

**Confronting the Enemies of Unity in Our Hearts – Part 5**  
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**James 4:1-12**  
**September 2, 2012**

Amen. Please turn with me in your Bibles to the fourth chapter of James. We've come to the last message in a series that we've been in for about four months now, a series on unity in the body. The subset of that series has been looking at James 3:1 to 4:12 where we see James confronting the enemies of unity in the Body of Christ. We have worked through that passage and we come today to the last two verses in it, James 4:11-12. This passage has been dealing with how James sees the churches he writes to struggling, failing to live up to all that God has called us them to be. God has called us to a supernatural unity. We've looked at this a number of weeks back, in John 17, that the church is to reflect the unity of the triune God, that we are to have a oneness that causes the world to stand up and take notice, and to believe that God sent Jesus because they see that we are one even as the Son and the Father are One. A glorious oneness and unity—that's our calling. But there are enemies to that unity—the world, the flesh, and the devil, and we have been looking in this passage at how satan orchestrates that alliance of evil, the axis of evil against us.

In Chapter 4 we've been looking at how we need to fight against disunity in our hearts, that the real problems that come, division comes from our hearts, our idolatry. We're going to see that today. What we're going to see here is he wraps up this section. I mentioned 3:1 to 4:12. For those of you who have been with us, remember when we started in Chapter 3:1, that the focus of James at the beginning is our tongue, what we say to one another. "The tongue is a restless evil full of deadly poison. Behold how great a forest is set ablaze by a small spark," James says. The power of the word, the spoken word. Well he comes back to that at the end. He started with confronting the enemies of unity in our words, Chapter 3:1-12. Then he looked at attitudes, remember? 3:13-18? Attitudes of jealousy and selfish ambition. And then Chapter 4 he started in on the heart, and Verses 1-10 really dealt with the issue of the heart. Then Chapter 4:11-12 kind of wraps up this section by going back to the tongue. It says, "If the Lord is saying, 'Watch your mouth', because your mouth is an index or helps you draw a beeline to your heart." What is it that comes out of your mouth? Follow that down and you'll find the issue is in your heart.

If we're prone to speak evil of one another, to speak against one another, we have a heart issue. We're going to see in this passage he addresses that hard issue. He

basically confronts us with the reality, as we've seen James and his style is pungent and sharp, that he again echoes that same kind of style. He wants to get his readers' attention. He wants to get our attention. That we're too prone to and allow speaking, speaking against one another as a casual part of our lives. We don't think it's that big of a deal, but in reality, throughout all the pages of scripture, things like gossip, things like malicious words, are some of the things God has consistently condemned. God hates these things. They are completely out of place among the people of God.

I want to share with you, some of you might not be aware of this, but we're hoping to expand our sanctuary here in the next few months to allow for some more seating. We're taking out that wall back there on the left side and moving the sanctuary back a little bit, and adding about 50 or 60 seats. Well, that's going to be a blessing because we've been a little bit tight lately, but one of the things that we want to do is do that well, and do that with excellence so that it's attractive. We try to take care of our building because it's important that we honor the Lord in these things.

Imagine if you came in on a Sunday morning, and we came in on Sunday morning to worship, and someone had come in and vandalized the building. They had taken spray paint and written blasphemous things against our Lord on the wall. They had torn up the carpet, turned over the chairs, tried to destroy things, break things down, and you came into that. Our hearts would be broken, wouldn't they? "This ought not be! This place is set apart for the worship of the Lord, Jesus Christ!" This place has been sanctified as it were. It's not that it's magical, but we set it apart as a place to gather and hear the Word of God so that we can see the glory of Christ and worship Him together." In that sense, it's a House of God. It's not *the* House of God, but it's a house where we have set apart to worship the Lord. The idea of, "This ought not be this way. This is horrible. This is so irreverent, so ugly." I believe God, when He looks at the Church, which is the true House of God, because we see in the New Testament, 1 Peter 2, that we are being built into a temple that you, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you are a living stone being placed into a temple, a living temple for the glory of God to dwell in. The Body of Christ is God's house, and when there is evil-speaking, and gossip, and back-biting, and dissention, the Lord sees it like this: There is blasphemous spray paint all over the House of God. He comes down and He says, "What are you doing to my house?" That's the force we're going to hear in James' tone here because he's going to ask the question, "Who are *you* to deface God's house?" Look with me at James 4, we'll read Verses 1-12 to get the full context.

## James 4:1-12:

*What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*

*11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?*

Let's pray together:

*Father, we come to Your Word this morning as needy people. Lord, we need you to open our eyes. May Your Word, and the entrance of Your Word, bring light. May we, in Your light, see light. May You expose the darkened corners of our hearts and bring healing, and bring grace. We pray this in Jesus' marvelous Name, Amen.*

This morning I want to organize our thoughts around two main points. The first point is 'An Appalling Malady', an appalling illness as it were, an appalling state of affairs. The second is 'An Appropriate Remedy'. James really in this passage calls our attention to the fact that this situation is utterly and completely appalling. He doesn't say anything without an edge to it, does he? James' tone is striking, it is sharp and pointed. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit we can trust that God is

speaking exactly as He intended to through our brother James. He wants to shake us out of our lethargy, out of our complacency because we too often allow these things in our lives. We allow the way that we speak to one another, the way we speak about one another to do great damage to people that God has intended to bless. That is something that ought to appall us. One of the challenges that we're going to see is that you and I, the most awful part of the heart of sin is that when we hear a message about people speaking evil against one another, this is how we tend to hear it: "I'm so glad that he or she is hearing that," or "I wish he was here to hear this." That in itself, that thought process must be just put to death. We could be happy that a brother or sister is hearing the truth, but what we ought to be not even thinking about it. We have to discipline our minds when we come to the Word to say, "Lord, I need to hear this. I am the one. It's me. It's me. It's me, oh Lord," like the hymn says. "It's me. It's me. It's me, oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer." There's that kind of spirit of longing to be blessed is something that God responds to, it's the essence of humility to see, "I'm the one that's in need." So as we look at these things, let's examine our own hearts and see where is it that we're guilty of evil speaking.

