

Speaking Evil of and Judging Each Other

Spiritual Maturity

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Bible Text: James 4:11-12
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We turn in sacred scripture this evening to James chapter 4, once again looking at another portion from James chapter 4. This evening we look at verses 11 and 12. We read the chapter in its entirety. James chapter 4.

1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. 4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be [who wants to be] a friend of the world is the enemy of God. 5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? 6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. 11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. 12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? 13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour [a mist], that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. 16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. 17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word.

The text is verses 11 and 12.

11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, in our last sermon on the book of James, we looked at the calling in verse 10, to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord. We looked at verses 7 through 10 as the text last time, and we looked at the strong exhortation James gives to repent. These saints, to whom James was writing, were characterized by wars and fighting. They were characterized by friendship with the world. Their wisdom was being more and more the wisdom that is from below, the wisdom that is earthly and sensual and devilish. And so, James writes, "Repent. Let your carnal laughter and let your carnal joys be put away. Let your laughter be turned to the mourning of repentance. Let your joy be turned to heaviness. Turn from your sins, resist the devil, and draw near unto God." And last time, when we looked at that idea of humility, we defined humility like this: putting ourselves under God. That's why he says right away in verse 7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God." Put yourself under God. Humility is recognizing who God is as the perfect, all-glorious, infinite God that he is, and then putting ourselves under him and living accordingly. Humility is saying, "Thou art the potter, I am the clay." And humility is then saying, "I need to live a God-centered life. Not a man-centered life, but a God-centered life. Having his word as my only authority, having his glory as my focus, knowing who he is as my heavenly Father through Jesus Christ, his Son."

Well, as we turn now this evening to verses 10 and 11, what we see is that James is really continuing along the same line of thought. When you first read verse 11, it seems that James is now starting to head in a new direction, he's focusing on a new topic. In fact, when you start reading verse 11, it seems that James is simply going back to a topic that he's already spoken on three or four times already in this short letter. But as we'll see, James is really focused on the same topic of pride and humility and as we apply this passage to ourselves, one of the truths that we're going to see is this: our pride, because we're inclined to be proud, our pride and arrogance and self-conceit is shown in a very large way by the way that we speak evil about others and the way that we speak down about others. Well, it's worth mentioning, again by introduction, that James is writing here to churches. He's writing here to God's people who are redeemed in the blood of Jesus Christ. They've been begotten again by the word of truth and now they need strong words to lead them on in the way of spiritual maturity. That's the perspective of James. That's our perspective as we look at this text tonight. We take as our theme, "Speaking Evil of and Judging Each Other," and we look at that theme under three points. First, we look at the sins. Second, the seriousness of these sins. And then third, the solution.

The command that James gives at the beginning of verse 11 is to the point, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren." That's the first sin James is addressing, speaking evil of one another. Then, James immediately also brings in the idea of judging. He writes, "He that speaketh evil of his brother and judgeth his brother." And so that's the second sin that James addresses, being judgmental. And then at the end of verse 12, James uses that language again, "who art thou that judgest another?" So there are two sins here in the text that James is addressing and really they go together, really they're the same sin, but there's two words used here, so we're going to look at it in two sections this evening. Now James is also going to speak about the seriousness of these sins; that's what the second point of the sermon is going to look at. What I want to do just in the first point is look at these sins themselves, speaking evil of one another and judging one another.

So first of all, James writes, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren," and even before we get into the sin, even that word "brethren" really pops out of the page in this part of James. James has just called these people adulterers and adulteresses, he's just called them sinners, he's just called them double-minded, and now he calls them again brothers, and part of the power here in calling them brothers is the fact that here they are, brothers and sisters in the Lord, and yet they're attacking each other, and they are attacking that reality that they are brothers and sisters in the Lord. This sin of speaking evil about one another, this sin of being judgmental towards one another, is especially damaging, especially unfitting, you might say, in the church. It's a sin in which we're inflicting harm upon ourselves. And when you notice that James uses the word "brother" three times just in verse 11, he's emphasizing the point, "You guys are brothers. You guys are sisters in the Lord. Yet here you are speaking evil towards one another and judging each other. How hurtful, how damaging. Don't you have enough of the persecutions of the world around you? You've been scattered away from Jerusalem because of that persecution, but now you add more suffering to the church community by the slander and the judgmental spirit of brothers against brothers and sisters against sisters." So that sets the tone here.

