

James 4:11,12

Intro: • What contextual considerations need to be remembered in interpreting these verses?

- Jewish heritage of the Christians who were recipients of this letter?
- the political situation in Palestine in the late 50s or early 60s when this letter was written?
- the conflicts that were taking place within the community(ies) to which James was writing?
 - trials, testing, temptations (1:2,3,12-16)
 - verbal improprieties (1:19,20,26; 2:3; 3:1-12)
 - social discrimination (1:9-11,27; 2:1-13)
 - belief-only teachers (2:14-26)
 - congregational disorder (3:13-18; 4:1-10)

Vs. 11 • Note these Old Testament passages which served as background for these Jewish-Christians:

- Leviticus 19:15-18
- Psalm 50:19,20
- Psalm 101:5

• Note also some New Testament passages which serve as parallels:

- Matthew 7:1,2
- Luke 6:37
- Romans 2:1
- Romans 14:4
- I Corinthians 4:5

• What does James mean by “speaking against” one another, a brother, and the law?

- to discredit?
- to find fault with?
- to denigrate?
- to criticize?
- to slander?
- to speak contemptuously of?
- to speak of with disdain?
- to denounce?
- to ridicule?
- to condemn?

• What “law” (used 4 times in vs. 11) is James referring to?

- Mosaic Law?
- Ten Commandments in particular?
- Old Testament in general?
- the “law of Christ”? (cf. Gal. 6:2)
- the “perfect law of liberty” (cf. James 1:25; 2:12)
- the “royal law”? (cf. James 2:8; Rom. 13:8,10)

• Is “judging a brother” or “judging the law” (2) different from “speaking against” the same?

• If so, what is the difference?

- indict?
- prosecute?
- censure?
- bring a verdict against?
- pronounce judgment on?
- anathematize?
- condemn?

- What does it mean to be a “doer of the law”?
 - obey all the rules and regulations?
 - keep the Ten Commandments?
 - become an activist for Christ?
 - let Jesus Christ be the “doer” in/through you by His grace?
 - allow for the outworking of the divine dynamic to which we have been receptive in faith? (cf. 1:22,25; 2:14-26; 3:13)
- When happens when one becomes “a judge” of the law?
 - he sets himself outside and above the law?
 - he views himself as separate and detached from the law?
 - he stands apart from the law in a place of superiority?
 - he claims authority in himself over the law?
 - he elevates himself above Jesus Christ?
 - he usurps God’s sovereign rule?
 - he tries to “play God” or “play Holy Spirit”?

Vs. 12 • Who is the “Lawgiver and Judge...who is able to save and destroy”?

- cf. Isaiah 33:22
- cf. II Timothy 4:1,8
- cf. Matthew 10:28
- Why does James stress the “oneness” of this divine action?
 - singularity of God?
 - exclusive prerogative of God?
 - divine right of God?
- What is James’ argument, then, when he draws the conclusion: “Who, then, are you who judges your neighbor?”
 - “Who do you think you are to presume and pretend to ‘play God’?”
 - “Who do you think you are to assume a superior position over your Christian brother?”
 - “Who do you think you are to usurp Christ’s exclusive role as Lord in the life of another Christian?”
 - “Who do you think you are to accept/reject; include/exclude; call your brother in/out?”
 - “Who do you think you are to designate yourselves as the determiner of God’s approval or disapproval?”
 - “Who gives you the right to protect or expel; to cover or condemn?”

Conc. • If Christians are not to “speak against” or “judge” another Christian, what is the antithetical and positive action that James is inculcating?

- Can you think of some personal situations where James’ exhortation can be applied and implemented in your own life?