

The Complete Christian is Not Judgemental

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[0 : 0 0] in the book of James, thanks to the musicians, to the techie folk, and so forth. I understand they're about to sort out this morning, technically. Hopefully that's all jiggling now. I only want to look at two verses this morning as we work through this. James is speaking to Christians. He's looking at them in their spiritual condition, as we all are. Sometimes we fall, sometimes we fail.

He's speaking to them, and he's very much in this section that we've been looking at over the past few weeks, looking at the problems within the church community because of the way we speak to each other. He's already dealt with the tongue. We looked at that in chapter 3, and then talking about selfish ambition and so forth at the end of chapter 3, and then last week, quarrels and fights.

It's not the cheeriest of stuff, but as I showed you the image about a car wash last week, it's good to come to church just to get a good thorough washing and to remind ourselves that it's not just those out there that need to repent. We need to repent on a daily basis, and we do so knowing that the Lord forgives us, but this is often the human condition. So, let me read from—I'll read from chapter 4, verse 1, and we're only looking at verses 11 and 12, but let's put it in its context.

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire, but you do not have, so you kill. You covet, but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? That for anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he, God, jealously longs for the Spirit he has caused to dwell in us, but he gives us more grace? That is why Scripture says God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble. Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning, and your joy to gloom.

[2 : 3 5] Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. And here are the two verses we're considering this morning. Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one lawgiver and judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you, who are you to judge your neighbor? And that's the passage we're looking at this morning. Let's ask for the Lord's help as we come to his Word now.

Our loving Heavenly Father, Lord, we are very much in line with your Word when we acknowledge that there is a sin that so easily besets us. Lord, it might not be the same sin for each one of us, but we know this side of glory, Lord. We wrestle, Lord, against flesh, Lord, against our own weakness, against that old nature that is still there. And Father, we come and we ask forgiveness, Lord, if there be any barrier even between us and you as we come to your Word, that we might confess, whether it's jealousy or anger or pride, that we might ascend the hill of God with pure hands and a pure heart. So, Father, just lead us and guide us, we pray now. We pray, Lord, if there's anything in us that verses 11 and 12 in this passage relate to us, we pray, Father, that you might reveal it to us, that we might quickly deal with it and confess it and bring it before you. Lord, we place ourself under the authority of your Word, under the microscope of your Word. So, speak to us, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. In the news, often, I always listen to the 6 o'clock and the 10 o'clock news usually in BBC, and they usually say, here's an article coming up, this is what you're about to watch or whatever it is, and then just before they show you what it is, they say, just to warn you, there may be strobe, lighting, flashing images in this, so you're ready. This image comes with a similar thing, this might not affect your sight, but it might affect your spirit, just depress you the thought of you're going to be hearing about this for the next five or so weeks or so. Rishi Sunak calls UK election on July the 4th. We will be bombarded with this over the coming weeks. But no matter what party you're going to support, it seems that politicians do, they all do the same thing, they all do two things. One is to promote themselves. This is what we will do. This is what we are all about. This is our manifesto, and this is what they have to do. But they never leave it there. They have to do the other side. This is how good we are, and this is how bad everybody else is, especially the government.

They have to elevate themselves and make sure they bring the other ones down. They can't do one without the other. In other words, their mission is to promote themselves and bring down the other party. That is the topic of our sermon or this passage that we looked at today. It's about self-promotion at the cost of someone else. And it's that second part that is the sad part and the serious part that James deals with here. Not content to just be the best we can. We need to do it by pushing others down. And that is what this serious passage is all about. We are continuing our series of studies, and you know that James' desire is that we are complete, mature, lacking nothing. That should be your desire, as it is my desire, to be a mature Christian. Not just to be saved and going to glory, but that we are mature. We grow up. Our faith is strong. Our love is strong. And we want to be those mature Christians. And as I've said many times, the reason for this is because God chose to give us birth through the Word. We are the life of God is now in the soul of man. We are different.