Now the sin itself. In the King James, the language is this, "speak not evil one of another," and that does capture the idea, but the original word that is used simply has this idea, "speak not down, speak not down upon one another." And so what James is really addressing is this: don't just avoid hurtful speech that attacks another person, but avoid any language that is language that puts yourself above them and puts them below you, so that you're speaking down upon them, so that you talk about them, brothers and sisters in the Lord, as if they are in a separate category than you. Here you are, up here, and here they are, down here. So James is here still talking about the sin of pride, the sin of haughtiness. You speak condescendingly about someone or to someone. You speak with that air of self-righteousness. That's what James is addressing here in verse 11.

So what is this sin? What does this sin involve? Well, first of all, it involves slander. Some translations even just put it that way, don't slander one another. Slander is saying something about someone else that isn't true. It's lying about them and then doing it with the intent of hurting them, hurting their reputation, make others look at them in a bad light. Say, for example, you want to influence someone to think badly about someone else so you craft your words carefully in such a way that really unbeknownst to them,

you've lied about that person, that other person, and then suddenly the person you're talking to is saying, "Really? That's what that person did? That's the way that person thinks? Well, maybe they're not the good person that I thought they were." And maybe if the information is true, well then it's not slander, but then it's gossip. That's what gossip is. But either way, it's still coming from a heart of pride and self-conceit and hatred. Speaking down upon someone.

Second, what James is addressing is the sin of talking down to people face to face. You don't just do it behind their back, but you're ready to do it right to their face. So you're ready to give them a piece of your mind and then maybe you walk away and you pat yourself on the back for being so bold or having the courage to really humble that person that you were attacking. After all, they needed to be brought down a notch or two, didn't they? At least now you're a notch above them.

Third, what James is addressing is the sin of simply talking other people down, you minimize another person's virtues, you minimize another person's accomplishments. And whatever form it takes, at the heart of it all is this posture that I think I'm better than them. I'm better than these other people in church. My thoughts are better than their thoughts. My ways are higher than their ways. My family maybe doesn't really associate with their family. There's distance between us because, well, they are here and I am here. That's the idea.

And why does this kind of thing happen? Well, exactly because we feel the need to elevate ourselves. It's like the Pharisee on the street corner, praying with himself, "I thank thee, Lord, that I am not as other men are, even as this brother in the church, this publican who's praying next to me." And we totally forget the realities of the gospel, who we are as brothers saved by grace. Or maybe it's this, we want revenge. Maybe that other person has slighted me. Maybe it was real. Maybe it was imagined. But we want to settle the score and get even. Or maybe it's this, we just don't have anything better to talk about and this is where our conversations go. This is the habit we're in. We don't know what to talk about. Maybe this is what we always talk about. We've got too much on our minds and so we fuel. We've got so much time on our hands, put it that way, we've got so much time on our hands so that we fuel the fires of conversation by throwing other people into the fire. Maybe we want to make ourselves feel good. Maybe we want to justify how we've been acting towards someone else with a bad attitude, so we resort to this speaking down about them, because it helps me justify this bitterness, this discontent, this envy that is brewing in my heart.

Evidently, this was a common trait among the saints in the New Testament Church. This is at least the third or the fourth time that James is addressing this kind of thing in this letter. And I wonder if it's a common thing for the church of Jesus Christ today, or for us? The Synod has met for the last two weeks and maybe, I don't know what your conversations were like, maybe some of us have all kinds of good things to say about some people and all kinds of bad things to say about other people. We've got to be careful. We've got to be careful. We've got to be loving and not speak down about others. Maybe here in church there's an issue. Maybe we know something going on with another

family in the school community and we don't really care that someone is hurting or someone is struggling but we just take the opportunity to speak evil, to speak down upon them. We carry on with talk that's not rooted in love, but with talk that's really pushing them down so that we can push ourselves up a notch. They're brothers, they're sisters in the Lord, bought with the same precious blood of Jesus Christ, God loves them, and we treat them that way, and then we defend it.

