floor of the mouth cavity is a muscular organ called the tongue and James knew that this would be a major judgment issue when we face God. When we leave our brothers and sisters in Christ, no one really knows what we say, except God.

There is no question that James realized that the most devastating of all organs is the uncontrollable tongue. A tongue can murder a person.

As we come to these two verses of Scripture, there are four key words that show up multiple times. 1) The word judge shows up 5 times; 2) The word law (no article) shows up 5 times; 3) The word speak against shows up 3 times and 4) The word brother shows up 3 times.

Now it is clear that believers were making judgments against each other based on some law and they were judging each other and speaking out against each other and James says you stop it right now.

What James says is this:

IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT GOD WILL JUDGE EACH OF US, GRACE AGE BELIEVERS MUST STOP JUDGING ONE ANOTHER AND SPEAKING AGAINST ONE ANOTHER.

Every person has a right to his or her own convictions. What we do not have a right to do is use our convictions as a basis for judging another brother or sister in Christ. **The pronoun “another” in Greek means another of the same kind.**

The Jewish people had made up several laws and religious traditions and rules that were not even in Scripture and they were using that as a basis for judging each other. James says you need to stop that right now.

Now there are three reasons why believers need to stop making judgments about each other:

REASON #1 – Because speaking judgments against each other is a violation of God’s law.
4:11a

The basic point here is that if one is speaking evil of another brother or sister at church and if one is making judgments about them, they are actually violating the law of God.

When we open our mouths on some insignificant matter in a negative way against another brother or sister in Christ, we break God’s law.

Now the entire Bible testifies of the severity of speaking against a brother or sister in Christ. In God’s mind, it is serious business:

- 1) **Leviticus 19:15-18** - It violates God’s Levitical law.
- 2) **Psalms 15:2-3** - It prevents one from having a heart that is right with God.
- 3) **Psalms 101:5** - It puts one on a path of destruction by God.
- 4) **Proverbs 6:19** - It involves oneself in something God hates.
- 5) **Romans 1:30** - It is a sin that causes the abandonment of God (same word as James 4:11).
- 6) **James 2:8-9** - It is a violation of God’s royal law that says we are to love each other.

Any way you look at this, if one uses his or her mouth to speak bad against a brother or sister in Christ, it is against God's Word and against God's law.

What is so ironic is that these believers were judging each other based on their law matters and legalistic codes. James says if you want God's blessings, knock it off.

The next time you are tempted to say something negative about someone, think very seriously about this fact. It is a direct violation of the Word of God and law of God. Also remember we will face God.

Many years ago there was a church north of Grand Rapids that split over versions of the Bible. One family really liked the NIV and another family really liked the KJV. The older people liked the KJV and the younger family liked the NIV. Some of the old stalwarts started telling people that the younger family wasn't spiritual because they liked the NIV. That family eventually left the church and at the time I knew of this story, they pretty much gave up on going to church. Now the old people got their way. But one day those older people are going to face God and the moment that happens, they will lose. They used their mouths to destroy a family. They made their judgments on their own opinions and they were in violation of God's Word and God's law.

REASON #2 – Because speaking judgments against each other is exaltation above God's law.
4:11b

James really doubles down on his point. Not only are you in violation of God's law, when you speak against people and judge them, but you actually put yourself above the Law. You become the judge, rather than the Word of God and the law of God.

The law says don't speak out against a brother and when you do, you are basically saying my views are more important than the law of God. One who holds to this position is not interested in obeying God's law, but rather breaking it.

If you decide to use your mouth to speak out against your brothers and sisters in Christ and make judgments based on your own presuppositions and conclusions, you need to know that God views you as thinking you are more important and authoritative over Him and His Word.

Now that is very serious. In **Revelation 22:18** we read John's final words at the end of the Bible. It is a warning that says do not add things to the Word of God. It is deadly serious in the mind of God.

When we make judgments about others and use our mouths to hurt others, we are doing something that is a clear violation of God's Word and we are heading to serious accountability. We aren't the authority; God's Word is the authority.

Now churches would not do that, would they? No one would come up with their own traditions and rules and judge others by them, would they?

REASON #3 – Because speaking judgments is a prerogative of God. **4:12**

There is only one who is in a position to make honest and accurate judgments and it is God.

Now one question we would ask here is how do we reconcile passages such as I Cor. 5:7; 6:2-5; II John 10-11 that specifically say we are to make judgments? These passages make it very clear that we are to judge.

What we discover if we carefully study those passages is that it is a violation of the Word of God not to judge. These are not speculative judgments that are made based on man-made traditions or one's own opinion. The purity of the church and the truth of God are at stake.

The motive for making the judgment becomes a key to the judgment. The matter James is addressing was the matter of slandering people and demeaning people not in any way that was godly.

James was addressing people who were verbally assaulting others who went to church for no solid Biblical reason.

Our job is not to judge people based on our own convictions. When we do make judgments, it must be based on the Word of God and the truth of God. Our job is not to invent more laws, rather apply the Word that God has already given.

When I was a young boy, I had some dreams and fantasies that were basically harmless:

- 1) I used to pretend I was Superman. I would tie on some cape and jump off something.
- 2) I used to pretend I was Al Kaline. I would take a whiffle bat and hit stones for hours.
- 3) I used to pretend I was Wilt Chamberlain. We had an 8 foot rim in our garage.

Now those are basically harmless fantasies.

But there is a very dangerous fantasy that is played out in the church and it is the fantasy of playing God. When we open our mouths and make judgments against someone, we are doing something that only God has the right to do.

Now the context of this was doing things that can bring the exaltation of God (James 4:10). God will not bless and exalt one who is continually running their mouths, making judgments about others.

A harsh, critical, backbiting spirit will not be blessed or prospered by God.

Our greatest fear should be facing God and not being ashamed. Our biggest fear should be facing God and being pleasing to Him. To do that we must quit speaking against each other.