

Slander and Boasting

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 April 2021

Preacher: Thomas Davis

[0 : 0 0] Well, we are going to continue study in the better of James this evening, and we are going to read chapter four. We're looking at the last part of chapter four from verse 11 onwards. But let me read the whole chapter as we return to God's word. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this that's your passions are at war within you?

You desire and do not have? So you murder, you cover it and cannot obtain. So you fight in quote, you do not have because you do not ask, you ask, and you do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. You have Delta is people. Do you not know that friendship with the world is Amity with God?

Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God? Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the scripture says he yearned jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us? But he gave more Grace. Therefore it says, God opposes the clod, but give Grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God.

Resist the devil, and he'll flee from you down near to God, and he will draw near to you, cleanse your hearts you sooner and purify. Cleanse your hands, you source, and purify your heart. You double mind is be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter returned to morning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exhaust you.

Do not speak evil against one another. Brothers. The one who speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge he who is able to save and to destroy.

[1 : 5 8] But who are you to judge your neighbor? Come now, you who say today or tomorrow we'll go into such and such a turn and spend a year there, and three to make a profit. Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring, what is your life. But you are a miss that appears for a little time and then vanishes instead. You ought to see if the Lord Wills we will live and do this.

Or that as it is you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it for him, it is sin. Amen. This is God's word, and as that you would bless it to us.

We're going to just spend a few minutes looking at this. This section together as part of our study on James, and the whole of this study is really summed up by the words that we have in James 122 where he says, Be doers of the word and not hearers only. And this is a theme that we're wanting to highlight throughout this year. And James is particularly helpful in enabling us to do that, reminding us of the importance of making sure that what we know from scripture actually shapes the way that we live. As you've been seeing, James is a really practical book, and so it's full of instructions about real life situations that affect the Church community.

So we've seen it. James touch on topics like those who are wealthy and those who are poor. He talks a lot about speech. He talks about cartels, about temptation. He touches on many of the complicated practicalities of life in the Church community.

And for that reason, the letter can be so helpful in terms of thinking about just the practicalities of life as a Christian and life in the Church family together. But it's important to remember that behind the practicalities of this letter lies some very profound theology. So as we read games, in fact, whenever we read any part of the Bible, it's always good to ask ourselves what theology lies behind this verse on this section of scripture that I'm looking at. And I think that's a really helpful thing to do in games. Let me just pick a couple of examples.

[4 : 36] If I just make myself smaller, make the version big. Here's a verse in James 118, it says of his own will. He brought us forth by the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. Good to ask ourselves that question. What theology lies behind this virtual is at least three massive theological tools that lie behind this verse.

You got the Doctor of creation. Yeah. Which is just massive. The fact that we all have existence and everything to the fact that God is our creative. I mentioned here of the divine will as another massive theological topic, the mind of God, the will of God, how He plans things, what he wants, what He doesn't want, and how his purposes are worked out.

And then we also receive mention of the Word of Truth. Could be the idea of God, God's revelation of himself through his speech, the fact that he communicates, and that through that word, God reveals himself to us and God, God passes on his will to us. So you have these massive truths, even in just this one sentence, God is our Creator, and God has a will, and God communicates will to his future. If you go back one verse to 1 17, you see the same thing. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights and whom.

There is no variation. What shadowed you to change what theology lies behind this version. Again, there's massive theology. I love this idea. Every good and every perfect gift is from above, the idea that God is the source of all good.

And not only that, God is utterly consistent, there's no variation or shadow or changed hers unchangeable, absolutely consistent. Still, in chapter one, verse 19 speaks of a God's righteousness. So when we say that God is consistent, we're not just saying that He's consistent as a kind of steady level. We're seeing if he is consistent at the level of righteousness, but he has the standard of righteousness. That's just like a bar of impeccability that he never, ever deviates wrong.