That's the first sin that James is mentioning here in the text tonight, and then it's really the same kind of sin, but he's using different language, he mentions the sin of judging. And again, we'll see it's the same sin being mentioned. It's a figure of speech, "speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth the brother." It's really the same sin, but he uses a different word, so let's look at that. What does James mean by the idea of judging one's brother? Well, what James does not mean here is that we should never condemn the wrong that someone else does. In that sense, we must judge. It's our duty to uphold the law of the Lord, and that takes judgment. James is not telling us that we should start overlooking sin or be naive about the reality of sin. And the Bible speaks to that as well, "You will know them by their fruits. You will be able to make a judgment of people based on their actions." And that's wise. Multiple times, the Bible tells us to beware of false prophets and, of course, those false prophets are going to try to make themselves leaders in the church. Try the spirits, whether they be of God. Exercise right judgment. Jesus says, "Beware the leaven of the Pharisees." That wasn't gossip, that wasn't slander, that was a good word of warning. One of the high callings that the elders have is to judge, to lead God's people in the same way that Jesus was leading his disciples. To judge righteously is to judge according to God's law. It is to judge according to God's standard of what is right. That's not what James is getting at. What James is getting at here is the sin of judgmentalism, having an unkind, unloving, judgmental spirit that seeks to run other people down.

He's talking about judging other people in the sense of looking down on them from above with a proud and haughty spirit full of criticism that's rooted in hatred and bitterness and envy, and that comes out in the text when you see that speaking evil and judging are really used interchangeably. It's the same idea. And to judge, in the sense that James uses it here, to judge is to pronounce a verdict upon someone. Just as God carries out the final judgment, it's to pronounce a verdict on someone. And to judge is to really say this, "This person is such a sinner. In fact, I wonder if this person really is a Christian. After all, he doesn't wash his car on Saturdays as he prepares for Sunday worship. And I do. So I must be better than that person." That's being judgmental and at the heart of it all is this: you judge the other person not according to God's law, but you judge the other person according to your law. That's the idea of speaking evil of someone. I'm up here, and now where are you? I'm the standard. How do you match up to me? That's judgmentalism, judging the person not according to God's law, but according to your law, and so you speak down upon them.

That's the sin James is addressing in the text. That this is the sin James is addressing in the text is clear from everything else that James writes in which James highlights the seriousness of this sin and that's where I want to move now too; that's really the focus of the passage here, the seriousness of this sin. James writes in verse 11, "Speak not evil one

of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother," now this, "speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge." And that might sound a little confusing at first, but what James is simply saying is this: when you are being judgmental of others, and when you set yourself up as the standard for others to match up to, what you are doing is being judgmental of the law of God, and you are speaking down upon the law of God. And that's true because what we're ultimately doing in those circumstances is this, we're saying God's law isn't good enough for this situation. What we're ultimately saying is this, God's law is insufficient. I need to add my own thoughts, my own traditions, my own expectations, my own rules, and then on the basis of that, I will decide whether someone is right or not. Not the law of God, but I. I should be the standard for how people live so that we impose our rules on the life of other saints.

And we do this all the time. We do it. Whenever we speak down, whenever we judge someone, that's what we're doing. We do it all the time. Maybe in the New Testament time period, the issue was the issue of eating meat that was offered to idols. Right? "How can you be a good Christian and go to the supermarket and buy the meat at the supermarket that was offered to an idol in a temple yesterday? How can you do that?" And some people were able to say, "No, an idol is nothing. There's nothing wrong with this meat. I can buy this meat and eat it, buy it at the marketplace and eat it." And other people struggled with it. Maybe it's because they were still struggling with the superstitions that they grew up with as children. And then what did those people say about the people who didn't struggle? "It's shameful how they eat. Eating meat offered to idols that was bought in the marketplace, I just don't know how they can do it. Clearly, those people are less than us. In fact, maybe those people are even close to joining in on the sacrifices that are made in the temple to those idols." Based on the book of James, James chapter 2, maybe the issue is this, "There's another poor person coming into church. That's the last thing we need here, isn't it? Another poor person. That person must be lazy anyway. That's probably what explains his poverty." Maybe that's how it was for some of the saints in the New Testament.

