

James 4:11-12

Speaking Against One Another

Jeremy Doan

Holly Hills Bible Church

August 11, 2013

James 4:11-12 (NASB)

- 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.*
- 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?*

Approaching the target

- Two different sources of wisdom – heavenly or earthly
 - 4:1-6 – Results of earthly wisdom
 - 4:7-10 – God's remedy, which is to submit/rest in him
- James has just given us several imperatives, wrapped by the two passive voice verbs *submit* and *humble yourself*
 - He may not fully realize it, but he is speaking of identification
- James carries on the theme that God's holiness still matters, and it matters how we arrive at it
 - We are entirely unqualified to determine right and wrong
- James also carries on the theme of fellowship among the saints
 - He puts our “spiritual” criticisms of each other into perspective

Sibling non-rivalry

Do not speak against one another, brethren.

- *Speak against* – to speak against one, to recriminate, traduce¹
 - Peter is the only other author to use this word
 - Translated *slander* in 1 Peter 2:12 & 3:16
 - Derived from word translated “backbiting, defamation” – Wuest translates this as “defame”
 - The verb tense indicates this was actively occurring
- *Brethren* – brethren in Christ
 - Same word used by James throughout the book
 - Like John, James is concerned primarily with our treatment of the fellow saints

¹

unless otherwise noted, definitions come from BlueLetterBible.com

Here comes the judge!

He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law;

- *Judges* – to form or express an opinion of a person
 - Same word used in James 2:12
 - Implies condemnation²
 - James' words recalls the word of Jesus in Matthew 7:1-2
- Combining *speak against* with *judges* indicates that these people are speaking a moral/legal judgment of another
- Which law is *the law*?
 - Any law of any kind?
 - The Mosaic Law, as in 2:9-11?
 - The royal law, as in 2:8?
 - The law of liberty, as in 1:25 & 2:12

²

from Zodiates

Just do it

but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.

- Look at the logical progression here:

Slander/judge a fellow saint = Slander/judge the Law
 Slander/judge the Law = not a doer of the Law

- Where have we heard before about being a “doer” of the law?
- What are the non-stated assumptions here?
 - Hint: some are actually stated in the next verse
- Where does this fit into Biblical counseling?
 - Are we not to help the weaker brother?

From the mouth of Ironside

- Ironside: *To [speak against your brother] is to reflect on God Himself, who in His infinite love and mercy has received us all and put us into this place of holy fellowship one with another. He is the supreme lawgiver to whom each one is accountable. If I pass judgment on my brethren I am speaking evil of the law and therefore of the One who gave it. Each is to answer for himself before God. I cannot answer for my brother, nor he for me. We are all alike called to be doers of the law – that is, to render obedience to the Word. Evil-speaking is in itself disobedience. So if I indulge in and speak disparagingly of my brother, condemning him for disobedience, I am utterly inconsistent because I am disobedient also. Each must give account directly to God "who is able to save and to destroy"*
- Is he correct?

Two kinds of persons

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

- Quote: *There are two kinds of people: those who can extrapolate from incomplete data.*
- James identifies a stark contrast here:

Law Giver	Law Doer
Declares the law	Does the law
Only one	Many
Saves and Destroys	Fight and quarrel
Is able	Is unable

Table : Two kinds of persons

The One

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

- *One who is able* – to be able, have power whether by virtue of one's own ability and resources
 - Matthew 3:8-9 – God is able to raise up
 - Used by James in 1:21, 2:14, 3:8, 3:12, 4:2
- *Save* – Salvation from eternal death, sin, and the punishment and misery consequent of sin³
 - Used 54 times throughout the Gospels; 20 times in reference to spiritual salvation
 - Occurrences in James – 1:21, 2:14, 5:15, 5:20

3

Zodhiates

Who do you think you are?

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

- *Destroy* – to declare that one must be put to death; a sentence of death
 - Matthew 10:28 – The one who is able to destroy the body and soul
 - The emphasis here is that only God holds the power of life and death
 - This theme is carried on in the remaining verses of the chapter
- *Neighbor* – any person other than yourself
 - Matthew 22:39 – love you neighbor
- *But who are you*
 - Who are we to question God's order?
 - Who are we to place ourselves in God's place?

James 4:11-12 (Wuest)

11 Stop defaming one another, brethren. He who defames his brother or passes a condemnatory judgment upon his brother, defames the law and passes a condemnatory judgment upon the law. Now, if you pass a condemnatory judgment upon the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 One only is a lawgiver and a judge, He who is able to save and to destroy. But as for you, who are you who passes a condemnatory judgment upon your fellow-man?