

James Part 10

Condemn / Restore

James 4:11-12

Memory Verses: Galatians 6:1

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Last week we began by framing the way our faith works in the book of James as a series of battles we all must face. We will face battles of various trials, battles against all kinds of temptations, battles against partiality and how we treat people in general, and a myriad of battles against our own flesh; hearing but not doing, having faith but not working, blessing and cursing with the same tongue, a prideful arrogance that places us at the center rather than Christ. The Christian life is nothing less than a constant war... and as we said last week, though we may lose some battles along the way, we must... we must win the war. There is a peace with God that can only be found on the other side of the war with the flesh. So Make war.

Which brings us to the next part of James chapter 4. Read with me **James 4:11-12**. Do you guys remember Pat Tillman. Pat Tillman was a standout football player in the NFL for the Arizona Cardinals. I happen to have one of his **football cards** right here with me. In 2002, because of his love for our country, Pat declined a new contract with the Cardinals, worth 4 million dollars, to join the fight on the war against terrorism as an Army Ranger. In 2004, while on a patrol in Afghanistan, Pat's platoon got separated. Pat's party had gone ahead of the rest when they heard gunfire. They assumed that the party they had left behind was under attack. They had just taken a supporting position above the gorge they had just walked through when they saw the rest of their platoon coming through the gorge. In an effort to signal to them that they were there and that they were friendly, Tillman was shot; by his own men. Pat Tillman was and always will be remembered as a hero who turned down fame and fortune to go fight for his country, but the fact that he was killed by friendly fire will always be a dark shadow looming over his story.

The point is this... when you make war on the flesh... unfortunately, there may be friendly fire, and as Murphy's law states; "friendly fire isn't friendly." We must not get sidetracked in our battle against the flesh and start fighting against each other. If we do we will defeat ourselves. A house divided against itself cannot stand. When we speak evil against one another, and when we judge one another with condemnation we can quench the Spirit and sabotage God's plans for our church, our community, our families, and ourselves. Rather, as brothers and sisters, when we disagree with each other, or see each other

struggling to overcome the flesh, we must choose to see the best in one another and gently restore one another to a righteous walk with Christ.

And all of that comes down to how we judge one another based upon our understanding of the word; judge. The word judge, may be one of the most misunderstood words in the entire Bible. Some believe that we have no right to ever judge anyone, and there is biblical support for that. Other's believe that we have a duty to judge our brothers and sisters in Christ, and there is biblical support for that. I want to take our time this morning to look over this passage and other supporting passages and hopefully solidify for you today what it means to pass judgement on someone or to judge someone as a believer. And what we will see is that the word Judge can either mean to condemn or it can mean to restore. According to scripture, we can choose to either condemn one another in judgment or restore one another in gentle accountability. One is sinful and one is God glorifying. One builds up the Kingdom of God and one tears it down. We must be careful how we judge one another because... **when we judge one another in condemnation we lose the opportunity to restore one another in accountability.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

So let's tackle these two different definitions of judgement. First, the negative. **Judgement Means Condemnation When We Create Our Own Rules For One Another**. Look again at **verse 11**. We see here that we are to not speak evil against one another. No friendly fire. If you remember we actually spoke about this at length a couple weeks ago when we talked about how what we say tells the world who we really are. If you missed that sermon you can find it online at our website or facebook. Since we talked about it at length a couple weeks ago, we will not be rehashing it that much this morning. Suffice to say, evil speech can be gossip, slander, or cursing and has no place within the body of Christ. And as we see here in verse 11, when we speak evil against one another we speak against the law. What law, the royal law of love that James spoke about in **chapter 2:8**. To love God and love others as ourselves. It's clear, when we speak evil of one another we sin against one another and God.

But this passage speaks about another sin, the sin of judging each other in condemnation. The word used for "judge" here has dozens of translations – and according to the thesaurus 108 synonyms. The word "judge" can mean a lot of different things. The greek word for judge; kreono, can mean to condemn, damn, make a determination, consider, distinguish, or discern. This can be a translation nightmare because condemn and discern are very different words with very different connotations. Where does this word mean condemn and where does it mean discern? When trying to determine the meaning of words you must look at their context and corresponding verses. Let's look at a few of those.