Maybe today we struggle with other things. How about if a woman came into church wearing a jean skirt? I bring that up because I remember about 25 years ago when I was a teenager, that was the issue then, wearing jean fabric into the worship service. That was foreboding. That was the unwritten rule. How about if a woman came into church wearing pants? How about if it was the minister's wife or the elder's wife? That would be shocking, such open sin. How about if a church put on the gray new psalter on the big screen behind the pulpit and used that to sing in our divine worship service? Well, that's what liberal churches are starting to do, using the big screen behind the pulpit. What if someone rode their bike on Sunday? What if someone used their grill on Sunday? Right? Those are real things. You go to different enclaves of conservative, maybe Reformed Christianity, and they each have their particular thing. There's different rules for different places, aren't there? And if you're not privy to the rules of your own community, well, you're in for an unpleasant surprise because we're not supposed to be grilling on Sunday over here. Someone is pregnant again? Isn't that their 10th child? That's too many. The children that they have are already a wreck. What were they thinking? Someone only has

one child? You know, I heard they were preventing it all along. So-and-so bought a Mercedes? That's not a Christian way to spend your money. So-and-so doesn't like Fox News or Trump? They must be woke. Oh, that elder doesn't have the specific gifts for the office that I value and therefore, I have permission to be judgmental of him and I can say, I don't need to honor him. Reading out of another version of the Bible other than the one that I approve of? Well, those people have just been notched down a level.

And the list goes on and on and what you can get is a certain brand of Christianity, a certain institutional brand, a denominational brand, and that's what differentiates you from other Christians, and that's how you can rank yourself and position yourself as better than others. I, for myself, could look at things that I've said, even over the pulpit, and I examine it, and does that portray a kind of judgmental spirit? We all struggle with it. We've all got to be honest about it. You can think of your own examples. Maybe the examples I bring up are showcasing where maybe I can be judgmental, and you've got your own things. And if we're not on this side judging the people over here, well, maybe we're on this side of the question, judging the people over here. And what are we doing? Well, we are speaking down over others. We're judging others, to be sure. But what is even worse is this, two things. First of all, we're judging the law of God because with each one of these things, what we're saying is this. "God's law is insufficient. I need to add to it. I need to add my own standard to the law of God." And then second, what we're doing is this: we're not paying attention to what the law of God actually requires of us because what the law of God requires is this, love your neighbor, esteem others better than yourself. The law says that judgmental attitude, that's entirely wicked. Follow the royal law. James chapter 2 verse 11. Love your neighbor as yourself. Yet we go around exercising this judgmental attitude as if my judgmentalism is actually the height of piety.

And not only are we hating our neighbor, and not only are we judging the law, but in the end, we're judging God because, of course, God himself is the lawmaker, and with our actions, with our attitudes, we're saying the law is insufficient and God himself is really below my standard. I think we need to appreciate that. For example, some of the examples I gave about women wearing pants in church, or maybe it's about the men wearing ties in church. When you have that judgmental attitude, what we're saying is this, "God, you really should have written down this law in your word. You should have made it more explicit that women need to wear dresses and men need to wear ties." And then maybe we can say to ourselves, "Well, I'm well pleased with myself that I conform to the dress code that I've set for the congregation." The congregation, I realize that there is the whole reality of the feminist movement. We must not be naive. And there is a godly way of thinking that impacts how we dress ourselves for church. I recognize that. Those things are valid and real but the point is, we can't make laws, and we can't make laws just maybe because we're afraid of the feminist movement. That's where we get judgy. No, the defense that we have against these kinds of things is the law that God has already established. You don't need to add to the law of God. You don't need to make up your own laws in order to protect yourself against the feminist movement. You don't have to be afraid of the feminist movement. Simply walk with the Lord. Simply follow his word and he will lead you. That's going to be good for everyone. That's my only authority. And the law of God is clear on the issue. Whether you are a man, whether you are a woman,

the calling is this: love. Love God. Love his law. Know what his law is for you. Love your neighbor as yourself. And then, yes, dress yourself and conduct yourself according to that law.

