

THE BEREAN

"...EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY..." (Acts 17:11)

SPEAKING AGAINST BRETHREN

*A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES
PART FORTY NINE OF SIXTY FOUR*

Humility cannot exist alongside the spirit that speaks against brethren. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you. Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law" (James 4:10, 11). James seems to have in mind speaking against another behind his back. The backbiting tongue and the spiritual mind are not together.

Censoring brethren is the utterance of pride. The person who is in the habit of running down his brother often does so because he feels much better than others (Luke 18:11). Still another backbiter may have a deep sense of guilt. Knowing he is wrong, he finds comfort in destroying others by saying, "I am better than he." He speaks against another to divert attention from himself. Don't we all find it easy to soothe our conscience by pointing a finger at someone else? The one given to slander seldom examines motives. It would do us all good to ask, "Why did I say what I did?"

No aspect of life shows the influence of Satan sooner than speech. The temptation to criticize harshly is ever about.

Many are completely thoughtless of the harm they do. Others are just malicious. How many friendships have been destroyed, reputations ruined, and homes broken by gossip? The one who speaks against a brother sets himself up as a judge while he may not know the facts and may not want to know them. All slander involves an act of judging which God condemns. "The evils of backbiting are so self-evident that it is a mark of crass and willful stupidity to fail to recognize them" (Tasker). Yet we continue to accuse others whether they be guilty or not just because we don't like them.

We cannot have the wrong attitude toward brethren and be right with God (I John 4:20,21). Members of Christ's body are bound together as members of one family. James uses the words "brethren" and "brother" three times in one verse. Their tie is closer than that of physical brothers. To malign a fellow member of the body of Christ is without excuse. The Bible allows us to speak of our brother's errors, but it requires that we speak to him and not about him (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1). It takes more courage to obey Christ than to talk behind someone's back.

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