

Watch What You Say (James 4:11,12)

- Words are extremely destructive, often cutting deep and leaving life long scars
- The Holy Spirit addresses this evil in 11,12: A command and the reason behind it
- The command clearly stated and unadorned: “Brothers do not slander one another”
- The precise wording of this command in Greek, goes further than just slander
- Lit. Do not speak down on one another, or do not speak against one another’
- Most think it’s ok to convey negative information about one another if it’s true
- Many Christians use truth as a license to righteously diminish one’s character
- Gossip & criticism may be rooted in an overweening sense of self-righteousness

I. Self Elevation above the Law (11b)

- First argument: when you speak against others you elevate yourself above the law
- James isn’t saying Christians are never to make judgments about others (Matt 7:1)
- Jesus forbids sinners judging the lives of others while they themselves live in sin
- It is the Christians duty to judge false prophets (Matt 7:15,16) Judge sin as sin!
- The Scripture forbids Judgementalism, a judgmental, critical, censorious spirit
- When one speaks uncharitably against a brother – he breaks the royal law of love
- The royal law of love is broken when we judge our brother (2:8 cf Lev, Jas 2:10)
- His failure to keep the law amounts to him judging it, in that he has judged invalid
- If we do that, we evidently think that our opinion is better than God’s

II. Self Evaluation above God (12)

- The absurdity of a critical spirit goes further, it sets oneself higher than even God
- James says there is only one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and destroy
- God’s sovereign capacity to save and destroy is repeated many times (Deut 32:39)
- Jesus warned, don’t fear those who kill the body but him who kills soul & body
- James’ logic: Since God is the only one who can save & destroy, He alone is judge
- This judgmentalism is not only the epitome of pride, it is blasphemous
- Would we take God’s place? We can judge external sins, but only imperfectly
- Ignorance mars even our best judgments, we don’t know one’s heart (1 Cor 4:5)
- Judging others is one of the worse sins we can commit, James tells us why:
1) It is self exaltation above the law 2) even worse it is self exaltation above God
- We must agree with God or suffer the terrible consequences of our wickedness