

James 4:11–12

Relating Rightly to God, His Law, and His People

Thursday, February 8, 2024 • Read James 4:11–12

*Questions from the Scripture text: What type of speech does v11 forbid? About whom? What does the one who speaks evil of a brother do to his brother? Of what else does he speak evil? What else does he judge? What is our relationship to the law supposed to be? But what is this man's relationship to the law instead? With Whom does this put them into competition (v12)? What two things is this other Lawgiver able to do? Who is not able to do either of these things.*

**Why is speaking against our brother so bad?** James 4:11–12 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these two verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **speaking against our brother puts us at odds with the law and with God Himself.**

**A right relation to our brother.** "speak evil" (v11) is a combination of the preposition for "against" and the word for "speak." It definitely has the sense of speaking of someone as if he himself is a form of evil. Note that the Lord's prophet calls his speakers "brethren" immediately before reminding them that their fellow church member is "a brother." Shall we consider that brother to be an evil thing, when he has not only been made in the image of God, but also redeemed by Christ and for Christ, and is now in union with Christ? God forbid!

**A right relation to God's law.** It is important to take these two verses together, because the "judgment" in v11 is one that puts us in competition not only with God as judge who acquits/condemns (cf. 2:4), but with God as "Lawgiver." In other words, this passage is NOT saying that we are not to tell our brother when he is violating God's law. Scripture actually *commands* us to do that (cf. Mt 18:15; Luk 17:3; Gal 6:1; 2Th 3:15; Ja 5:20). But note that in those situations, it is our brother to whom we are to speak.

So this passage is addressing speaking about our brother to someone else. It is addressing when we speak against a brother on account of something apart from violating God's law. Doing this not only speaks against and judges the brother, but speaks against and judges God's law, as if it is incomplete. But is that what we are supposed to do with God's law? Add to it other things as a basis of speaking against a brother? No! We are to be instructed by God's law and do what it says (cf. 1:22–25).

Either we are under God's law, together with our brother, whom we help as needed; or, we are above our brother and speak against him, in which case we are putting ourselves above God's law.

**A right relation to God.** Of course, putting oneself above the law is especially grievous because of Whose law it is. Adding to His law arrogates to ourselves the status of "co-lawgiver." But there is only one Lawgiver, and by rights, He could and would have already destroyed us all. Yet, by grace, He has saved those whom He makes righteous through faith in Christ.

We ought to reverence God, as the One Who would rightly and justly destroy us, and not presume to judge His law as incomplete, speaking against it by speaking against our brother.

And we ought to love God, as the One Who has instead saved us. This means loving and praising His good and perfect law that He has given. And it also means loving and speaking well of our brethren, whom He Himself has loved and saved. Rather than being competitor-judges to God who will be destroyed, we ought to be companion-redeemed with our brothers who are being saved by God!

Refraining from speaking against our brothers is a significant part of the Christian life. If it is not something that you have been pursuing by God's grace, dear reader, then it is high time that you humble yourself before the Lord. He will give you grace to help cleanse your mouth and purify your heart (v6–10) out of love for the Lord Himself (v3–5) that produces love for your brothers and sisters as well (v1–2).

Whom, in the church (especially in your home!) do you need most help not speaking against? To whom should you speak, if a brother is breaking God's law? What else must you not allow to become the basis of thinking ill of another? What are you attempted to add to God's law as a basis for evaluating others? What should you be doing with God's law instead? What does God do, in accord with His law?

*Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for when we have spoken against one another, instead of to one another, when our brother has broken your law. And forgive us for thinking ill of one another on the basis of things other than your law. Forgive us for becoming judges with evil thoughts, rather than submitting ourselves to You, alongside our brethren, and hoping in Your salvation together with them. Grant that we would humble ourselves under Your mighty hand, looking to You to life us up together with them to the joy of delighting in You, which we ask through Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP197 "Christian Unity" or TPH409 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"**

**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))**

James chapter 4 verse 11 through 12. These are the words of God. Do not speak evil of one, another Brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother? Speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law.

But a judge. There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge? Another. And then so far, Reading of Gods inspired and And Aaron toward, As we continue in James chapter 4, Uh, where the The Lord's Prophet has been addressing quarrels among Believers.

And has exposed. That these corals come often from. Desires for pleasure within us putting ourselves in the place of, uh, in the place of God, putting our Pleasures, what pleases us ahead of what, pleases, Lord, and the need to humble ourselves. Uh, before God and to find our pleasure in him and in what pleases him?

Uh, so also now Uh, he addresses gossip. Speaking against a brother. This is not saying that we should not help our brother. If he is caught in a sin that is against God's law. Scripture plainly teaches us that we are supposed to do that in places like Matthew, 18, and Colossians 6.

And even at the end of this book, Where it says, Brethren if any one among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, let him know that, he who turns a sinner from the error of his way, will save a soul from death and cover. A multitude of sins.

And of course, it's God, who is saving? But God has appointed to us and instructed us to tell a brother. When he is sitting, but he is not told us to do, is to speak about A brother if we speak about a brother. Uh, Uh, we are if we speak against Uh, oh brother.

Then we are forgetting that the Lord has called him. Our brother. And we are making ourselves, then Uh, Uh, putting ourselves in the place of God. God is the one who speaks for or against and God having spoken for our brother to save. Uh, we are not to speak against our brother, we are If he is sinning to speak to him.