We have that power, that potential through the Holy Spirit to be like Him. That is the most amazing thing. The world knows nothing of that. They might know something of the gospel that Jesus came and died and died on the cross and they need to repent. But they know nothing of the power of God in the life of an ordinary person. And that is what this is all about. We've looked at big topics over recent week. The use of the tongue, foolish behavior, selfish ambition, fights and quarrels, the need for humility. We looked at this last week, didn't we? We fights and quarrels, we kill. James, you think he's exaggerating, but he says this is how serious it is when we fall out, when we're prayerless, when we take the principles of the world and apply them to us. And he gave us the cure. And we looked at this last week. Submission to God. Submit to God. Come to God. See sin as He sees it. See yourselves as we really are. Be reconciled to God. Come near to Him, and He will come near to us. Wash, be clean, be purified through the blood of His Son. Grieve, mourn, and wail. Be transformed. And then He will exalt us. He gives grace to the humble, but He resists the proud. These are big topics. We live by these principles every single day. We cling to them. Now, James, in these two verses, verses 11 and 12, continues in this whole area of one of the commentators, calls it community problems and godless attitudes. I like that. Community problems caused by godless attitudes. And in many ways, he's returning back to chapter 3, the use of the tongue. And in this case, a specific use of the tongue, where we slander one another. And that's what I want us to look at this morning. Four points. I want to go through these quickly. They're fairly easy to understand. But even as I, I've never preached this passage before, so I had to work on this this week. And I think if the end result's the same for you as it was for me, that would be good. What struck me is the seriousness of this, when we slander one another. And that's what James, as he was saying when we, when we do things, when we quarrel and fight, he calls it killing. Jesus calls when we love other things adultery. The Bible, we sugarcoat it, and we say it's not that bad. But the Bible strips these things away and shows us it for what it is. These two verses are serious verses, and that's how they've certainly come upon me. So, I want to, four points.

[9 : 33] I've actually, they were the same points as I had, but I liked Alec Mottier's way of grouping them, and I thought, yeah, I'll stick with his. His is good. So, here is the first thing. James tells us how we are to regard each other. That's the first thing. How he wants us to, looks at the community, and he says, this is how you are to regard, how you are to relate to each other. And straight-talking James is great. You never have to wonder what he's saying. He tells you right off. Verse 11, brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. It can't be any simpler. Just don't do it. That's what he says. Now, what does slander mean? What does James mean by slander? His definition here is two words, to speak against, to speak against. Brothers, sisters, do not slander one another, anyone who speaks against a brother or sister. So, his definition is we are speaking against someone else. The dictionary definition of slander is this, the utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another's reputation. In other words, you're saying something about somebody that damages them. You're not showing them in a good light. You're damaging them. So, James says, speaking against. He does it in this way. Now, the dictionary definition is talking about defaming somebody through telling lies. But the spirit of James, and the spirit, if you're a Christian, it really doesn't matter whether you're saying something true or something wrong. The motive behind it is to defame that person, is to rob them of any glory that they might have and deserve. And you've stripped of them and left them bare and naked. And it might be true what you're saying. It might be a lie. It doesn't matter. It's what you're trying to achieve through that.

So, really, it's a derogatory thing. And whether it's true or whether it's false doesn't really matter. It's you're speaking in such a way to denigrate that person. Behind this is pride. That is what's usually behind us. That's why this happens. Because whenever we do this, whenever we show somebody in a bad light, it is pride. We are basically saying we are superior to the other person in this particular thing. We begin to talk down to them or about them. And so, we adopt this position, I'm glad I'm not like them. They're like this, and I am here. And this is what we do. It is serious in that way. One of the commentators said this, I like this, defamation is forbidden not as a breach of truth, nor even as a breach of love, but a breach of humility. That we come and we're showing no humility. I'm better than them. Let me tell you about them. So, that they become less in that person's eyes. One of the commentators says this, if we are really low, remember James has mentioned submit to God. He says, if we are really low before God, we've submitted to Him. Picture it physically, we're low.

There is no altitude left from which to talk down to anyone. That makes sense, doesn't it? How can you, when the Lord shows you what you're like and you're low, Lord, depart from me, I am a sinful person.