For another example, think about riding a bike on the Sabbath day. When we have that judgmental attitude that immediately condemns someone for even touching a bike on Sunday, what we're saying is this, "God, you should really have addressed this in your word. You should have wrote it in the Bible that to touch a bike on the Sabbath day is sinful." And then we're inclined to say to ourselves, "I'm so glad that I keep the Sabbath day. I haven't touched a bike on the Sabbath day in the last five years." Now, again, I realize there is a great desecration of the Sabbath day today. In our society, I think the reality is we don't even appreciate it because we're so desensitized to it already. But at the same time, we can't make up our own laws just because we're afraid of what's happening in the world. Now, that being said, I can make laws in my own home for my own family to teach my children. We do that. But we can't then take that law and go around in church and make up all kinds of laws and then look down on others who don't abide by these laws that I've invented. The defense against the Sabbath desecration is the law that God has already made. And what is that law? That law is love God. Enjoy the Sabbath day as the Lord's day. Do his pleasure and enjoy the day in public and private acts of worship and acts of mercy and do the works of present necessity.

You could go on with example after example. When do you slander someone? When do you gossip about someone? Well, we do it when we think that they're just not meeting up to our standards because if it really was a matter of being concerned about God's law and his standards, we would be handling the whole issue quite differently, wouldn't we? We would be careful first for ourselves not to slander, not to be judgmental, but to interact regarding this issue in a way that's honoring God. But when we slander, when we judge, what we're concerned with is this, not it offends God, but it offends me. It offends me. And then sometimes, because this is how we are, we can so easily blur that distinction, can't we, as if God would automatically take my position.

Well, as I said, the problem is really threefold. First, we judge the law, we judge the law to be insufficient. That's what James says. We judge the law, we know better than the law. Second, as James writes at the end of verse 11, we're not actually doing the law anymore. We judge the law, but we're not a doer of the law anymore because the law says love. The law says do good to your neighbor. The law says humble yourself in the sight of the Lord. And that leads to the third problem, and that is that when we judge the law, we are ultimately judging God himself. "God, you are not sufficient." And when you have this kind of thing going on, what happens? What happens is this, you get legalism on the one hand, and then you get antinomianism on the other hand, and they mix together so that I'm free to do what I want to do, antinomianism, and then I keep the laws that I want to keep. You get whitewashed sepulchres. You get hypocrites. You get envying and strife. You get friendship with the world. You get this wisdom that is not from above, but that is earthly and sensual and devilish. You get a proud and haughty spirit. You get a lack of reverence for God. You have a lack of being God-centered and more and more being man-centered. And that's when, like it was with the saints to whom

James is writing, you need to hear the word again. I need to hear the word again. Humble yourself. Humble your thinking. Humble your attitude in the sight of the Lord.

And that's where James goes in verse 12. Verse 12, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" James says, let's go back to remembering the reality of the situation and what's the reality of the situation? The reality is this: you're not the lawgiver. The reality is this: you don't get to determine what is right and what is wrong. God does. You don't get to condemn those whom God himself does not condemn. The reality is this: you're not the one who is able to save. You're not the one who is able to destroy. The choice to save and the choice to destroy is not in your power, it's in God's hands. He is God, you are not. So who are you to make rules for others? Who are you that judges and condemns others according to your own laws? It's the height of pride. It's the height of arrogance. It's legalism. It's Phariseeism. And it's wicked because the way that we are thinking is this, "I am better than God." That's how this fits into the context, humble yourself in the sight of the Lord.

And I think this is where we all need to examine ourselves, myself included. I see this in myself regarding our piety. I think with the background that many of us have, the assumption is simply there that I know, I know what piety looks like. I follow this unwritten rule book that has been ingrained in me since my childhood. I follow the standards of the predominant culture of my denomination, and I know that if I do that, no one's going to give me trouble, and I can enjoy this feeling of being righteous and pious. And what James is impressing upon us is this: you need more spiritual maturity. Don't do things because of what man will say. Don't do things because this is what other people accept as appropriate. Don't do things just because this is the way that you've always done it. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord.

