

## **James 4:11-12**

### **Slander**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. There is power in the tongue for good and evil. What you say is heard, remembered and meditated upon by those who hear you.** As we look at this passage this is perhaps the thing we should keep in mind throughout...Our words, good or bad, have impact. James is focused here on those times when they are bad...
- B. At the start of the McCarthy era, Floridian Claude Pepper, one of the Senate's most outspoken liberals, was on the conservatives' "hit list" along with many other senators. George Smathers lashed out with some typical right-wing invective -- he called his opponent "the Red Pepper" -- and he launched a campaign to expose Pepper's secret "vices." Smathers disclosed that Pepper was "a known extravert," his sister was a "thespian," and his brother a "practicing homo sapien." Also, when Pepper went to college, he actually "matriculated." Worst of all, he "practiced celibacy" before marriage. Naturally, Pepper lost.**
- C. Our words mean something and they are a big opportunity for us to love others. Or, a big opportunity to NOT love others.**

**D. A man working in the produce department was asked by a lady if she could buy half a head of lettuce. He replied, "Half a head? Are you serious? God grows these in whole heads and that's how we sell them!" "You mean," she persisted, "that after all the years I've shopped here, you won't sell me half-a-head of lettuce?" "Look," he said, "If you like I'll ask the manager." She indicated that would be appreciated, so the young man marched to the front of the store. "You won't believe this, but there's a lame-braided idiot of a lady back there who wants to know if she can buy half-a-head of lettuce." He noticed the manager gesturing, and turned around to see the lady standing behind him, obviously having followed him to the front of the store. "And this nice lady was wondering if she could buy the other half" he concluded. Later in the day the manager cornered the young man and said, "That was the finest example of thinking on your feet I've ever seen! Where did you learn that?" "I grew up in Grand Rapids, and if you know anything about Grand Rapids, you know that it's known for its great hockey teams and its ugly women." The manager's face flushed, and he interrupted, "My wife is from Grand Rapids!" "And which hockey team did she play for?"**

**E. James wants us to see what words can do. He wants us to learn their power. He wants us to be intentional and use our words to build one another up instead of tearing one another down.**

## **I. Just Stop**

**A. Stop Speaking Evil of One Another** — Stop slandering one another. Stop sharing malicious gossip and talking down one another.

**B. He emphasizes the point at the end of verse 11 by reminding them that we are family...Brothers and sisters in Christ.**

**C. What made you a brother or sister in the earthly sense of the word?** It was a common parent. You share a father or mother or both. This creates a bond which cannot be denied or broken. You are “stuck” with one another.

**D. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. It doesn't matter whether we always like one another or agree with one another. We are “stuck” with one another because of our common spiritual parentage; our Father is God Himself.**

**E. God wants His children to get along! He wants us to love everyone but how much more so the members of our own family! Brother, sister, love one another! And this begins by how you speak to, of and about one another.**

- F. If you are guilty of speaking ill of someone then STOP IT!**
- G. Remember, when God calls us to something He gives the grace to do it. So ask God to help you stop your unkind words and gossip. Ask Him to change the feelings you have toward the one whom you have ill will. Pray FOR the person with whom you have problems. Commit to do things God's way.**
- H. If you choose *not* to do things God's way you are in affect saying God is not God...**

## **I. The Law is The Law!**

- A. God has determined what is right and wrong. He has set down two laws for the believer in Christ to follow: 1. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. 2. Love your neighbor as yourself.**
- B. "Speaks Ill Of The Law And Judges The Law"**
- C. If you decide you do not have to obey one of these laws you are in affect telling God that you will be the judge of both Him and what He has said is right or wrong.**
- D. Let me assure you...There is an absolute law and God is the one who has established and revealed it to us. There is right and wrong and you do not get to decide what that is! The law cannot be denied or ignored.**