You cannot therefore stand and say, but they're worse than me. You see only your own sin. And therefore, to speak evil or to degrade somebody is serious. One of the commentators says this, some people find or think fault finding is their spiritual gift. That's scary, isn't it? And they think they're wise. And let me tell you about them, I am so spiritual, I'm up here, and I'll show you how they're not spiritual. And we do this. We think it's a spiritual gift. It is anything but a spiritual gift. It happens in churches. It happened in the Corinthian church. 2 Corinthians 12, 20 says this, for I am afraid that when I come, I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder. It's a sad thing. Imagine, we promote the gospel, but these are not verses we would share with non-Christians. We just wouldn't do it. It's serious. Slander is serious, and it's often linked with the word malice. It's done in such a way where it's malicious. You're not just sharing facts. You're doing it in such a way to bring the other person down. Ephesians 4, 31, get rid. Note those strong words, get rid of it. Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, along with every other form of malice. Colossians 3, 8, but now you must also rid yourself of all these things, anger, rage, malice, slander. And 1 Peter, Peter says the same thing, therefore, rid yourself. Know the words, rid yourself. I mean, cast it out as far as you can.

Rid yourself of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. And then Jesus said the same thing, didn't it? Out of the heart comes evil thoughts, adultery, and one of those is slander.

[15:16] It comes from our heart. It's very unpleasant if you're ever on the receiving end of this. Folk will always say something about you. Everybody have opinions about this one or that one.

But if you're ever on the receiving end of this, and if it's ever prolonged, and it goes on and on for some time, and it becomes widespread, that is very difficult. I remember being a pastor in one particular church where this was the case. An opinion was gauged. This was this person's opinion.

Spread this person's opinion. It becomes widespread, and it happens for a long time. I wouldn't wish that my worst enemy. That is a dreadful thing, dreadful thing. The apostle Paul had to deal with this in large measure in the churches. Paul is this. He's in it for money. And this would be spread wide over a long period of time. It really is very, very sad. And when brothers and sisters do this, somebody said, basically, when a Christian turns against another Christian, it's like the body attacking the body. It just seems crazy, but it does happen. Now, it doesn't mean, James is not saying there's not room for honest discussion. Sometimes we have to discipline somebody in a church or whatever, and that becomes public, and so forth. It's not that. But it's basically jealous. When somebody's jealous, and they want to hurt another person, and it degrades another person, that is wrong.

That is what James is really looking at here. Wisdom teachers of Israel call this use of the tongue the third tongue. And it's called the third tongue, because when we slander, we kill three people with this. We kill—it kills the speaker, the person who's saying it. They think they're doing themselves a favor, that they're really spiritual, but basically their reputation, they're killing their own reputation. Let me tell you this, a wee bit of gossip here, a wee bit of something to show them in a bad light. They don't realize they're killing themselves. They're also killing the person that they're talking to, the person that's listening, because they are then affected by this. They're robbed of joy and peace. And obviously, you're killing the person you're talking about. These three people are killed. There's a lot of wisdom in that in Israel. They're calling that the third tongue.

So, James says, this is not how we should treat each other. And now he goes on to tell us why. So, secondly, not only shouldn't be, but that's not how we are to regard each other, how, he goes on to say, how we are to regard the law. Now, when we do this, we tend to think that it's not a big thing. It's just a trivial thing that happens. They all do it in the workplace.

[18:12] Doesn't matter. For James, it's serious. This is very serious. And how he describes this is he's not just hurting—you're not just hurting the person. He doesn't look at it that way. He relates it to God's Word. And he says, we speak against the law. We are speaking against God's Word. There is a law that is against speaking or slandering a brother or sister. There is a law there. There are many laws similar. But here's Leviticus 19, a very familiar passage, 16 to 18. Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. Do not, I hate a fellow Israelite—sorry, do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against any one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. The second and greatest commandment is in that passage to do with slander. In other words, don't slander, love your neighbor as yourself. But when we sin, when we slander, what are we doing? We know God's Word. We know that it's wrong. But in that moment, we speak against this. We think that we know better than this law. It's a bit like driving at 20 miles an hour. 20 is plenty. I must confess, I struggle with that. I'm especially in

London. I'm getting nowhere here. And Wales, I see they want to do away with the 20 thing and go back to 30. In some zones, it's just killing. What are you doing? You drive 30 mile an hour down a 20 mile an hour zone or any speed limit. You're basically saying, I don't know who came up with these rules.

Whoever, whatever authority dreamed this up, I don't think this is 20. 20 is too slow. I'm going to go at 30. You're saying this law is rubbish, should never have been made. I'm going to write my own law, and I'm going to do this. That is what we do when we slander. We say, I know God says this, but I think that's a rubbish law. I am going to do this. I am going to slander because it suits me to do it.