We all need that, beloved. You know, your denomination is not going to be the one who can save you, and your denomination is not going to be the one who can destroy you. And that might sound obvious, but as a pastor, I've experienced those who seem to have a strong sentiment in that direction, as if they think that in the end, they will have to do with the faces of men, and they don't have to do with the face of God. Let's be clear here, another denomination can't save you either. Another denomination can't destroy you either. The reality is we all have to do with God, and then again, not just any God, but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who for his sake is our God and our Father. We're going to be judged according to his law. He is the lawmaker. Don't let anyone else be the one who is your lawgiver. As John Calvin wrote when he was treating this passage, it is an obedience, listen to this, it is an obedience rendered to the devil when we allow any other than God himself to be a lawgiver to rule our souls. Beloved, you don't need another pope in your lives. That's probably what he was referring to. There is one lawgiver, and that lawgiver is God and his law is the perfect law of liberty, his law is the royal law. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and with respect to that royal law, when that royal law comes to us, the call is this, humble yourself in the sight of the Lord. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord.

And that's the solution. That's the solution to everything. To speaking evil of others, to being judgmental of others, humble yourself in the sight of the Lord. And that humbling involves a few things. First, remember my place under God. He is the lawgiver. I need to submit to him and his law. My thoughts, my standard, it has nothing to do with that. It all has to be in conformity to him. And his law for me is this, love your neighbor as yourself. Second part of humbling ourselves involves this, remembering that God is the one who knows our sins and the depths of our sins better than we do and he is the one who has the power to save. He is the one who has the power to destroy. And we all need mercy because we are sinners. And third, humbling ourselves involves this, that we remember the mercy, the love that God has shown me, that God has shown us in Jesus Christ. The free, gracious love, what he did sending his only begotten Son to fulfill his own law for me, who couldn't keep it at all. Remembering his mercy, his unspeakable grace to me so that I remember the cross of Calvary, that Jesus, who is God himself come in the flesh, died on the cross bearing the full agony, the full torments of hell for all my sin, who made the full payment for all my debts. And I know already, I know already the beginning of eternal life in Jesus Christ. I've been begotten with the word of truth. I know my identity in Jesus Christ. And I look at all these things and I know, as James writes, I know God gives more grace. I know God is the God who delights in mercy. I know this personal relationship with him. I know his commandments are good and pure. I have experienced the joy of loving my neighbor as myself, a small beginning of it, and it is amazing, it is divine, it is sweet. I know the joy of walking according to the perfect law of liberty. I also know the freedom of not having to fear the judgment of men, how liberating that is. I know what it is to be lifted from the crushing weight of having to answer to men, men who don't know mercy, but I am accountable to God who knows mercy. Isn't that even what David said when God was going to chasten him? "I would rather fall into the hands of God than fall into the hands of men."

You know, we know the glory that is due to God. We know he is great. We know he is greatly to be praised. Then humble ourselves, humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. Magnify his name, reverence him, fear him and him alone, and hold up his law, hold up his law as the only law that is good and right. Put away the pride, put away the focus on self, put away the envy, put away the bitterness, love your neighbor as yourself. And here in church, here in church, remember that that man on the other side of the aisle is your brother. Remember that that woman, sitting across from you is your sister. Do them good. Love them. And then rejoice with each other in the comfort that together you know it's not man who's going to judge you. The judgment belongs to God and he's already carried out the judgment on our Savior Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago. And we know that through faith in Jesus Christ.

If there be any here tonight who don't know Jesus as their Lord and Savior, who do not call on the name of the Lord Jesus, what a fitting word this is for you also tonight. The word also comes to you that there is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. All men must appear before the final judgment to be judged according to God's law, not man's law, to be judged according to all that they have done. If you don't have God as your God through Jesus Christ, what a day of fear and dread that will be. And to you then also comes the word, humble yourself in the sight of the Lord. Repent and believe on the

Lord Jesus Christ. Trust in his righteousness and not your own and you also will know the joy of knowing that you shall be saved and not destroyed. Amen.

Let us pray.

Our Father, thy word is a sharp two-edged sword, piercing even to the bones and marrow, dividing asunder soul and spirit, exposing us, but at the same time, that word is a healing ointment. It is the prescription, it is the medication that is good for us. We pray that thy word might have that operation in us by thy Spirit. We thank thee for this instruction. We pray that we might learn from what these early New Testament saints were struggling with. We know it's applicable for us, Father. Give us thy Spirit, lead us into the way of thy law, and give us spiritual maturity. Help us, Lord and use this preaching to that end. Forgive our sins. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.