### 1) The Appalling Malady:

Okay, an appalling malady which afflicts us all, which is so closely tied to pride, like Spurgeon said:

*Pride is the first sin that we put on and the last one that we take off when we leave this world.*

It's there at the very heart of who we are and it manifests itself in the way we speak. Now this first point, 'An Appalling Malady', I have four sub-points which are four questions that help us really understand what this is, it's not an illness, but what is this affliction that we have? This tendency to speak evil of one another. What is it? There are four questions: 'What?', 'Who?', 'How?', and 'Why?' under 'An Appalling Malady'. That will help us examine what is it James is talking about. So let's begin to look at that and then we'll look at 'An Appropriate Remedy'.

#### A) What?

The first question under 'An Appalling Malady' is 'What?' What does it mean to speak against my brother? The verb speak against is there three times in Verse 11, it's repeated. Listen to this:

***James 4:11 ~ Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.***

Do you see that repetition? Speak against, speak against, speak against, three times he hammers home that verb. The tense of the verb in all three cases is the Greek present tense which means ongoing action, continuous action. When you have a present tense imperative like this that's a negative, "Do not speak, do not go on speaking," is really the force of it. You could almost translate it better 'stop speaking against'. The idea is it's already going on and you need to stop it. James is looking at us saying, "You need to stop this. It's something that is happening. It needs to stop." That's what he was doing when he wrote to this audience. Now the word itself, this verb, is a compound of two verbs, literally 'speak down'. If you translated the parts of it literally, 'speak down'. It's speech which is damaging. It's words that are hurtful. So when we speak and do harm to someone.

Now the NIV translates the word 'slander' in the first occurrence in Verse 11, and I think that's really not accurate. In a sense, slander is included in the word but slander is not the whole word because slander generally is defined in Webster's dictionary as 'false charges or misrepresentations'. That's what slander is. It's when you say something bad about somebody that's not true. You misrepresent the circumstances, you misrepresent what they did, and you tell it to someone else. That's slander. You defame their character through falseness. Well this is not just talking about false statements. It can be true statements. Any words that are damaging, any words that are destructive, whether true or false, are condemned by this. The ESV translates it as "Stop speaking evil against one another, brethren." So that's, I think, a better way of translating it. The idea of speaking down, speaking evil, doing damage. So that's what the word means now and to understand it a little more, let's think about what he's talking about. There are two ways that we can do damaging words. Actually, there are three in one sense, and all three of these are under this one point 'What?'

a) We Can Say Things To a Person that are Damaging: We can speak to them directly things that are damaging, and we speak them. This is the belittling, demeaning speech. Maybe it's legitimate. You know we say, "You did something wrong and we're telling you," but we do it in a way that puts them down, that brings them down. That's one way that we can do this sin of speaking against, or speaking evil against.

b) We Can Speak About a Person: We can speak about them, to them or about them. So we're talking to someone else about a third party and we're saying things that bring that person's reputation down in the eyes of this other person. We're tearing them down. They're not here to defend themselves. We're saying things that might be true, but it does damage to the person's reputation. Gossip is the classic example of this kind of speech. Speech to them, speech about them. There is a third way though.

c) We Can Speak To Ourselves About Someone Else: I think this is the heart of it. Are you guilty of that? That's something I struggle with. When someone has done something that offends us, or where we don't think something's right, and we've been hurt, we're upset, we're envious, whatever. We can speak about them in our minds and turn it over in our minds and begin to foster in our own hearts a lowered sense of approval of that person. We cultivate disapproval, dislike by speaking about them in our own minds.

So what we need to do is put off all of that. We don't speak to people things that are demeaning or belittling. We don't speak about them. Almost never should we be talking about someone, that's the rarest example of a time where you might have to go to an elder and say, "There's a situation that hasn't been resolved," and you still try to be as careful as you can in what you communicate. You rarely have to go to a third party. And we speak to ourselves that way. We need to stop that thought process of thinking, "Why did they do that? I think this is what they did. I knew they were going to do that." Stop that thought process and put on biblical, godly thoughts.

So the idea of speaking against another which is damaging. The essential idea is really hurting someone. Now, let me say this, ask a question: Are we never to speak critically to another Christian? If we just took this passage and some might preach this passage and say, "You should never say anything but positives to somebody." Right? Hey, it's always with a smile and always just 'Johnny Encouragement'. "I know that you're sinning right here, and I know that you're in sin here, but I just want to be a blessing and I'm not going to talk about that." No, scripture interprets scripture, so when you ask how this verse applies, we have to look at the whole of scripture. What we see when we look at the whole of scripture is there are places where, in love, we are to go to someone and to speak hard words to them. We're to confront sin.