[7 : 08] And a fourth example is again, a number five speaking about wisdom, which is a theme kind of running through the Hall of James as well. God is wise, just so wines. And with that, wisdom is generous and journalism. So many different ways versus like these are just conveying to us massive theological truths about God. And so although James isn't explicitly saying God is righteous, God is wise.

God is created. I hope it's easy enough to see that behind what he's saying are these massive theological tooth. And perhaps the most important one of all that runs through gyms is the fact that God is our Father. You see that mentioned in 1 27, God is described as Father here. You see mentioned again in 3 9, and it's often almost mentioned in passing.

You just that God his father. But again, that's such a massive geological to God knows us. He relates to us here for us, and he is committed to us as the perfect father who loves his children. So all this means that behind the practical extractions of James, there lies some really rich theology. There's lots that we could say.

I just want to summarize four things that James is constantly aware of. He is aware of God's status.

So God alone is Creator. He is the absolute of all reality. He's the source of all good. He is the one who everything else is dependent. God alone is God.

[9 : 01] God is one. Even the demons know that God status is absolutely unmatched. James is also aware of God's authority. So he is the one who rules over all. It's his will that defines what happens.

His word is the word that is authoritative, and he is the one who rules over all. James is also aware of God's competence. So God is wise. He is the one who knows. He is the one who understands.

He is the one who has perfect standards. He has that standard of righteousness. He's the one who's actually able to maintain that standard of righteousness, and he's the one who's able to communicate his wisdom with others. So you have this really strong awareness of God's competence in terms of the instruction that God is able to convey to his people. And then summarizing again, He's very aware of God's character.

And so God is utterly consistent, never kind of unpredictable or unreliable or inconsistent. God is absolutely consistent. He is not changeable. And at all times he maintains the perfect love, care and protection of a kind and strong other. And so what I'm trying to say is that although James is a really practical letter behind that practical stuff, there lies, so much theology.

The whole letter is grounded on the principle that what we know about God, all these theological truths and others, what we know in our heads about him should shape how we live. We are to be doers of the word and not just here. Now, all of that's really important. We're looking at games to remember the balance between theology and practical instruction. It's important for reading games.

[11 : 12] It's important for reading any part of the Bible. But I think it's especially important when we come to the second half of chapter four, because in the second half of chapter four in games, we come across a rule for Christian discipleship, a very clear rule of Christian discipleship. This rule is one of the most important rules of discipleship. It's one of the most challenging rules of discipleship, and it's probably one of the most forgotten rules of discipleship. And the rule is this not that Christians don't judge.

James is making it clear that central to your life as disciples is this rule, do not judge. And of course, that rule doesn't come from James. That comes from Jesus and Jesus himself said in the same of the Mount very clearly, judge. Not that you be not judged. It is something that we must must not forget.

It's a massively important, but also a massively forgotten commandment of Christian discipleship, I think. And so I want us to think about it and leave it more tonight. And we're going to do so under the four very familiar headings that we can often use. We're going to ask what to how and why. So first of all, we'll just ask the question, What?

What do we mean when we're talking about not judging? Well, judging can happen in so many different ways. And I'm sure it's something that you've possibly experienced today, probably experienced this week. Definitely experienced. In the last few months of your life, we could be judged in so many different ways in terms of how we look, how we speak, where we live, our jobs, our politics, our successes or failures.

Our beliefs are hobbies, the school, we go to the grades, we get even the hairstyle that we have. So if I ask you the question, have you ever felt judged? Then the answer I am short is Yes. If I ask myself a question, have I ever judge others? Yes, definitely, Yes.

[14 : 06] But the virtue that we read in James for give us a really good understanding, a good, helpful balance that I think can help us understand this whole area of judging a little bit more, because James actually gives us a kind of two sided coin of judgment. On the one side of that coin is verse 11. As you can see, there is this, Do not speak even against the brothers. The one who speaks against that, a brother or judges a brother speaks evil against the law. And judges the law.

So another term for that speaking evil for another is the term slander. It's basically involved speaking negatively or harshly about others. And of course, that speech doesn't come home nowhere. It comes from thoughts. And the fact that we speak evil about each other is because we think evil about each other.