But not only, then are we? Adding to what God has told us to do, which already makes us to speak against the law and to judge the law as incomplete in that way for ourselves, but often when someone speaks against a brother or speaks against a sister, they're not speaking.

On. In accord with or on account of something from God's law. They're adding Uh, to God's law. Other things that become the standard or the basis upon which they speak against someone. And so, That too is a way of speaking against the law and judging the law. If we add other things, then we are implying that God's law is insufficient.

This was something that we saw already in chapter two where there was the wealthy brother and the poor brother and if we treat the rich one better than the poor one. Then we become. Uh and show partiality amongst ourselves. If we do that then we become judges with evil thoughts is how chapter 2 and verse 4 said it.

In other words. Using adding the the Qualification or the evaluation of someone's social status or economic status as a way to treat them well or poorly. Uh, so also, if we add anything at all to the law of God, For speaking for or against people who speak against someone, then we Are also then speaking against the law and judging the law.

Therefore, as incomplete. Incomplete both from what we are to do and incomplete in giving us the basis upon which to think and speak about someone but God's word teaches us to call those whom. He has brought into his church. Who are members in good standing. In his church, he teaches us to call them Saint to call them.

Holy ones, even to have our Delight in them, according to Psalm 16. And so, we are to have a right relation to our brother, not to speak against a brother, or to treat a brother. As an evil thing, when he has, not only been made in the image of God, but has been United to Christ and God forbids us.

Then to speak against someone who is in God's image and United to Christ as if they were evil. Right relation to your brother. Don't speak against your brother right relation to God's law. Remembering that we're not to speak against the law and judge the law. But rather, what are we supposed to do?

And to verse 11, if you judge the law, you're not a doer of the law but a judge we're to assume we are to operate on the basis of the truth. That the law is complete and that we are the ones who are flawed. So, we're not to correct the law, or enhance the law, the law corrects.

And improves. Uh, and so in our view of God's law, we are to carefully, do whatever it is that he says, and not do whatever it is that he forbids. So, we are to be submitted to the law either. We are under God's law together with our brother, The law putting us in our place next to him, not above him, whom we help as needed.

According to the law, the law, telling us when to talk to our brother about what And telling us not to talk against our brother at all. Uh, and so in order to have a right relation to our brother, we need to have a right relation to the law. Uh, if we and if we are mistreating our brother, then not only do we have a wrong relation with him.

If we're speaking against him, if we put ourselves above him and speak against him, we not only have a wrong relationship to the law or to our brother, but also to the law. But if you have a wrong relationship to the law, you have a wrong relationship to God.

There is not room for another law Giver. Uh, and so you have in verse 12, there is one law Giver. By rights, he could have already destroyed us all but as judge, he not only exercises, his his office as lawgiver and judge in destroying, but especially in Saving. So that God by giving Israel in a period of there in a period of their history, a series of Judges who did determine Disputes.

Between people, but he also at that time gave gave them judges, who were deliverers And God also is our judge and deliverer delivering us. Not only from enemies who are against us, but also delivering us from his own wrath. Providing his own righteousness, providing a tournament, so that in his judgment in his declaring verdict, he is not only Destroyer but savior Now, we do not think.

Or we must not think and we would be delusional and wicked. If we thought that we were able to save another, But the one who saves is also the one who alone has right to destroy and condemn. And so we must be careful that we not take any part of the place that belonged to God.

Seeing that he is the only lawgiver. He is the only judge. He is the only savior. He is the only Destroyer. And rightly then does verse 12 conclude addressing us and says, who are you? To judge another. So, this A big part of our Christian Life, how we speak?

We need to receive take to heart. This part of God's word, may his Spirit. Give us Grace, not to speak against others. Other brothers, whether in the church or especially in that part of the church that is in our own home. Since these are the brothers and sisters in the congregation that the Lord has most closely assigned to us.

Is our family. It's part of our right relationship to God recognizing him as the lawgiver. So we put ourselves under the law, not above the law, and alongside our brother, not above, or against our brother. Um, So, recognizing him as lawgiver. Him as judge him a savior. Him as Destroyer.

And realizing. That if we unthinkingly, uh, Reflexively revert to operating out of our remaining sin and speak against our brother or sister. We are actually corrupting our relation. We are relating wrongly to the law of God and even The god of the law. So, Refrain from speaking against your brothers.

If this is not something that you have been pursuing by God's grace, Uh, then it is something in which you need to Humble yourself before the Lord. And look to him. To help you. As we have been hearing these last few weeks. Uh, cleanse your hand, in this case cleanse, your mouth and purify your heart So that you may love your brother or your sister rightly.

Let's pray.

Our gracious. God and our heavenly father. We ask for your help. We confess that we are often quick to think and speak against a brother or a sister. Rather than speaking to them. Grant that we would not treat one another as enemies or evil. But that we would look to you as Savior.

And treat our brothers, according to your calling them brother, and you're calling them Saint. Help us Lord to be humble before you. To Rejoice over you as the lawgiver and the judge and the Savior. And to trust that, when the time is right, for you to condemn and Destroy that, you will do that.

So give us Lord, contentment and humility. Under your mighty hand and humility. Also. And how we relate to our brothers and sisters. Guard our heart. We pray by your spirit. Grant us to guard our art. Has since out of it flows, the Wellspring of And out of its overflow, our mouth speak.

So help us. We pray our God in Jesus name. Amen.