***Matthew 18:15 ~ "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."***

You go and you help him see what is wrong in his life, but it's how you go. That's what he's getting at. You don't go as someone who is intending to damage someone. You go as someone who is intending to build up a brother. It's such a subtle line you can cross from being intending to help someone and actually doing damage. You know if someone sins against you, you know you need to go to them, what is your motivation when you go? We have to spend time before the Lord dealing with our hearts so that when we go we are serving them. Like we sang earlier, "Let me be a servant, meek and lowly." Let me be a servant to this person. So there are places where we go, but he's talking about speech that tears down, not builds up.

## B) Who?

A second question under 'An Appalling Malady', not just 'What?', but 'Who?' He emphasizes the word 'brother' in the passage. First of all, he says in Verse 11, ***Do not speak against one another, brethren...*** James uses that noun of collegiality, of unity, 15 times in his letter. He addresses his readers as brethren, brothers. He sees them as people who love the Lord and who are walking with God or seeking to walk with God, who profess to know God, and who he wants to encourage. So he calls them his brothers. But look what he says after that, ***...He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother,...*** The NIV again here misses it. They say, ***...speaks against a brother or judges him...*** They take him, the pronoun him, and substitute it for brother because they think it sounds wooden to say, ***...He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother,...*** This is one of the problems I have when translations do that because they ought to just translate it word for word wherever possible. It's appropriate here because he's wanting to emphasize the fact that when you speak against your brother, you're judging your brother. He wants you to think about whom you're speaking against and who you are judging. Who is it? It's your brother! You are hurting, harming your own brother, your own family. We ought to be appalled at that. We're brothers and sisters in Christ. If someone names the name of Jesus, how can I be tearing them down? Now there's a way to address sin, there's a way to address doctrinal error and you have to do it, but it's not this kind of speech. James is saying this kind of tearing down, that's not loving, that's not edifying, that's really not about somebody's good, it's really about putting them down so that I feel better. That's what we have to watch out for.

You know a lot of times we want to go talk to somebody because we want to get this off our chest. Have you ever said, "I need to get this off my chest."? No, you ought to go back and pray some more and give it to the Lord, and then come back and serve the person. We don't need to go to somebody with a desire to get it off

our chest because we're just going to sin. We need to go to the Lord and then go to the person, and do it quickly. So, 'Who?' A brother. Now if he's our brother, we ought not sin against him, we ought not want to hurt or slander our own brother. But more than that, if he's our brother he has the same Father that we have. He's God's child, and God's children are called to be blessed, not harmed and cursed.

***Ephesians 1:3 ~ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,***

Then in Verses 4:14 he unpacks just the lavish blessings of God. He saying, "This is what I've called you to, to lavish blessings upon you." We've got to remember in our relationships with every other Christian who truly names the name of Christ, that they're called to inherit a blessing. In fact, 1 Peter 3, I'm going to turn over there. Just a couple of pages in your Bible over. Look what he says in 1 Peter 3:8.

***1 Peter 3:3-9 ~ To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit: 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.***

He says when another Christian hurls an insult at you, does something evil, and the world evil, actually the New Testament word and the Old Testament word translated evil most of the time, speak of damage, misery caused by something. So evil is that which tears down and destroys. God has made everything good and the essence of evil is to destroy the good things that God has made. So when someone says something to you, a believer says something to you that is evil, that is damaging to you. Rather than fight fire with fire, God's Word says to return a blessing. Ask the Lord to help you and bless them, serve them. Why? Because this person who has just mistreated me was called to inherit a blessing and I will not curse the one God has blessed. If we feared the Lord like we ought to we would understand that. How can we curse what God has blessed? So that's what he's saying here, "We must see this before the Lord, who are we tearing down?" So, 'What' and 'Who', now the third question 'How?'

C) How?

How do we speak when we speak against a brother? It's not just what we say, it's how we say it. I said that we're supposed to go to one another, we're supposed to love one another enough to go when someone has sinned, to speak to them about their need, to serve them, but it's how we say it. What he points out here, in James

4, what does he say about how these Christians are treating one another, how we treat one another? He says, “When you speak against a brother, or you judge your brother, you speak against the law, and judge the law.” What he’s talking about is a spirit of condemnation, when we go to someone when they’ve sinned and there’s a spirit of condemnation. You know I said the words ‘speak against’ are very important. In the text it’s used three times, the verb is repeated three times. Brother is repeated for emphasis. Even more than those two words, maybe the most important word in the passage is ‘judge’ because it is repeated six times in Verses 11-12.

***James 4:11-12 ~ Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?***

The issue is a spirit of standing in judgment on our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is completely and entirely out of place. It’s so natural. It is so natural for us. It’s part of sin again. We judge one another. I mentioned that one of the places I struggle with this is on the road, and I’ve been working on this, and my family has been helping me in this area. I like to pass judgment on other drivers. I feel like if everybody would just follow and do as I do, the world would be a better place. Use your turn signal. You know? Use your turn signal and allow other people to turn, right? There are all kinds of things that I think we could just really fix if everybody would just drive right. I get appalled when they pull out in front of me when I’m in a hurry. “You pulled out in front of me! I’m in a hurry! You are guilty!” Now when I pull out in front of somebody because I’m also in a hurry, that doesn’t really matter to me if they’re in a hurry or not. I’m in a hurry, I’m going to get going here pretty fast anyway, just be patient. You see, it’s crazy! There is something just inherent in us, we want to judge other people. It is ridiculous because I don’t have all the facts. This is one of the reasons that it is so stupid to ever have a judgmental attitude. You and I don’t have enough information. We don’t know what’s going on in their life. We don’t know what circumstances have led up to this particular act. It may not be the best act, but we see a small part. We see it best the tip of the iceberg. There is One Who sees all, and He’s God. He sees the heart, He sees the circumstances, and He alone is worthy to judge.