And there's a whole host of reasons why that can happen. Often it's related to our insecurities. Or it can be because people are different from us or whatever. It may be the way we think can cause us to speak speak evil against one another. But the other side of the coin is to speak to positively or even arrogantly about ourselves.

Students, look at that in verse 13 to 16. This is the kind of opposite of what we were seeing. If speaking evil involves speaking very negatively of others, boasting and arrogance is kind of being too too presumptuous about yourself or thinking too highly of yourself. James here use the example of making plans, and he's saying, If you just make plans, thinking you're gonna be able to go here, do this by the cell that make this money that you can plan for the next year of your life. If you think you can do that without any thought of God, then you're mistaken, and you're actually making it a wrong judgment, because both of these are all examples of judging, aren't they?

Slander is judging other people to negatively. Boasting is judging yourself to positively. Kind of put it a bit more bluntly. One is to say that other people are idiots. The other is to say that I know it all, and both of these can flare up in our lives in all sorts of ways.

[16 : 37] It is so incredibly easy to look at that colleague or a classmate, even a stranger, or particularly in relation to this passage. Another Christian. It's so easy to look at them and judge them. And at the same time, it's so easy to make ourselves and to think that we are sorted. And often all of this can be related to bad experiences that we've had, particularly the times when we when we feel threatened or whatever it may be.

And lots of things can let us can cause us to easily slip into this tap of judging others harshly and judging ourselves with arrogance. So that's the question what we need to turn to the question of who, because one of the main ways in which James challenges us in this area is to get us to think about this question of who. And below that, I want to kind of add two subheadings, so I just make this bigger so you can see it. I want to ask who is judge. And then I want to ask who gets judged, because I think James is wanting us to think about both both of these.

So if we're asking the first question, Who is judge? The very obvious answer to that is God. And and James is absolutely emphatic about that. He says in verse 12, there's only one log ever and judge. And it's just worth just sort of pausing over that language.

You've got the language of only one law giver and judge. And then it's a little bit more about the fact that he's able to see and to destroy. So it's really clear that James wants us to recognize that God alone is judge. But the way that James emphasizes this point is not to just say who is judge. It's also to make it absolutely clear who isn't judge.

And he does that in the second half of this version because he says there's only one law giver and judge who's able to save in is to. And then he asks a really talent taking question, but who are you? So just shoot me a and so he's making a really, really clear contract that God is log out. God is judge. And that means that the judge this person is definitely not us got alone is judge.

[19 : 35] And of course, that immediately steps us of the right to speak evil of others and to pronounce judgment in that way. Be Teams also asks a similar kind of question in relation to Boasting. So in terms of judging others, he asked this question, Who are you? But in terms of Boasting, he asked the question, What is your life? Because if we're judging ourselves arrogantly and already positively, James has time to get us to stop and ask the question, well, actually, in all that Boasting about what you think you're going to do and achieve and everything else, and in all your plans and expectations, are you remembering to see real and small you actually have?

So it's really quite powerful language, I think, just as an aside, I think it's an example of the power of questions. And maybe if you are confronting somebody who is really judgmental, and maybe one of the best ways to tackle that is to just ask questions rather than to confront it directly, asking questions, because sometimes we have very good way of challenging inappropriate behavior. But we've also got the second question where not only is James getting us think about who is judge, he forces us to also ask a question, Who is getting judged? So when we behave in this kind of way, slander or Boasting, who is getting judged? Now, in terms of the whole book of James, let me just make myself beginning in in terms of the whole book.

And James makes it very clear that when we are judging others, we are mis teaching people who are precious to God. So chapter three emphasizes that very powerfully. You can see the verse in relation to speech. He talks about the fact that when we speak, you know, when we're reckless with our tongue, we are cashing people who are made in the image of coming the likeness of God. You've got people who are made by God, who are precious to him.

