

- A. **“Judge not lest ye be judged” from Mat 7:1 is one of the most misinterpreted verses in the Bible?**
B. As we look at this text tonight, we must remember that the audience of this general epistle is the entire church which he called the **“the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad” (Ja 1:1)**. The early church had a great deal of conflict. That is why James wrote this epistle. → **Ja 4:1-2**.

There is one Lawgiver and Judge.	I. DO NOT SLANDER YOUR BROTHER II. REMEMBER GOD IS THE LAWGIVER AND JUDGE
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I. **DO NOT SLANDER YOUR BROTHER** → **v11**

- A. The Greek verb used here is translated simply as **“speak against,”** as the NASB95 has it; however, it is best to understand this as slander when we consider the context of this epistle.
- P. H. Davids wrote that “The author is ending a larger segment on the problem of community conflict. He has first traced this to worldliness. . . , which earned the hearers a strong prophetic rebuke, but he has not forgotten that the divided heart expresses itself in inner community strife (4:1), including the putting down of others (3:9–12).”¹
 - When Davids mentioned the “putting down of others,” that is a bit softer than the sin James rebuked.
 - Earlier in **3:9**, James condemned the use of our tongues to cursing others.
 - The OT condemned the sin of slander very vigorously. We should condemn slander as well.
 - Turn to **Lev 19:15-18**.
 - In **v15**, we are told not to be partial in our judgment of others. It says, **“you are to judge your neighbor fairly.”**
 - How does this make sense at all when Jesus said, **“Do not judge so that you will not be judged”** in **Mat 7:1**?
 - Again, as we read earlier from **Ja 11**: **“He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law.”**
 - Lev 19:16** helps us to better understand the sin of slander.
 - Slander is an **“act [Lit. ‘stand’] against the life of your neighbor.**
 - Multiple sources define slander as speaking falsely against someone for the purpose of ruining the other person’s reputation (defamation).
 - Slander is condemned because it seeks to “murder” the other person’s good name. In that way it is an **“act against the life of your neighbor.**
 - In **Ps 50:19-20** God rebuked the sins of the tongues saying, **“You let your mouth loose in evil and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son.”**
 - The strongest rebuke comes from **Ps 101:5a**: **“Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy.”**
 - This Psalm points us to how it is especially bad to talk behind the other person’s back even if there is a valid area of sin you can point to.
 - Lev 19:17** tells you what you should do instead. Go to him or her face-to-face so that **“you may surely reprove [lit. ‘rebuke’] your neighbor.”**

¹ Davids, P. H. (1982). [*The Epistle of James: a commentary on the Greek text*](#) (p. 169). Eerdmans.

B. In **v11**, James argued that to slander our brethren is to slander the law of God. **“He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law.”**

1. This is a logical argument if we interpret, **“speaking against”** in **v11** as **“slander.”**
2. Matthew Henry wrote, “We have the law of God, which is a rule to all; let us not presume to set up our own notions and opinions as a rule to those about us.”²

II. REMEMBER GOD IS THE LAWGIVER AND JUDGE →**v12**

A. It is helpful to remember this verse when we make statements that condemn someone to hell.

1. Even in the case of a notoriously wicked person, we don’t know if God will grant a person repentance or not in the future.
 - a. Who would have ever thought our Lord would have caused Nebuchadnezzar to give glorious praise to God before all his kingdom that he ruled over?
 - b. God took Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of the church, and molded him into a holy apostle!
 - c. Anna Waterman wrote a hymn with these words:

“Come, ye sinners, lost and hopeless, Jesus’ blood can make you free;
For He saved the worst among you, When He saved a wretch like me.
And I know, yes, I know Jesus’ blood can make the vilest sinner clean,
And I know, yes, I know Jesus’ blood can make the vilest sinner clean.”
2. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown wrote, “God alone is Lawgiver and therefore Judge, since it is He alone who can execute His judgments; our inability in this respect shows our presumption in trying to act as judges, as though we were God.”³

B. When speaking of God as **“the One who is able to save and to destroy,”** James likely had the words of Jesus in mind.

1. In **Mat 10:28**, our Savior said, **“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”**
2. **Mat 10** speaks of God’s ability to destroy and condemn to hell, yet James in **v12** reminds us that our God is **“the One who is able to save.”** We should remember both as very true and vitally important.

Review, further application, and conclusion:

² Henry, M., & Scott, T. (1997). [Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary](#) (Jas 4:11). Logos Research Systems.

³ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible](#) (Vol. 2, p. 492). Logos Research Systems, Inc.