

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

James 04:11-12

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thanks to the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We will continue to read James Chapter 4, and today we will read verses 11-12.

James tells us from his own experience that the difficulties in the church all come from the lusts of the flesh, the temptations of the world, and the snares of the sin from the devil. For the saints to submit to God, they must first stand on the overcoming position of Jesus Christ to resist the devil, rejecting the temptations that come from the flesh, the world, and sin. This is the passive aspect. The positive aspect is to draw near to God. The prerequisite for drawing near to God is to remove all barriers between us and God, which include the things we do that do not please God and the things we think that offend God.

If we can draw near to God with clean hands and a pure heart, God will surely draw near to us. If we humble ourselves, we will receive God's abundant grace. This grace can help us grow spiritually, draw us closer to God, and make God draw closer to us, lifting us up. Following this, from James 4:11 to the end of the book of James, James raises several matters that are commonly encountered in daily life, reminding us to submit to God's guidance, resist the devil, and reject the lusts of the flesh and the temptations of the world.

Verse 11: "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge."

From the beginning, James says not to criticize each other. The Chinese Union Version translates this as "criticize," but the original meaning is stronger than criticism; it means to speak maliciously about others, perhaps better translated as slander. In the church, we should not slander one another. When we speak evil or slander others, our words are an outward expression, but the source of these words comes from within a person.

Every person who has received grace and salvation has two sources within them: the indwelling Holy Spirit and the lusts of the flesh. Speaking evil or slandering others certainly does not come from the Holy Spirit but from the flesh. Not submitting to the Holy Spirit and instead following the flesh is an obvious mistake. However, this is also a common difficulty encountered in the church. No wonder James places such importance on practical living; we must produce a good testimony in our daily lives.

This is also true in today's church life. Often, the truth is preached at a high level, but the church life among the saints is full of the flesh, resulting in frequent criticism, judgment, and gossip. Because of this, Paul rebukes the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 11:17, saying, "Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse." Although the Bible tells us not to forsake our assembling together, if people do not deal with the flesh, gathering together can result in greater harm rather than benefit. Dear brothers and sisters, we should learn to examine ourselves every time we come to a meeting, to be cautious of the words that come out of our mouths, and to always submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, not allowing any slanderous words to escape our lips.

James continues, saying that if a person speaks evil of a brother and judges a brother, they are speaking evil of the law and judging the law. James takes it a step further, stating that when you criticize and judge a brother, you are essentially criticizing and judging the law. At that time, the New Testament had not yet been written, so the Bible James frequently read was the Old Testament, where the term

"law" often represented God's word. Therefore, criticizing and judging a brother is tantamount to criticizing and judging God's word.

A brother's right or wrong is determined by God's word, so how can you replace God's word to judge the saints? Especially when you criticize and judge, you are basing it on your own opinions and views. When you judge others, you are essentially judging God's word. If you judge God's word, you do not respect it, so how can you be a doer of God's word? Not only are you not following it, but you are also replacing God's word and acting as a judge over people. God wants us to be doers of the law; He does not call us to be the executors of the law.

Verse 12: "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?"

The law is established by God, and only God can judge people. God is the only judge who can save and destroy. Because God has eternal love and absolute righteousness, He saves people in His love. In the process of saving people, He completely satisfies His requirements of righteousness. And in His righteousness, He judges people.

Anyone who does not have the mark of His love cannot meet His requirements of righteousness, and He will destroy that person. Anyone who has the mark of His love on them, which is the precious blood shed by Jesus on the cross, will be saved. Because Jesus has already taken their judgment, God will justify them and pass over judgment. Therefore, the only true judge is God Himself.

James then brings out a question: Who are you? How dare you judge others? Dear brothers and sisters, I hope we all accept this reminder not to judge others in the church. Because God establishes the law and God executes judgment, no one has the authority to judge others.

James particularly emphasizes here that humans cannot replace God's position to judge others. In verse 10, James tells us, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." Someone who likes to judge others puts himself in a high position to dare to judge others. James tells us that when you do this, you have already elevated yourself to be equal with God, which is very offensive to God. We need to humble ourselves before God and not replace God. This is true in dealing with others, and isn't it also true in dealing with ourselves?

Each of us has things in our flesh that we particularly care about, which makes us hold on tightly to them. In these matters, you unconsciously replace God's rightful position. Many times, we do not even realize that in such matters, we have replaced God's position and still feel at peace because we cannot hear the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, James particularly reminds us, in our life experiences, to surrender our sovereignty, let the Holy Spirit guide us, and let God exercise judgment in us. If we are willing to humble ourselves, the Lord will lift us up.

Let us pray: Lord, keep the church and the church life I am in, allowing the Holy Spirit to have sovereignty and to move freely. May the saints be willing to learn the lesson of humility, not speak evil of others, and avoid slanderous words. Christ is the head of the church, and the saints are members of one another, all submitting to the head's governing and learning the lesson of mutual submission. Bless the church and the church life I am in, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.