And if we are making ourselves judge, then we are inevitably going to risk hurting these people, people who are made in the image of God, and people who are probably far more fragile and vulnerable than we realize. And so when we think of please getting judged, well, image bearers of card that should always make us pause before judging. And when we're tempted to judge is always good to play. Lord, help me to remember how much you love this person. And that's a prayer I often have to play when somebody gets on my nerves or disappoints me or whatever.

And that prayer, Lord, don't let me forget how much you love this person. It's a really powerful antidote to the seeds of judgment or the flames of judgment more than seats. That the flames that can fire up inside us very quickly. So at a general level, James is telling us, you remember when you judge someone, you're actually judging someone is very precious in the sight of God. But in terms of the passage that we're in tonight versus 11 to 17, James is actually giving us another crucial lesson in terms of who is being judged.

[23 : 17] Because if we go back to verse 11 and let me just make it bigger again so we can highlight a couple of keywords, we put this command, You do not speak evil against each other. Let me be the highlighted on hold on. Do not speak evil against one another. So we've got that command. But then we've got this really interesting kind of argument being built up here.

It says the one who speaks against them brother or who judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you're not a duet of the law, but a judge. And so we've got this really interesting balance. We're judging a brother here it's is equated to judging the law, so you can see a clear link being made the same speaking against a brother here, speaking evil against the law in parallel pattern is visible. Now, what I think that is implying is that when we judge others, we are actually judging God.

Because remember, we ask the question, you what's the theology that lies behind the verse? Well, you look at the law. What's the theology that lies behind the law? The theology that lies behind the law is the fact that there's a law giver, and the law, in fact, is one of the great means in which God reveals himself, particularly his righteous standards. So although the verse isn't explicitly saying you are judging God, I think that that is what James is deliberately implying.

If God is the law giver, and if judging others means judging the law, then I think that judging other people also means judging God. If you can look at it almost in terms of steps. If this is step one, judging a brother. If step two means that you're judging the law, I think step three means that you are there for judging the law. Giver.

And of course, I think that that makes sense, because if you think about it, ultimately, at the root of all, sin is us judging God because sin puts us above God. And sin concludes that God swears not the best sin doubt God's goodness towards us, and thinks that we'd be better off going out our own way. Sin rejects God's authority, and sin thinks that God is not worth of being. And all of that is just examples of judging card. And and I think that that's such a crucial thing for us to remember, and especially when it comes to judging other Christians, which is what Gyms is primarily referring to in this passage.

[26 : 20] If we slammed at other questions, if we see them as stupid or as inconvenient or as threatening or as frustrating or as evil, and how how do we reconcile that with the fact that when Jesus looks at that person, he thinks that they're worth dying for him?

It all means that we can't speak about other people in that kind of way without actually passing judgment over God. It's really an amazing reminder that the way we are acting towards God and the way that we Act towards other people is inseparable, which hush makes so much sense because what did Jesus says the most most important commands to love God and to love one another, and it's never an either or it can never be over. Yeah. Make sure to the loving God part on make sure I do the loving one another part, the two that you have to call and in hand. And I think that point that James is making where is basically sent us look, you you're judging God when you slander a brother and a sister, and that should definitely make us pause before catching.

But of course, that, of course, raises the question, well, how do we do that? If we want to make sure that we don't judge, how do we do that? Well, that brings us back to the theme that runs through the whole letter and the fact that we are to be hearers of the word and not only do it. In other words, what we hear has to shape what we do. Our theology must shape our behavior.

So in terms of saying, how do we avoid judging others, the answer isn't simply just that they don't do it. The answer is actually to say, think of your theology, figure out what you've heard and about what you know, because relations in this issue of judging others or theology must shape our behavior. And I think the key point that I would want to emphasize is that the better we know our theology, less likely we are to judge other people. The better we know our theology, the less likely we are to know, with the less like we are to judge others. And that brings us back to what we were trying to say at the start, that behind James's practical instruction lies massive and theology.

So remember the four things that we highlighted? We said that James is constantly weird of God status of God's authority, of course, competence and, of course, character.