This is why, this is this balance. We have to go, we have to love each other enough, God has ordained that we go and we learn to lovingly reprove one another. I want to show you this. First of all, turn with me to Leviticus 19. Now this is one

of the most important passages in the Old Testament. Remember when Jesus was asked, “What is the greatest commandment in the law?” And He answered, they were expecting or wondering if it was the first commandment, “No other Gods before me.” “What commandment is He going to say?” He picked a verse from Deuteronomy 6:5. He said the greatest commandment in the law is:

***Deuteronomy 6:5 ~ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.***

This is the first and great commandment. Remember what He said after that? “The second, you didn’t ask me about the second greatest commandment, but I’m going to tell you what it is. The second greatest commandment is ***You shall love your neighbor as yourself.***”

From Leviticus 19, I want you to look with me at the context of that command. Let’s begin reading at Verse 15.

***Leviticus 19:15 ~ ‘You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.***

There is a place for us to judge. There’s a place for us to judge ourselves and to judge others. Now then also the Scripture says, “Don’t judge yourself and don’t judge others.” So we’re going to see that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4, he doesn’t even examine or try to judge his own heart, only God can judge. In other places it says, “Examine your heart before you come to the Lord’s table, judge yourself. Make sure you judge the body rightly.” What’s he saying? There is a way to judge that you should judge, and there is a way to judge that you should not judge. Okay? We are to care about our neighbor and look, go on, He’ll help us see this.

***Leviticus 19:16 ~ You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD.***

When He puts ... ***I am the LORD*** in there, that is emphatic. God will not have that. Going about as a slanderer, in fact the words ‘go about as a slanderer’ translates one Hebrew word and it means ‘going up and down’. The picture is going up and down through Israel and the idea of spreading the news about someone. God says, “You shall not do that!” To show how bad it is, He says, “You shall not act against the life of your neighbor. You shall not kill someone. You shall not hurt someone physically. You shall not hurt their reputation. I am the Lord!” He says that

enthroned among His people, “I am the Lord, you shall not do that.” That’s why James is speaking with such force in our text. This background is there. Look with me at Verse 17. Now it said earlier you are not to judge, but look what he says here:

***Leviticus 19:17 ~ ‘You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.***

If you hate your neighbor you won’t reprove him. You see that? The balance? If you love your neighbor you will reprove him.

***Leviticus 19:18 ~ You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.***

To love your neighbor as yourself means that we are to lovingly reprove, but we are not to slander, we are not to hurt or bring harm to our neighbor. So turn with me to Matthew 7. It’s so important for us to see the balance because we have people who, and satan has always done this since the beginning of time, he takes scripture out of context. So often he tempts people to take scripture out of context, out of balance. We’re going to look at a passage which is often taken out of context, Matthew 7:1. These are the words of Jesus.

***Matthew 7:1 ~ “Do not judge so that you will not be judged.***

Now how many people have we heard speak on that and say you should never have any kind of negative thing to say about someone else? Who are you to judge? Well, yes, who am I to judge, but look what Jesus goes on to say. So what does “***Do not judge so that you will not be judged...*** mean?

***Matthew 7:2-4 ~ For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye?***

Now if He stopped right here in this passage we’d be tempted to think, “Well, we should never really confront anybody.” But what does He say? Look at Verse 5.

***Matthew 7:5 ~ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.***

Do you see that? We ought to reprove one another. But the thing is, we're supposed to do so in humility, because if I see that you have a speck and I have a radar for that, just like I was talking about driving, I can see this guy has a speck. He needs to learn to use his turn signal, or whatever, right? I see that, but that's not really a good example. Let's just go back to somebody in the body of Christ. You have an issue and I see it. I have a radar to see your sin, and I have a tendency in my sin where I want to stand in judgment on you and say, "That's wrong what you did," and to have a condemning spirit. If I step back from it and look at this properly, I see that the biggest issue in that situation is not whatever your sin is. The biggest issue is that I am trying to stand on the judgment bar over you. That's the log. It's like the picture is I want to help you get the speck out of your eye, and imagine – I don't want anybody to mess with my eye. I wear glasses. I don't wear contacts. I don't want to wear contacts. I don't want to put those things on my eyeball. I have to respect my wife and my daughter who wear contacts. Jonathan wears them some. I just can't do it. I guess I could do it, but I don't want to do it. And I don't want you touching my eye. Imagine if you come to touch my eye. "Hey Ty, you've got something in your eye. Let me get it for you." Imagine if you say that but you have a board across your face. Do you think I'm going to let you touch my eye? No way! That's what we do when we react to the speck without dealing with our own hearts. I say, "Let me help you out," but I've got this board across my face. But when we see it rightly, that's what Jesus is saying in Matthew 7. "Don't have a spirit of condemning someone else. Get on your knees before Me, so that you won't be judged. Don't judge. Don't condemn. Now get that right, and then you now can go serve with a right heart." We're not to judge one another. It has no place, the idea of casting judgment on another believer.