Whoever made this law doesn't really know what they're talking about. And one of the commentators says this, law works that way. You either submit to it or you set yourself above it. And when we slander, we know God's law, but we're setting ourselves above it, and we don't do it. Not only are we speaking against the law that we know better, we are judging the law. And that's what he says here.

When you judge the law, you're not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. And that is why it's serious. It's a willful disregard to God's Word. And that's what James does. He doesn't say, well, you must sadden this person. He links it to God. He sees it through God's eyes, and he brings us back to God. Very wise, very wise. So, you and I might say, oh, don't say that about them. They're really quite a nice person. James strips it all away, and he says, when you do this, you have disregarded God's Word. You've spoke against the law, you have judged the law, and you've created your own law.

[21 : 27] Very serious. All sin basically does that, but slander certainly does it. But James goes on, and thirdly, to say not only how we are to regard each other and the law, but how we are to regard God.

And that is what he says. When we do this, he reminds himself that we are not only going against his law, we are going against God himself. That's why in verse 12, he says, there is only one lawgiver and judge, and it's not you. You have no right to create your own law, to disregard God's law, and to judge others. So, he brings us back to God. And Christians are commanded in Scripture, and I use the word commanded, God's law, to refrain from judging others. Jesus said in his manifesto, as he comes with his kingdom, not like labor or the Tories or the SNP, he comes in the Sermon on the Mount with the kingdom manifesto, and he says this, do not judge. Matthew 7, verse 1, do not judge, or you too will be judged. For the same way as you judge others, you will be judged.

And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. And then he says, why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, and you do not see the log? There's always a log. We're good at finding a speck in somebody else's eye, but the simple truth is there's always a log in your eye, always.

It's not just, you're not just exaggerating here. At any one time there's a log in their eye, we might not be aware of it, but there's a log. But we're too busy obsessed by the speck in somebody else's eye. You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Paul says something similar in Romans 2, you therefore have no excuse. You who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you, past judgment, do the same things. Romans 14, verse 4, who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall, and they will stand for the Lord is able to make them stand. Paul was judged so many times by others.

Remember, he says in 1 Corinthians 4, I care very little if I am judged by you, or any human court. Indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. And if someone's not doing something right, you can many ways hand them over to the Lord. A slanderer despises a brother or sister, and with the presumption that they are better, and they appoint themselves judged. That's basically what's happening. We're usurping the role. It's God's role, and we become lawgiver. We become judge.

[24 : 26] And it's, when we, pride is a weird thing. We very seldom see it in ourselves. One of the commentators said this, some of the proudest people I have ever met thought of themselves as being very humble, and were very critical of pride in others. Most of us, he says, are a lot prouder than we would like to believe. We're great at doing that, aren't we? Lord, I'm a humble guy, but they're proud, and usually it's all the way around. The very fact that we're saying that is an indication usually that we are proud, and they are humble, and so forth. It's not a new thing. Pride, thinking that we know better, is it was there before the world was created. It's not a man-made thing. It was the first swelling of pride in the heart of Lucifer before he became Satan, the adversary of God.

Isaiah 14, how you are fallen from heaven, morning star, sun of the dawn. You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations. You said in your heart, I will ascend to the heavens.

I will rise above, I raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the top of the clouds.

I will make myself like the Most High. I will be God. And that is the seriousness of this. The minute we disregard God and we judge, we take the place of lawgiver and judge, we have the same attitude as the devil. I will do this. And that is why this is so serious. And Satan was cast out, becoming the adversary of God and of his people. It is serious. We become the lawmaker. We dethrone him.

How should we deal with this? James tells us, verse 12. He reminds him there is one who is able to save and to destroy. It's great that God saves. We sing songs about the fact that God saves, but we forget often that God destroys. He has the power to destroy. And that's how he describes himself in Deuteronomy 32. There is no God beside me. I put to death and I bring to life. I have wounded and I will heal and no one can deliver out of my hand. In other words, James is saying, when we speak evil against a brother, it comes with a price tag. It's a very heavy price tag. Are we willing to pay that price? That's what he's saying here. Jesus said the same thing. I tell you that everyone will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every empty word that they have spoken.

[27 : 22] We need to remind ourselves of this, that it won't just be Peter standing at the golden gate saying, in you come, everybody, John's arrived, let the party begin, and it's all going to be moonlight and roses. There is judgment. There is judgment for you and for me. And every careless word that we utter, we will have to give an account for that. There is one lawgiver and judge, one who is able to save and to destroy. Now, our faith, we won't be destroyed by this, but we will still have to give an account.