[29 : 27] But you know what? I've done right? Got status, code, authority, code, character. The reason I pick those four things at the start because I could have picked many others in gyms. There's so many things that the reason I want to pick those four things is because these are exactly what a judge needs to have, and God has them all.

So God has the status to judge. He is Creator. He is the absolute to whom the whole world as accountable. He has the authority to judge. He is the one who sets the standard, and he is the one who rules over all.

He has the competence to judge. So he has the wisdom, the knowledge, the understanding of all the factors that are involved. He knows the story from the beginning to the end. He knows every detail. He is able to process all that information.

He is able to judge with impeccable, fairness and absolute competence. And God has got the character to judge. You said no hidden agenda. He's got no, he's not going to kind of not going to take a back handed. He's not going to time twist things in the way he wants to go.

He will always be utterly fair, utterly wise and always, always good. God has all the qualifications needed for a judge. And in contrast to that, I have to ask myself a question, do I have the state just to judge? And I update at the level of being the absolute of all reality? No.

[31 : 09] Drive the authority to judge. Am I above other people in any way? Am I one who set standards the way that God does? No. Do I have the competence to judge?

Do I have the knowledge? Do I know the whole story of the situations that I see in front of me? Am I able to perfectly understand people people's character, motives and actions? No. And do I have the character to judge?

I don't think I do. I wish I did. But I know that that that for every bit of goodness in my heart, there's a battle against sin going on all the time and and awareness of these things, that God has these characteristics and that we don't, I think, will keep us from both slander and from Boston and couple to that is the fact that if you think about all of these things, Jesus has them all. And when Jesus walked on the face of the Earth, he had them all perfectly. And yet when you look at Jesus, you see the least judgmental passion to have walked in a piece of your and that's a powerful example to us.

And James actually reinforces this point with a really interesting verse at the end. In verse 17, he says, Whoever knows the right thing to do but doesn't do for him, it's sin. Let me make it bigger just so you can see it. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it for him is sin. This is one of these rare in these verses.

We think, what exactly does that mean? I think it's important not to over complicate it, but just to take it in just the simple terms of what it's saying. And I think if you think of an example, for example, in James's letter earlier on, he spoke about when rich or poor people come into your Church gatherings, and if a rich person comes in and you sit them at the front and in an important state in an important place, then you're giving them a status that reflect the place in society. And if you keep the poor people at the back, then you're making a judgment over them all, and you're showing a partiality that would be sinful and inappropriate. But if somebody came into your Church and you had no idea whether they were rich or poor and you just sat them at the front without knowing it, that wouldn't be a sin because you didn't know.

[33 : 33] And I think that there's lots of examples of that were in practical day to day life of the Church, you could do something in ignorant, there wouldn't be a sin. But if you knew what the right thing to do was and you didn't do it, then that's different. And that would be sinful. And I think this principle, verse 17 definitely applies to judging, because we should know better. We should know better than to judge others, and we should know better than to arrogantly boast about ourselves.

And that, of course, means and data Cush means that judging is not a sign of knowledge.

It's a sign of ignorance. So to avoid judging, we need to remember what the Bible says. We need to remember the great theology that lies behind the practical extractions of scripture. But we also need to remember. So we need to remember what the Bible says.

We also need to remember what the Bible doesn't say. So let me test your rival knowledge for a moment. Okay. Here's a quotation. So that's gone too far.

Here's a quotation. Do not be too gracious. Do not be too Mexico.

[35 : 11] Where in the Bible does that come from?

The answer, of course, is no. Where. And it was a basic question.

Nowhere does it say don't be gracious. I know. Where does it say don't be too Measureful? And I think that's such an important thing. It does not say don't be too Glacius.

It does not say don't be too Measureful. It does not say don't be too quick to let something go. It does say don't judge. And I think that's a really important balance to maintain. If you're in date, if you're in date, in a difficult situation, air on the side of Marshy and Grace.