In talking to one another, one of the things we have to watch out for is the symptoms of a judging spirit. I'm really trying to put shoes on this. What's this look like? Say you're talking to somebody and you think they just told you a lie. You ask about something, they say something, and you say, "That is a lie." What you just did is wrong. You're passing a definitive judgment on what they did. A better way would be to have a question mark on it, to say, "You know, what you just said, if I understood you correctly, what you're saying is this, and what you said yesterday was that. It appears like those things are inconsistent."

Now, you'd like to help that person come to the place where they would say about themselves, "I lied," but we don't go around pronouncing that. We have to sit there

and ask some question, and hard questions, and we may have to say, “Do you think you lied? Did you lie?” It’s better than saying, “You lied.” Do you see the difference in that? If you think it’s clear that they lied, you can say, “Did you just lie to me?” Do you see the tone there, rather than, “You lied.” Who are we to stand in judgment? We don’t know all the facts. I might have misunderstood you yesterday. I don’t have perfect understanding of what you said yesterday. Only God does. God knows your heart, but I love you enough when I heard that to care about you enough to ask the question, and say, “That doesn’t match up to what you said yesterday, I don’t believe, does it?” Or maybe at the end extreme, “Did you just lie to me?” So, a judging spirit is about tone. We don’t judge one another.

I love what Paul says in Romans 14:4. He says, “A servant is judged by his own master. Who are you to judge another man’s servant?” We’re all servants of Jesus Christ. He’s the One who judges us, so we have no business judging, in a definitive way, another person.

This comes down to also when we see someone who has real issues in their life, and we’re talking with them about their faith, and maybe even like in church discipline things where someone has unrepentant sin, and they won’t come back to the Lord. One of the things we try to discipline ourselves in as elders when we’re talking to someone, is to not pronounce in a definitive way, “You’re not a believer,” because that would be taking a role of judgment that is not appropriate for a human being to take. What would be appropriate to say is, “The way that you’re living, acting, and responding, according to the Scriptures, causes me to question the reality of your profession of faith.” Do you see the difference? There are miles of difference, and we must learn not to judge like that, not to stand in judgment. So that’s “How?” The fourth question is “Why?”

#### D) Why?

What does it mean to speak against, or to tear down? We’re speaking against our brothers. We do it in a spirit of condemnation. Why do we do it? I think the reason James goes on into what he says in Verse 12, is to help us be appalled at ourselves. I mean, look what he says:

***James 4:11 ~ Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.***

The reason why we speak against one another is because we want to be the judge. And Verse 12 says we want to be God. Look what it says in Verse 12:

***James 4:12 ~ There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?***

There's only One who's supposed to judge. He is the Lord, and if I take a self-righteous position of passing judgment on someone, I am usurping God's throne. I'm judging His law, and I'm usurping His throne. I'm judging His law. What does that mean? Well, I'm rejecting all of His commands about me staying off the throne. ***Don't judge lest you be judged.*** Don't speak against your brother. If I speak against my brother, I'm saying God's law is bad. And every sin really does this. Every time we sin, we're basically making an affirmation by our lives that we don't believe the law of God is right. So when we speak against someone, when we tear someone down like this, we're speaking against God's law in that way. But worse than that, we're speaking against God Himself. It's like we're assaulting the very judgment bench of God.

It would be like being in court and deciding that you want to go up there on the judgment seat and push the judge out of the way. "I think I can do a better job of this than you." I've been to a couple of court cases through the years, and there have been times where I thought the judge was not handling himself right. "Man, that guy's really arrogant." But I didn't think about walking up there and saying, "Excuse me, sir. You need to sit down." Do you know where I would have been? I would have been in jail. That's something you just don't do. How much more should we fear standing in judgment upon a fellow Christian? Even upon an unbeliever, we can't stand in judgment. We can tell them the truth. "If you don't believe the Gospel, then the Bible says you're going to hell." That's not standing in judgment. That's offering the Gospel. That's telling the truth. We can tell a fellow believer, "The way that you're living gives me great concern. You're saying that you're a Christian, and yet you're living in this unrepentant sin. I'm very concerned about you. I'm burdened as to whether you're really a Christian. Only God knows. I can't pass judgment on you, but I'm very concerned."

So the "why" really gets at the appalling thing. What we're wanting to do is we're becoming, in that sense, the fulfillment of what sin is. If you think about this, what was the heart of the beginning sin? It was when satan, in Isaiah 14, said, "I will ascend to the place of the Most High." Lucifer, the highest created angel, wanted the place of the Most High. He wanted to sit in God's throne, basically. How incredibly wicked is that? Then he comes to Eve and he says, "You will be like

God.” So sin, in a sense, is always wanting to sit in the place of God, and being judgmental is the same thing. “I’m wanting to sit in the place of God.”

Now, the thing about this also, is how satanic this is. If God has called every Christian to be blessed, and I won’t curse that which God has blessed, who is it that curses what God has blessed? Satan himself. Revelation 12:10 tells us that he is the accuser of the brethren. They’re called to inherit a blessing, and he accuses. His name ‘satan’ in the Old Testament means to accuse. His name ‘devil’ in the New Testament (diabolis) means to throw against, to hurl. So when you and I hurl insults, when you and I defame someone else, we are acting out the character and the essence of satan himself, and the essence of sin. We ought to hate that. And this passage here says not only are we acting out his character, but we are directly assaulting the throne of a Holy God. Be appalled at this, oh heavens. Don’t be appalled at what happened over here. Be appalled at this. That’s the force of this passage. So the appalling malady is within us. The problem is out there, but it’s mostly in here.

