

The Pride of Evil Speech and the Humility of Love
James 4:11-12

I. Introduction

- A. Reconciliation – Romans 5:6-11
- B. We have been given a ministry of reconciliation – 2 Corinthians 5:18-20
- C. Therefore, we are called to be peacemakers (James 3:18ff.).
 - 1. However, churches are infamous for their conflict and hateful speech.
 - a. Church vs. a group (homosexuals) – Fred Phelps and Westboro Baptist Church
 - b. Husbands and wives
 - c. Parents and children
 - d. Brother and brother

II. Proposition

- A. The Bible commands us as Christians not to speak evil of one another or have judgmental spirits toward one another because such actions are contrary to the gospel.

III. Exposition

- A. **Evil speech is rooted in our own selfish, frustrated, unmet desires (4:1-3).**
 - 1. Sin is turning away from God in order to satisfy our selfish, frustrated, unmet desires in something else:
 - a. Sin of pride – seeking satisfaction in self-glory rather than God’s glory
 - b. Sin of covetousness – seeking satisfaction in stuff rather than God’s provision
 - c. Sin of bitterness – seeking satisfaction in personal revenge rather than God’s justice.
 - 2. When we speak evil of our brothers and sisters in Christ, we are turning away from God in order to find satisfaction in our own selves by exalting ourselves and passing judgment on others (4:3-6).
 - a. Evil speech, judgmentalism can flow from a variety of selfish, frustrated, unmet desires.
 - 1). Covetousness, bitterness, etc.
 - b. Ultimately, however, evil speech is a manifestation of pride – an exaltation of self.
- B. **When we speak evil of one another, we exalt ourselves above others (4:11).**
 - 1. When we speak evil of someone, we are placing ourselves over them as judge.
 - a. The idea of judgment here is one of criticizing or finding fault with someone.
 - 2. We are called to make judgments:
 - a. Not by appearances but with right judgment (John 7:24)
 - b. In matters of church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 12-13)
 - c. In member disputes (1 Corinthians 6:2).
 - d. In doctrinal matters (1 John 4:1)
 - 3. What we are forbidden from doing is having harsh and judgmental attitudes toward one another:
 - a. ILLUS: Charity beliefs (see Romans 14:1-9)
 - 4. Evil speech or judgmentalism exposes that we think more of ourselves than of others!
- C. **When we speak evil of one another, we exalt ourselves above the law of God (4:11).**
 - 1. Remember: The law is an expression of God’s character and nature; it expresses what love looks like. For James, it is:
 - a. The perfect law (1:25); the law of liberty (1:25); the royal law (2:8)
 - b. The law is summarized as, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (2:8).
 - 2. James’ argument:
 - a. Whoever speaks evil or judges his/her brother/sister speaks evil against the law (4:11b).
 - 1). In other words, you contradict love (the law) –see Christ’s example of love!
 - a). Jesus said we will be known as His disciples by our love (John 13:35)

- b. Whoever speaks evil or judges his/her brother/sister judges (stands above) the law (4:11c).
 - 1). We are not above the law; rather, the law will judge us (James 2:8-12).
- c. Whoever speaks evil or judges his/her brother/sister is not a doer of the law (4:11 d-f).
 - 1). In other words, we are actually breaking the law of love (see James 1:22ff.).
 - a). This is the point James has been making against non-doers!

3. ILLUS: Marriage – “irreconcilable differences”

- 4. Evil speech or judgmentalism exposes that we are unloving people, thus contradicts the gospel.
 - a. BEWARE: 1 John 4:7-12

D. When we speak evil or are judgmental of one another, we exalt ourselves above God Himself (4:12).

- 1. James’ argument:
 - a. There is only one law giver and judge – the one who can save and destroy (4:12a-b).
 - b. Therefore, who do you think you are to judge your neighbor (4:12c)?
 - 1). Judgmentalism usurps God’s role as judge!
- 2. ILLUS: Bitterness, revenge
- 3. Evil speech or judgmentalism exposes that we think more of ourselves than we do of God!
 - a. BEWARE: Romans 14:10-12

IV. Application:

- A. How do we battle the sin of evil speech, judgmentalism?
 - 1. If sin is the failure to be satisfied in God, then we fight sin, including evil speech, judgmentalism by being satisfied in God: i.e., faith (John 6:35).
 - 2. The fight of faith against evil speech and judgmentalism:
 - a. **Believe/Trust/Be satisfied in Christ (John 6:35)!**
 - 1). BELIEVE that all humans have dignity because they are created in the image of God (James 3:9).
 - 2). BELIEVE that no matter what anyone does to you, God Himself, as the just judge, will give everyone his/her due (Romans 12:17-21).
 - b. **Repent (James 4:7-10)!**
 - 1). This is a humbling of ourselves before God!
 - 2). This is getting the log out of your eye first (Matthew 7:5).
 - c. **Confront biblically (Matthew 18:15-29)!**
 - 1). The Bible helps us understand how to handle the conflict that invariably arises.
 - a). This means if someone has spoken evil of you, address biblically, then forgive (Galatians 6:1).
 - d. **Reconcile (Matthew 5:21-26)!**
 - 1). This is a humbling of ourselves before others!

V. Conclusion

- A. Let us beware of slander and judgmentalism (Matthew 7:1-5).
- B. Instead, let us cultivate a culture of peace and give a witness to the reconciliation of Christ.
 - 1. In our marriages, our homes, our relationships, our workplace, etc.

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