Look with me at perhaps the most famous passage in the Bible concerning "judging." **Matthew 7:1-5** says, judge not, that you be not judged – first examine yourself then you will be able to help take out the speck from your neighbor. Judge not judge or you will be judged; do not kreeno or you will be kreenoed. And... however you kreeno someone you will be kreenoed in the same way. And... you cannot kreeno someone if you have not kreenoed yourself and fixed your own mistakes. So we can kreeno... but first we must kreeno ourselves? When you look at this context it can be very confusing. But I believe that what this passage is saying is; **You cannot make a definitive ruling about someone's character when you have failed to repent of your own sin** . It's about judging in hypocrisy. You have no room to judge anyone when you yourself stand under judgement. When we judge others while standing in the same sin or greater sin, our words mean nothing. Rather than seeing concern or love, those we judge only see condemnation. Hypocritical judgements always come across as rejection and condemnation.

Look at another verse; **Luke 6:37** . It clearly tells us to judge not and to condemn not. Notice that the word kreeno here is actually connected to the word condemn. The word condemn isn't in addition to judging, rather it is used to clarify what the world judge means. When we discern someone's sin or unrighteousness, we are warned to refrain from pronouncing a final ruling over their character. No one should be condemned by another person... because no person knows the exact condition of another person's soul. Condemnation is just another form of slander. **No one's legacy should be based on their worst day**. Everyone makes mistakes, everyone sins, everyone has horrible thoughts and at times horrible actions. Do you want others to judge you based on your worst times? Do you want people only to see you as you are at your worst? Of course not, so don't do it to others. See them for who they can be in Christ, not who they are in themselves. Rather, we must forgive them for their sins and shortcoming, and we must choose to see their good works too. We must show grace instead of condemnation.

Lastly, let's look at **Romans 2:1-3** . You condemn yourself when you judge others but do the same things you are judging others for. Once again, the word condemn and judge are linked, and once again, judgement looks like condemnation when we act hypocritically. We like to change the rules don't we. We like to tell others that they have to abide by the law, but we don't have to. Rules for thee, but not for me. That is hypocrisy... and when we judge with hypocrisy our judgements are nothing more than condemnation.

So it is clear, we know that our judgements become condemnation when mixed with hypocrisy. But also, our judgements become condemnation when mixed with legalism. Look again at **verse**

12. God is the judge and we are not. He determines the final ruling upon one's life, not us. He determines what is just and what is unjust, what is sinful and what is good. God's law is perfectly fine just the way it is. We are ultimately judged according to God's laws, not men, or men's laws. So, when we pronounce judgement upon someone further than what God has already established we are in effect adding to his law. And, when we judge others based upon our own preferences, and our own idea of morality, we are taking the place of God, undermining his law and changing the rules. In effect, we are practicing legalism. We have no right to add to God's laws or change God's laws. As James has stated before; **we are to be doers of the law, not modifiers and changers of the law**. Hypocrisy changes the rules, legalism changes the rules... and it all ends in condemnation.

Who are you to judge your neighbor? Who are you to condemn your neighbor? Who are you to pronounce a final ruling about someone based upon sins which you yourself are engaged in. You are a hypocrite. Who are you to pronounce a final ruling about someone for sins you've invented and constructed based upon your own preferences and sense of right and wrong? You are a legalist. You have no right to condemn anyone! God is the judge... you are not! When we practice judgement with hypocrisy; when we practice judgement with legalism, we lose the ability to actually help restore those who are straying from God. We've condemned them rather than come along side them in order to help restore them. **When we judge one another in condemnation we lose the opportunity to restore one another in accountability**.

So the first definition of "judge" is condemn. When we condemn others we are sinning and burning the bridge to their restoration. But there is another definition of the word "judge." **Judgement Means Restoration When We Discern That God's Truth Has Been Neglected**. Look with me at **1 Corinthians 5:11-13** . This passage says we are not to associate with brothers who are in sin, we must discern that they are sinning and determine to disassociate with them in order to restore them back to the body of Christ. No, we don't judge the world, those who do not claim Christ, rather we are to kreeno those who are inside the church. This passage directly tells us that we are to judge those in the church! So what does kreeno mean here? It can't mean condemnation because we've clearly seen that that is sin and not our place. So it must mean something different right? It does. Based upon the context here it means the process of discerning whether a brother or sister is in sin and putting in place a plan of restoration. It basically means to implore accountability.