## 2) An Appropriate Remedy:

How do we stop speaking against our brothers? How do we stop accusing? How do we stop demeaning? How do we stop? You know, one of the places I think that happens so much, too, that we don’t realize, is how much of Christian parenting is actually an opportunity for demeaning and hurtful speech. We try to manipulate our children to do what we want them to do, and we don’t do it through speech that builds them up. I know how many times in anger we speak. God help us. Now, let’s look at an appropriate remedy. How do we overcome this? The good news is he’s given us the answer in the context here. The way that we stop speaking against one another is the same way we stop having quarrels and conflicts. The answer is to humble yourselves in the sight of God.

***James 4:10 ~ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.***

Humbles yourselves in the sight of God. To be humble, to humble yourself, is an imperative. In the command: ***Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you***, humble means to make low, to bring down, to bring down one’s own opinion of one’s self to an appropriate level. I need to see myself as I am, and the reality is I see myself way above what I am. That is the essence of sin. This applies even to the person who says they have a self-esteem problem. Today, the buzz word in the culture is low self-esteem. Nobody has low self-esteem. It’s

indigenous to the human being that he has too high of a self-esteem. Now, it manifests itself in different ways. Some people are just arrogant and walk around showing it. “Hey, I’m the best thing that ever happened, and you just need to know it.” But other people are like, “Oh, I’m so bad.” The reason they’re saying, “I’m so bad. I’m so messed up,” is so that you will say, “No you’re not! No you’re not! No you’re not!” They’re saying, “It’s all about me.” Both people are saying, “It’s all about me. It’s all about me. It’s all about me.” They’re thinking about themselves. For the person that commits suicide, it’s all about them. They’re not thinking about the people around them, and how they’re going to impact people. They’re not serving other people. It’s all about them. So there is no shortage of self-esteem, but the problem is we need to see ourselves Biblically.

What God wants us to do is have a lower view of ourselves and come to have a right view of ourselves, and to do that, you must do it as He says: Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord. The only way you can humble yourself is to seek the presence of the Lord, to see the Lord, to see His glory, to come to know Him, and then you can see yourself rightly. There is no knowledge of self without the knowledge of God. John Calvin says that in the Institutes of the Christian Religion in the first chapter. “If you want to know yourself, you have to come to know God. You cannot know yourself apart from knowing God.” And when we see God, we see our self rightly, and it removes the tendency to want to judge. It’s a daily process, but if I’m seeing myself rightly at this moment, and someone sins against me, I’m not going to be likely to judge them.

I’ve quoted you a couple weeks ago a Puritan prayer where basically the essence of the prayer was the fact that it’s impossible to look down on someone else when I’m standing on my own dunghill. It’s hard to look down on somebody else when I realize I’m standing on my own dunghill. “Look at me. What could I possibly condemn in you?” This is the godly life is a person who sees that the problem is not out there, but it’s in here. Paul had to be one of the most godly men that has ever lived. He was the author of half the New Testament. How could he say of himself in 1 Timothy 1:15, “I am the chief of sinners. Of all sinners, I’m the worst”? Because he knew himself better than he knew anybody else, and when he looked at himself, he said, “This is awful, but the good news is Christ is wonderful.”

Now, how is it that we cultivate humility? How do we humble ourselves? The Lord’s blessed us to have Dr. Wayne Mack with us longer than any of us originally had planned, and I’m so glad that the Lord has blessed us by his infirmity of having to deal with his heart. He’s going to be with us another week, and he’ll be

teaching Sunday morning Bible study next Sunday on the doctrine of the church. He's written an outstanding book called "Humility – The Forgotten Virtue" and that's a great book. I recommend that. Also, C.J. Mahaney has written a book on humility that's very helpful as well. But to study humility, one of the things that we see, some of the points that are brought out in that book are that, first of all, humility is the work of the Spirit. We can't be humble until we are born again. Pride had to be broken and killed, and it's killed at the foot of the cross. It's killed when the Spirit of God changes your heart, but it has a way of coming back to life, and you have to keep killing it. But we need a new heart. The essence of the Gospel message is that Jesus is for people who know how bad they need Him.

Remember Jesus' first sermon recorded in the New Testament? Matthew 5:3-6, the Beatitudes – the Sermon on the Mount:

***Matthew 5:3 ~ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."***

Where does salvation start? It's when you're poor in spirit, when you see yourself as nothing, as empty, as needy.

***Matthew 5:4 ~ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."***

Mourning over my sin, I see myself as filthy in the sight of God. I see myself in need of grace. I mourn over the condition of my own heart.

***Matthew 5:5 ~ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."***

Because I am so wicked in and of myself and I'm mourning over my sin, I have no rights. I let go of everything. This enables you to go to Christ in letting go of everything. This is why He says in His parables later in Matthew, "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who found a treasure in a field and went and sold all that he had, that he might have that treasure." What does that mean? He let go of everything else so that he could have Christ. Well, how to you get there? You become poor in spirit, you mourn over your sin, and you don't care what you have. You want Christ.

***Matthew 5:6 ~ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."***

That's the track of what happens in the heart in salvation. It all starts with humility and brokenness.