And we need to take this seriously. That's how we regard God. So, we need to look at this slander. Are we prepared to pay that price in glory? Finally, and with this I'll close, James tells us how we are to regard ourself. Fourthly, verse 12, there is one lawgiver, one judge he can save and he can destroy. Who are you? But who are you that you think that you can take this place?

Who are you to judge your neighbor? It's a wake-up call to self-examination. And the very fact that he mentions brothers and sisters, I like that. It's great. He puts us on the same level. We're on the same level in the family. There is no firstborn in God's family. I think we think we're the firstborn.

I'm the, Lord, either I say it, but I am the firstborn. That might be just because you're a Christian, longer name. Or it just might be because you're more mature. And we like to think we are the firstborn. I'm sure as you're sitting there thinking, I'm not perfect, but I'm probably better than 80% of the folk in here. I'm maybe the firstborn. It's bunkum. It really is.

He says, brothers and sisters, you're family. He comes as a family and says, there is one lawgiver, one heavenly father. After this, you're all brothers and sisters. We're on level ground.

[29 : 21] And that is why we need to realize this. We need to come humbly before who are we? We're family. Who are we? We're saved by the grace of God. And we need to love one another. We need to love.

Remember Jesus, what are the most important commandments? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second is like this. Love your neighbor as yourself. There are no greater commandments than that. We are to go back to the law. The law that we have disregarded and broken. We must always come back to God's word. That is, especially in this area, the second commandment, to love one another. Paul shows us what this looks like in the local church.

Titus 3 with us. I'll finish. Remind the people to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceful and considerate, and always to be gentle towards everyone. Why? At one time, we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God, our Savior appeared, basically we were changed. God loved us even when we were enemies of Him. We need to remember this.

Come in humility. Come in love. Remembering that He is God and we are but His creation. The mature Christian knows this. If you're mature, you're not saying, Pastor's giving me grief. I don't like it.

Toys out the pram, spitting the dummy. Don't like it. Others go, you're dead right. James, you're spot on. I've just thought it was. I was just saying a wee word, just getting it. And by that tongue, I'm killing three peoples myself. That person, the person I'm talking about, I've set myself up as lawgiver and judge.

[31 : 21] I need to come in humility. I need to remember love. And the Lord will bless us and raise us back again. Let's stand and sing. Old breath of God, come sweeping through us. An old hymn, one that we often sing in sermons like this. Lord, come sweeping through us. We're thinking of getting a new pastor, but we pray that the Holy Spirit of God will not only lead in that, but He will sweep through the church, make us to be the people He wants to be. Guys, you ought to come up here and sing. Lovely. Great.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Oh, breath of life, come sweeping through us Free by the church with life and power Oh, breath of life, come plenty to us And please your church to meet the sun Oh, breath of life, come deep within us Renewing heart and will and heart Oh, breath of life, come fresh to be with us Revive your church in every part Oh, when the God commands, break us Till our belief, we confess our need

And in your tenderness, we make us Be thy priesthood, for this we plead Revive us, Lord, his seal of meeting While our mysteries are vast and wide Revive us, Lord, the church is waiting Beek the Christ, to spread the light Let's just close in prayer, shall we?

Our loving Heavenly Father, Lord, you have shone at the torch of your word into each one of our lives Lord, we do not despise some of these difficult things that we've been considering over recent weeks Because we do know our heart We do know, Lord, that we're easily led astray Even the best of us So, Father, we thank you for that, Lord We would rather know the truth, we'd rather see our condition That we might humbly confess it And come to you for forgiveness And also for strength and for wisdom So, Father, as we end this service This sermon, Lord, that would very much be Our heart's desire That we would recognize you As our lawgiver and as our judge And as our Heavenly Father That we might walk humbly with you Lord, I do thank you for this church I thank you for the love and for the unity In many ways it's here We pray, Lord, that that will grow more and more Over these months and into the years We ask these things in Jesus' name Amen Amen Thank you, folks Thank you, ladies Thank you, ladies

[35 : 23] Thank you, ladies Thank you, ladies Thank you, ladies Thank you To be continued Dear Kids Thank you Helloimi I love you Thank you Thank you Dear guys I love you Thank you I love you Open you?