

Wiersbe notes, "We never know all the facts in a case, and we certainly never know the motives that are at work in men's hearts. To speak evil of a brother and to judge a brother on the basis of partial evidence and (probably) unkind motives is to sin against him and against God."

The third fact is that ...

3. The Condemnation is Severe (v.12)

a. God is the lawgiver.

- 1) He is the only truly fair lawgiver.
 - a) God is holy. He never makes any mistakes. Being perfect, He is able to make perfect laws.
 - b) God is just. His laws are always fair and based on truth. His motives are always pure and right.
 - c) God is the creator of all. Everything and everyone belongs to God. He alone has the right to tell us what to do.
 - d) He is omniscient. That is, he knows all things. (Ps 44:21) "*Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.*" (Heb 4:13) "*Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*" His laws address accurately even the secret sins of humans.
- 2) God is the only one who can rightly save and destroy.
 - a) God is the sovereign of all things. No one has the right to tell God what to do.
 - b) When God makes a decision to save or to destroy, it is always right. He has all the facts.

b. We have no right to judge in this way.

- 1) We do not know all the facts as God does.
- 2) We do not always have right motives when we judge.

Conclusion: We have attempted to distinguish between our duties to address sinful situations biblically and God's command not to speak evil of other Christians. The first helps restoration the second harms restoration. The first is God's way. The second is Satan's way. He is the accuser of the brethren.

Song: Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord - 337

Speaking Evil of Others

4 December 2016 AM - James 4:11-12 - Jas16 - Scott Childs

Introduction: (read text) Alan Redpath came up with the following acrostic. If what we are about to say does not pass these tests, we should keep our mouth shut. It works!

T	Is it true?
H	Is it helpful
I	Is it inspiring?
N	Is it necessary?
K	Is it kind?

Transition: This morning, I want us to examine three facts about God's command "speak not evil" that reveal what it means so that we can apply it to our daily lives.

The first fact is that ...

1. The Command is Specific (v.11)

a. It does not forbid discernment or judging sin.

- 1) God commands us to be discerning between good and evil. Not all activities are right to do. For example:
 - a) (Eph 5:10) "*Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*"
 - b) (1Thess 5:22) "*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*"
- 2) Christians are to confront fellow Christians who sin by following proper steps. (Matt 18:15-18) "*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*"
- 3) Christians are meekly to restore fellow Christians who fall into sin. (Gal 6:1) "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*"
- 4) Church members must identify and separate from those who disobey the Bible.
 - a) (Rom 16:17) "*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*"

- b) (2Thess 3:6) "*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*"
- c) (Titus 3:10) "*A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;*"

5) Biblically confronting sin is **not** the same as speaking evil of a brother. It is our duty as Christians to be discerning, to identify harmful activities, to identify wrongdoers and to stand against sin in a loving way. God wants our goal to be restoration. If the offender is unwilling, then God commands separation for our protection. Speaking evil works against restoration.

📖 *One of the main reasons that Christianity today as a whole has lost its impact in this wicked world is because Christians have failed to biblically confront sin and separate from error.*

b. It does forbid speaking evil against a Christian.

- 1) "*Speaking evil*" literally means to speak against. It is saying bad things about another. It is slander. Psalm 15:3 calls it backbiting. Solomon called it talebearing. (Prov 18:8) "*The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*" Criticising often falls in the same category as slander and talebearing.
- 2) In context James has just addressed the uncontrolled tongue (Jas 3:1-12), bitter envy and strife (Jas 3:13-18), and fighting to fulfil selfish lusts (Jas 4:1-10).
- 3) In **political campaigns**, candidates often cut down other candidates to try to elevate themselves. Promoting self is usually at the root of slander. **We must not fall into that same sin!** (Prov 15:28) "*The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.*"
- 4) Here is the reason that James links it this slander to judging. When we speak evil of a person we are saying, "In my opinion that person is bad or has bad motives." We are not capable of judging a person's motives and often we lack facts to know if what they did is evil.

- 5) Speaking evil is often a **cowardly** way of dealing with a problem. If a loved one or fellow Christian has done wrong, love him enough to confront him as Jesus said to do (Mat 18:15-17). Speak the truth to him in love. This is not easy, but it is right. **God commands us not to slander!**

The second fact is that ...

2. The Crime is Serious (v.11)

a. If we slander, we act as a judge.

- 1) James points out that speaking evil and judging is really an attack on God's law. He does not identify any specific law.
 - a) Perhaps he had in mind God's law in Leviticus 19:16. (Lev 19:16) "*Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.*"
 - b) James may still have had God's Royal Law in mind. (Jas 2:8) "*If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:*"
- 2) God's laws forbids talebearing (slandering) and it commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves.
- 3) When we slander or criticise someone, we are saying that we are right and they are wrong. We are setting ourselves up as their judge. Remember, it is our duty as Christians to be discerning, to identify harmful activities, to identify wrongdoers and to stand against sin in a loving way, but it is **wrong** for us to slander or criticise anyone.
- 4) When we speak evil of others, we are also disobeying this command. When we do so, we are speaking evil of God's law. We are saying, "God's law forbidding me to speak evil is not right and I know better than what God commanded." We become judges of God's law.

b. We cannot obey God's law and be a judge too.

- 1) If we judge or condemn God's law, we obviously are not obeying it. We are disobeying God.
- 2) We are setting up ourselves as a judge that knows better than God. That is a very evil sin.
- 3) It is wrong to speak evil and act as one's judge. Warren