### 3) How Do You Cultivate Humility?

It's the work of the Spirit. There are three things I want to mention that we can do to cultivate humility.

#### A) Place ourselves under the word of God:

I need to make an intentional effort to place myself under the word of God. It means be under the preaching and teaching of the word as often as possible, read the word as much as possible, and remember I was talking earlier at the beginning of the message about how we come to the word? When we come to the word, when we come to hear a sermon or come to hear a Bible study, or when we open our Bibles to study, we must ask the Lord to help us and guard our hearts to continually say, "Lord, it's me. It's me. It's me who needs this. Do Your work here, Lord, not out there." God has ordained preaching and teaching, and the inner relationships of the body, where it's not just preaching and teaching, but it's also counselling the word to one another. It's about discipling one another. ***Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly*** (Colossians 3:16).

How does the word of Christ dwell in you (plural) richly? You admonish one another. You teach one another. The idea is the word of Christ dwells in us as we talk to one another about the Gospel, as we talk to one another about our sin, as we address the needs that we see in others, and as we let the word go fourth in our midst. That's how we do it.

Well, what does that mean? I need to be humbling myself under teaching and under preaching. I need to be humbling myself under other Christians to speak the word to me. "It's for me, Lord," and it's something about hearing the word through another person.

One of the things you can pray for me, and I ask in prayer so often when I'm studying, is, "Lord, let this be for me," because as a pastor and shepherd, you think about the needs in the body, but, "Lord, no. I want this to be for me first. I need this more than anybody else." There are so many times that I feel as I stand to preach that I'm preaching a message that no one here needs to hear more than me. And there's something that's humbling about hearing that God has ordained to sanctify His people through hearing the word through other human beings. He

could have made a way where we would hear the word miraculously just on our own, reading the Bible, only just reading the Bible by yourself. Don't gather together. Just read the Bible by yourself and the Lord will speak to you. He does speak to us that way, but that's not the way He's ordained it. The primary way He's ordained it is through other Christians. We're going to learn some things through one another that we would not learn otherwise. He says, "Gather for the preaching and teaching of the word." Why? John Calvin says this in the Institutes of the Christian Religion:

*When a puny man risen from the dust rises to preach and speaks in God's Name, it is at this point that we best evidence our piety in obedience to God if we show ourselves teachable toward His minister, although he excels us in nothing.*

Do you see that? The way God has ordained preaching is we gather together to hear a man preach the word. He excels us in nothing. He's a puny man risen from the dust. Why does the Lord do that? Because it humbles us, and when you and I are sharing our lives together, and when a younger Christian says to you, "Hey, why did you do this?" or whatever, and they point out your sin, you have an opportunity to humble yourself before a younger believer. Every time we can do that, we need to. We need to discipline ourselves to humble ourselves. That leads us to the second point. Place yourself under the word of God, and then secondly:

#### B) Place Yourself Under the People of God:

We need to welcome others' criticism of us. We need to invite it. "Hey, what do you think about how I did that? Do you think... I really want to know. What are some things I could do better?" That's a hard thing. I mean, we naturally get defensive. You can tell in someone's tone they're coming to share, "Hey, I really appreciate what you did over here, but..." A lot of times you can hear that first little statement is the preamble to the zinger, right? You know it's coming. "Okay, yeah. Get on past it. No, it's not that way." We shouldn't be like that though. We shouldn't be defensive. We ought to be thinking, "It looks like I'm getting some criticism here, Lord. Thank You."

***Proverbs 15:5 ~ A wise son heeds his father's discipline. A fool spurns reproof.***

So a wise man wants to be reproofed, and a fool doesn't want to be. Reproof hurts, but it really just hurts initially. It's edifying. It builds up, even when someone comes with not the right attitude. "And I could receive this criticism if you were

showing a godly, Christ-like attitude, and therefore since you're not, I won't hear it." What would the Lord have us do in that circumstance? Pray for the person that's having a bad attitude, and be concerned about them, and say, "Lord, thank You that You're bringing this criticism to me. I need it. Help me hear it. Help me humble myself before it. What are you seeing? What do you see that I do differently?" Expect to be helped.

Mahaney talks in his book about the cream cheese on somebody's face. Imagine somebody has cream cheese on their moustache and they don't know it. The guy's getting ready to leave a restaurant, and he's got cream cheese on his moustache. C. J. Mahaney is talking about how the guy didn't know the man. He was a stranger in a restaurant, but he thought, "I've got to tell him." Wouldn't you want somebody to tell you? The point is we all have cream cheese on our face, but we can't see it, so the Lord has ordained that we're to help one another. And what He's intending is for us to continually humble ourselves before one another in a relationship of love, to say, "Please help me see what I need to see." And when that begins to happen, it's amazing how much easier it is for us to start hearing one another, because as humility increases, God's presence and grace increase. He resists the proud, but He draws near to the humble.