- E. Natural laws are illustrations of the consequences for those who try and make their own law for themselves...
- F. In 1969, in Pass Christian, Mississippi, a group of people were preparing to have a "hurricane party" in the face of a storm named Camille. Were they ignorant of the dangers? Could they have been overconfident? Did they let their egos and pride influence their decision? We'll never know. What we do know is that the wind was howling outside the posh Richelieu Apartments when Police Chief Jerry Peralta pulled up sometime after dark. Facing the Beach less than 250 feet from the surf, the apartments were directly in the line of danger. A man with a drink in his hand came out to the second-floor balcony and waved. Peralta yelled up, "You all need to clear out of here as quickly as you can. The storm's getting worse." But as others joined the man on the balcony, they just laughed at Peralta's order to leave. "This is my land," one of them yelled back. "If you want me off, you'll have to arrest me." Peralta didn't arrest anyone, but he wasn't able to persuade them to leave either. He wrote down the names of the next of kin of the twenty or so people who gathered there to party through the storm. They laughed as he took their names. They had been warned, but they had no intention of leaving. It was 10:15 p.m. when the front wall of the storm

came ashore. Scientists clocked Camille's wind speed at more than 205 miles-per-hour, the strongest on record. Raindrops hit with the force of bullets, and waves off the Gulf Coast crested between twenty-two and twenty-eight feet high. News reports later showed that the worst damage came at the little settlement of motels, go-go bars, and gambling houses known as Pass Christian, Mississippi, where some twenty people were killed at a hurricane party in the Richelieu Apartments. Nothing was left of that three-story structure but the foundation; the only survivor was a five-year-old boy found clinging to a mattress the following day.

- G. How much more the consequences for those who would attempt to usurp God's moral and spiritual law! God will not be mocked and we will not be God!**
- H. Loving others is not an option. Regardless of who they are or what they have done. We must love them. And this means keeping our mouth shut when we might have an opportunity to speak ill of them either to their face or behind their back.**

## **I. There is Only One Lawgiver and Judge?**

A. If you choose to be arrogant and make yourself the judge of who should be loved and who should not be. If you believe you can make such determinations you are simply living in sin.

**B. Let me ask you the obvious question, “Who are you to be God?” Consider the arrogance which accompanies any attempt to be so! If you think you can decide who to love and not love you have made yourself God.**

**C. He Is Able To Save And Destroy**

**D. It’s interesting that James puts this phrase into our final verse. God is God because of who He is and let us consider and remind ourselves of what He is capable of doing.**

**E. God chose to save us. He could have chosen to destroy us! But, He chose to love and save! You did not save yourself. You could do nothing at all to save yourself. He did it all!**

F. The kind of love we have been shown, the mercy given and the grace poured out upon us demonstrates a love greater than we will ever understand...THAT love has been poured out upon us!

**G. And because of the love we are loved with, and the power of God’s Spirit within us, we can love. We can keep our mouth shut. We can cease gossiping!**

H. Who Are You To Judge Your Neighbor?

**I. God holds the power of life and death in His hand. He has the keys to heaven and hell. Who are you to question Him?**

**I. Conclusion**

- A. **Repent of the sin of gossip** — Words have power. How will you use your words? Some in here today probably need to repent. Repent of talking down, putting down, discouraging and berating someone in your life.
- B. **Bless With Your Words** — Some in here very likely need to begin to be intentional with their words...There is someone you know you can encourage, bless and love with your words to them. You have withheld a blessing that needs to be given.
- C. **Stop The Excuses** — I know there are some here who believe in their heart they have a reason to be unkind, withheld forgiveness, gossip and speak ill of someone. **Maybe they have sinned against you in a terrible manner. But how much sin is in your life? Did the God who has the power of life and death in His hand judge you for death or give you eternal life? How should you respond to those who have sinned against you?**
- D. **Do not give yourself excuse to hate...judge God's law...or judge your brother or sister in Christ...or anyone else!**

**E. Obey the royal law of God. The law of the life of those living in the grace of Christ! Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself.**