Look also at **1 Corinthians 2:15**. The spiritual person judges all things, but he himself is to be judged by no one. Once again, all Christians are to judge all things? Are we to condemn all things? No, rather we are to discern all things. In fact, here we have both definitions of judge in the same

exact passage. We, Christians, are to judge all things; discern whether something is sinful, or if someone who is a believer is living in sin, but we are not to be judged; condemned by anyone when we make mistakes. We discern a Christians status with sinful living and seek to restore them but we do not condemn them or are condemned by them.

Also, **Galatians 6:1** ; christians restore christians. The whole idea here behind Christians judging Christians is that we are not condemning one another pronouncing a final ruling over one's life as lost or saved... rather we are to discern whether each other are living in sin or not and if we are we need to restore one another gently in Christian accountability or discipline. How do we do that exactly. Well it's simple. **First, we examine our own lives and rid ourselves of any sin. Secondly, we pray for our brothers or sisters who are struggling with sin. Thirdly, we address the sin we see in someone in a one on one personal conversation. Fourth, we help each other overcome sin by keeping one another accountable. Eventually the wayward Christian is restored and renewed and becomes a contributing part of the body again.** You see, this isn't just for Pastors or Deacons... this is your responsibility. Not to condemn, but to restore the body. **It is the responsibility of every believer to gently help other believers see their sin and repent from it.** And... we can't do that if we have already condemned them. **When we judge one another in condemnation we lose the opportunity to restore one another in accountability.**

Application

Let's bring this home.... look again at **Matthew 5:1-7** . We must not condemn each other in order to be able to restore one another. The whole point is to draw one another away from our sin and back towards Christ. When we judge in condemnation we sin and we tear down the possibility of restoring a brother or sister in Christ. But, when we judge in discerning sin, and choose to gently restore one another in love... we fulfill God's calling for the church and his kingdom. In short; **We must keep each other accountable, but we must never condemn one another.**

So who have you tried to kill with friendly fire? Who have you condemned whether in your head or by your words? Who have you pronounced a final ruling on based upon their legitimate sin? Is it possible you judged them unfairly? Is it possible that you judged their life based upon one mistake which is untypical of who they really are? Or worse, have you condemned someone based upon your preferences and your own sense of morality? They didn't do what you wanted them to do, they didn't what you expected of them... even though they may have still done what God wanted? Who do you owe an apology? Who do you owe forgiveness? Who do you need to go to and make the situation right by asking them for forgiveness because you sinned against them in

condemning them? **When we judge one another in condemnation we lose the opportunity to restore one another in accountability.**

Or who do you need to lovingly and gently need to have a hard conversation with. You've prayed about it, and through the power of the Holy Spirit you've discerned that they are living in sin and instead of outing them or condemning them, you genuinely want to see them repent and be restored to a right relationship with God and the church? Who is God calling you to help keep accountable for the sake of His Kingdom?

Conclusion

About 15 years ago I met a man named Tracy who was somewhat of a scoundrel. He was the Han Solo of the used car world. He was a Christian, but the way he lived his life and the way he conducted his business, wasn't very Christian at all. When his private sins became public, the FBI shut down his business, his wife left him, and the church I was a part of, pretty much condemned him and kicked him out. I wish I could say that I fought that decision better than I did... but I didn't. I was young, immature, and that dude owed me over 2k. You see, he didn't just cheat the system... he cheated me too. I worked at his car lot, and I lost my job, and my paycheck, and I was a little mad too.

Eventually Tracy had to spend some time in jail. It was during the time that he was waiting to be judged by the court system that God really dealt with me on the way I had judged him in my heart. We began talking again and I remember walking with him through a period of restoration. He was broken of his sins, he was looking for forgiveness, he wanted a relationship with Christ... and because I didn't condemn him like many of his other friends, God gave me the opportunity to lead him back to a right relationship with God. Instead of shooting at my friend, my brother in Christ, I chose to lovingly and gently point him back to Christ.

Stop shooting at your brothers and sisters in Christ! Stop judging them, condemning them, turning your back on them. Rather, in love, gently restore them. Become their accountability partner rather than their judge. **When we judge one another in condemnation we lose the opportunity to restore one another in accountability.**