So this is something we ought to seek, because we want more of God. So when somebody comes with criticism, it ought to be, "Yay! I'm getting ready to have more opportunity to be humble." It really ought to be. If we were thinking rightly, it would be. If we're thinking in vanity and pride, it won't be. But what we're initially going to always feel at first because of sin in us is, "Oh no. Here comes some criticism. Brace yourself. Get your dukes up." No, mentally it should be, "No, I won't do that. Lord, I humble myself before You. Thank You for sending this Christian into my life right now to criticize me. Help me receive it graciously and humbly without any defensiveness." It's amazing how that attitude even changes the attitude of the person who comes with a sinful heart in the first place, isn't it? ***A gentle answer turns away wrath.*** If you don't do this, they're less likely to hit a second punch. So place yourself under the word of God. Place yourself under the people of God. And finally:

### C) Place yourself under the hand of God:

That is, if you want to be humble, you've got to be under the word of God. You've got to intentionally put yourself under the word of God. You've got to intentionally put yourself under the people of God. You have to intentionally put yourself under the hand of God, and that is your circumstances. We're talking about the word,

your relationship, and now your circumstances. You can't control your circumstances and I can't control my circumstances, but we can control how we respond to our circumstances, and that makes all the difference. The good news is the Lord is using our circumstances every day to make us like Christ. If you belong to Jesus, that's what Romans 8:28 means. Every day, He's seeking to do what it says in Verse 29, which is to conform you to the image of His Son. He wants to make you and me humble and meek like Jesus, and He's going to use the same methods He used with Jesus. Jesus learned obedience through the things He suffered, Hebrews 5 tells us. So we're going to suffer if we want to be like Jesus, and the way we respond to suffering makes all the difference.

When something bad happens, our tendency is to think, "Why is this happening to me? Why did God let this happen to me?" What it ought to be is, "Lord, thank You for bringing it into my life." And when something *really* bad happens, we tend to think, "Why would You let such a bad thing happen to me?" and we're appalled at the circumstance. What we ought to be appalled at is the heart that required the circumstance. Now, think what I just said. We ought to be appalled at the wickedness in our heart that required this great of an affliction. "It took this much, Lord?" And that humbles us. We humble ourselves under it and say, "Thank You, Lord, for doing what was necessary," because if we really believe what the word tells us about our Father, it's that He only gives good things to His children.

Remember earlier I read from Psalm 34? *The people of God lack no good thing.* Romans 8:32 says that if He didn't spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, delivered Him up to the cross, delivered Him up to the wrath of God, if He didn't spare His Son from that but did that, how shall He not together with Him freely give us all things? That is, every moment of every day, if you're a Christian, God is blessing you to the full. He's blessing you full throttle, 100%. Every moment is blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing. So when bad things happen, what's that? Blessing. When something *really* bad happens, that's a blessing, because He's making me like Jesus. We shouldn't be appalled, thinking, "Wow, why did You let this bad thing happen?" No, we should have the attitude of, "Man, my heart must have been so bad that it required this." The biggest issue is what's going on in our heart. So we put ourselves under the word of God. We place ourselves under the people of God. We place ourselves under the hand of God, and then we will grow in humility. And when we grow in humility, then how much better we are at going and serving one another.

A beautiful picture to me of dealing with another brother's sin is the word picture, the acted out teaching that Jesus gave on the night before He was crucified. In John

13, where John says, “Jesus, knowing that He had come forth from the Father, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hand, knowing that He was about to return to the Father...” Do you see that? “Jesus, knowing that He is eternally God, Jesus knowing that He’s about to go to the cross, and He’s about to go back to the Father, Jesus knowing all these things, got up from the table, girded Himself about with a towel, took a basin of water, and began to wash the disciples’ feet.” He took the lowest place as the menial servant of the house, and He washed His disciples’ feet.

It was a picture of how we’re to deal with sin in the body. Once we’re saved and we sin, it’s like we need a foot washing. So your brother or sister is in sin? They need to have their feet washed. How do they get their feet washed? They need somebody to lower themselves down and go humbly like the lowest, lowliest servant in the house, and that’s how we go. When we go like that, then the world looks at that and says, “Surely God is among them.” Look at Jesus lived out right in front of them. May God make us like our Savior. How wonderful it is to know that when we have so much vanity and pride in our hearts, and we tend so quickly to judge, so quickly to react in anger, we catch that and we realize, “Lord, look what I’m doing. Look at my heart. It’s me. It’s me that needs You right now,” but look at Jesus. He’s always meek and lowly. He’s always submitting Himself to the will of the Father. Every time you find in yourself some deficiency, look at Christ. Come to God. Acknowledge it. “Lord, show it to me. Let me see the ugliness. Clean it all out, but let me see Jesus.” How good it is to know that God looks at us through the righteousness of Christ. The blood of Jesus washes away all of our sin.

Let’s go to the Lord in prayer...

*Our Father, how grateful we are that You gave Your Son, Lord, to be a sacrifice for our sins. We thank You that He endured all of the agony that we deserve for all of our appalling arrogance and pride. Father, when we look at how we are, we know we ought to be just destroyed, cast away from Your presence. How could we who are dust, dirt, presume to take the place of the Almighty? We see our wickedness and we are so encouraged by His righteousness. We’re so grateful that His spotless life was able to bear all of our infirmities, to bear all of the wrath, every ounce of punishment, so that He could say, “It is finished! Paid in full.” And how grateful we are that He not only pays for our sins, but He gives us His righteousness, that we stand clothed and robed in a perfect righteousness. You see us as if we had lived His perfect life. We praise You, Lord. Father, we pray that You would help us to turn from all of the sins and relationships that we have considered today, sins of pride in speaking against one another in slander,*

*judgmentalness, and condemnation. Help us continually be on our knees, on our faces, before You, because if we're low like that, we can't be lifting ourselves up above one another. We praise You, oh God, for the glory of the Gospel. We pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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