

SERMON TAKE HOME- James 4:11-12 Speaking Against another is no small thing

Do not speak evil against one another, brothers

- The Greek word “speak against” (katalaleō) is only used 3 times in the NT (1 Peter 2:12, 1 Peter 3:16)
- Another form of the word is used in 2 Corinthians 12:20, 1 Peter 2:1 & Romans 1:30 and is translated slander or backbiter. The idea is to speak against someone with the intent to defame them or their character. Typically what is spoken is untrue or exaggerated.
- The sin of speaking against another or slandering is typically not thought of as a “big” sin. It is listed as one of the “Acceptable Sins” in Jerry Bridges book on sins Christians downplay. Does this minimized view of speaking against another find its origin in scripture? Let’s find out-
- We know that no one has “tamed the tongue” (James 3:2,8), and we are all guilty to some degree of speaking against another/slander. Pray now that God would open your eyes to the depth of this sin as James points out what is really behind speaking out against another.

What makes speaking against another such a big deal from God’s perspective?

- The heart of the true believer has been transformed (Ezek 36:22-31), with the new heart comes a new tongue. Jesus showed us that the “*from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks*” (Luke 6:45)
 - When a convert to Christ uses their tongue to speak against another, they are in contrast to who they are in Christ. As James said (ch3v10) “*My brothers, these things ought not be so*” This is contrary to our new (true) nature.
- James uses the word “brothers” 3 times in our text. We saw how much grace we are under in ch4v6-8, and in knowing how much grace God has given us, consider the hypocrisy to turn to your brother and rise up and speak against him. Also remember, we are all part of one living body (the church), and Christ is our head. To speak against a brother/sister is to tear down your own body.

“the one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law”

- What does James mean that when we speak against/judge a brother, the sin is bigger than just offending a brother, but we actually speak against the law and judge the law?
 - Consider Matthew 22:34-40, Romans 13:8-10, Galatians 5:14-15 What is the summary of the law?
 - When we speak against or fleshly judge a brother, we are doing the opposite of the law (love) and we are speaking against the law & judging the law.
 - Who law is this? Do you see why David said “*against You only have I sinned*” (Ps 51)?
 - In a sense, when we ignore and disobey God’s law by speaking against another, we are judging the law of God as insignificant and unnecessary to obey.
 - In fact, we make ourselves not doers of the law, but a judge “*v11 But if you judge the law (by speaking against another) you are not a doer of the law but a judge*”
 - In other words, when we speak against another, we put ourselves in the position of lawmaker and judge of the law. Do we see how offensive this sin (and all sin for that matter) are in the eyes of God
 - How does God (through James) respond to the audacity of man when he does this? “*v12 there is only one lawgiver and Judge, who is able to save & to destroy*”
 - God is the only lawgiver and judge, and only God can save and destroy (Consider Deut 32:39, Exodus 20:1-17, Psalm 50:6, Psalm 75:7, Heb 7:25, Matt 10:28)

So let us all ask along with James “*But who are you to judge your neighbor?*”

I pray God has revealed with wickedness and depth of speaking against others. It is not a small sin to be downplayed, but an open rebellion against the God of the universe!

Pray that God would reveal any hint of slander or speaking against another, and may we be slow to speak and quick to listen.