And if you're wrong, God is judge, and he assorted it in his time. We also have to remember that although the Bible says, do not judge, it doesn't say do not instruct. And I think that's an important thing to say, because sometimes I think we can go to the opposite extreme and say, well, you know, it says, do not judge. That means I'm not going to say anything to anyone about what they do. I'm going to let everything go.

[36 : 36] The Bible doesn't say that either. And James helps us to get the balance right because he says, don't judge. But do you love one another? And loving one another will always involve guiding. But it never involves judging.

And I think that's where guidance and instruction can become so powerful when you can come to somebody and instruct them, and yet they know that you're not judging them. And I think that's really what Christian mentoring should really look like. So we don't want to be so heavy that we criticize every mistake. We don't want to be so light that we just let everything cool. We don't judge, but we do love, and we do listen to instruction, and we do give it.

So that's our part. How last of all is the question of why and just to this in a minute, because Time's gone by too quickly. Why is this important? Well, I just want to say two things about this. One, not judging is one of the most profound consequences of our theology.

So let me just write that down. So it was profound consequences. I see all that.

And what I mean by that is that we're just recognizing who God is and we're recognizing who we are. And that does two things. It humbles us because it recognizes that God alone has the status and competence that we don't have. But it also liberates us because we are not the judge. And the certificate that judging is a heavy burden and an enormous responsibility.

[38 : 30] And it's reminding us that we don't need to police each other. And if we heard or confused or totally unable to figure out who's right or wrong, there's a huge comfort and a Liberty in being able to say, God, you are judge. And I know that you can sort this out, and we must never, ever forget that God is big enough, big enough to sort everything out. So not judging is one of the most profound consequences of our theology, is also one of the most powerful aspects of a witness.

It's one of the most powerful aspects of our witness, because all our Enders are people who feel judged, people who are worrying about making sure their jobs good enough or that their clothes are nice enough or that their house is big enough or that their grades are high enough because they constantly feel judged. They feel that they've got to impress others, that people will look down on them, that people won't like them unless they reach a certain standard. All around us are people utterly weighed down by the pressure of being judged, and that can have two sides of it. Sudden you get people to kind of it's almost like they stay ahead of the wave and they're managing to keep up and keep the nice house and keep the nice job and make sure that everything's okay. So they're not judged, and they're kind of hanging on in there by their fingernails to sort of stay ahead of that wave.

And you get other people who are swarmed by it and who feel that their lives are failures and they haven't been able to stay ahead and haven't been able to achieve, and they feel that everybody's judging them and that they're just useless. And one of the most powerful things that the Christian community can do this is welcome people in who will know that they are not going to get judged. And that is such a powerful aspect of our witness. And that's what can make the fishing Church stand out from a judgmental world around us. And it's a very, very powerful aspect of our witness.

And that's why this rule do not judge. It's not just one of the most important rules. It's not just one of the most challenging. It's not just one of the most neglected. It is also one of the most beautiful because it shows us the kind of community that God wants us to create.

I don't think any of us would ask God to judge us according to what we deserve. And I guess it's just a great rule of Christian living that we do unto others as we would like to be done to us. And I actually think it's amazing. I think it's amazing that this is an emphasis that God makes so strongly, because it just reminds us of his goodness, his fairness, his love, his mercy, his Grace. He is wanting to create a beautiful community where people don't get judged.

[42 : 00] And probably the most amazing thing of all is that in order to establish that community got judge his son in their place. I mean, let me pray for a moment, and then we can go to break even father, we acknowledge that that this is a commandment that we need to hear again. It's so easy to judge others, and it's so easy to be arrogant in our judgment of ourselves. But we're also a way that we can go on all sides of these pitfalls where sometimes we can judge ourselves too harshly. Sometimes we can idealize others too much.

There's pitfalls everywhere would play that at all. We would just love to you and remember that you are judged, and we play that as a Christian community in our Church, and that er UN judgmentalness would be so clear and that it will be at the forefront of what we do. We repent of the times we have judged inappropriately, and we face and worship you as the only log ever. And judge. Thank you for that is all I mean.