

# (Judging - Part 2) Saying No to Slander

by Alistair Begg

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of avoiding slander and gossip, and the need for humility and accountability in our words and actions.*

**Duration:** 43:38

**Topics:** "Slander"

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## Description

In this sermon, Alistair Begg focuses on James 4:7-12. He emphasizes the importance of submitting to God and resisting the devil, as well as drawing near to God. Begg highlights the need for repentance and humility, urging listeners to wash their hands and purify their hearts. He warns against slander and judgmentalism, reminding believers that there is only one law-giver and judge, God Himself. Begg concludes by emphasizing the power of the gospel in transforming sinners and pointing them back to the cross of Christ.

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## Transcript

The following message by Alistair Begg is made available by Truth For Life. For more information, visit us online at [truthforlife.org](http://truthforlife.org). We're going to turn to James and chapter 4. It's page 856, I believe, in our church Bibles, if you'd like to use one of them. James chapter 4 and verse 7. Submit yourselves then to God.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves, therefore, before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you're not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

There is only one lawgiver and judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you, who are you to judge your neighbor? Father, we pray that as we have our Bibles open before us, and as we turn to the Scriptures for the help of the Holy Spirit to quicken our understanding, to illumine the page to us, to bring us into alignment with your truth, and to send us on our way rejoicing on the pathway of obedience. We ask for your help in this, humbly and sincerely, in Christ's name.

Amen. Well, here we are at the 11th verse of chapter 4, 11 and 12, coming to what Jerry Bridges in his latest book refers to as two of our respectable sins. Two of our respectable sins.

If we've been around churches for any length of time, it will sadly have become apparent to us that we contribute to the circumstance whereby it is possible for us to rage and rail against things that are so clearly wrong on the outside, while at the same time failing to pay any real attention to the things that are wrong and dreadfully wrong on the inside. And James here introduces us in verse 11 and 12, first to the sin of slander and then to the sin of judgmentalism. And it is to this uncomfortable little passage that we will seek to give our attention both this morning and this evening.

I think it was Seneca who's reputed to have said, when I think over all the things I have said, I envy dumb people. And those of us who use our tongues a lot and are talkative will very quickly be able to identify with that kind of sentiment. We're not going to get beyond the simple sentence with which verse 11 begins.

Brothers or brothers and sisters, as we might fairly translate it, do not slander one another. Now, as much as a teaching aid as anything else, I want to make sure that we set this sentence in its context. And when we come to a sentence like this, it is important for us to recognize where we find it.

And the context in its widest spectrum is the context of the Bible itself. And so we come to this matter of slander, and we look beyond the immediate statement to the wider context of the Bible. And when we do so, we discover that in Psalm 50, God speaks to the wicked and he says, You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit.

You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother's son. In other words, he identifies slander and deceitful speech as an expression of the inherent wickedness of men and women. Still in the Psalms, David, in identifying himself as one who wants to be careful to lead a blameless life, in the context of explaining to his readers what a blameless life will look like, in Psalm 101 and verse 5, he says, Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence.

Whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure. In other words, he says, If I'm going to live a blameless life, I cannot engage in the slandering tongues of those who are around me. I cannot become like those with haughty eyes and proud hearts.

Proverbs is replete with references to the tongue, at least 60 of them throughout the book. For example, Proverbs 10, 18, Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool. Whoever spreads slander is a fool.

When we come into what we refer to as the New Testament, we find that Jesus speaks very clearly and challengingly in Matthew 12, when he says, I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. Men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. So, we set our sentence within the context, first of all, of the Bible.

Then we come and narrow the lens, and we set our sentence within the context of the book, which is the book of James, or the letter of James. And when we do this, we discover that in the 83 verses, almost 20% of those verses reference the tongue in some way. And that is why, from the beginning of our studies, we've been aware of this.

Back in chapter 1, in verse 19, James had issued the statement, My dear brothers, take note of this. Everyone should be quick to listen and slow to speak. And then in verse 26 of chapter 1, he said, If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his or her tongue, then they deceive themselves and their religion is worthless.

One of the marks of somebody who has become a Christian, he says, is a controlled tongue. A controlled tongue. And that's why the teaching in the first 12 verses of chapter 3 is so immensely challenging.

And we might simply highlight verse 8 of chapter 3, No man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil full of deadly poison. And then thirdly, we come and narrow the lens down even tighter to view it within the context of the surrounding verses.

I'm doing this just to remind you that when you study the Bible, you must always think of what you find in context. In the context of the Bible, in the context of the book, or the genre of Scripture. So that you must read history as history.

You must understand the poetic books to be within the framework of poetry. The proverbial statements of proverbs are just that. Proverbial statements.

So that we need to recognize that the Bible has not been written in a flattened way, whereby you can turn to any passage of the Bible and simply extrapolate from it a bunch of principles that seem to appeal. It's possible to do it, but it is not helpful to do it and usually leads us astray. So do not slander anyone, my brothers and sisters.

The Bible has a lot to say about the tongue. James has almost 20% of his letter addressed to the tongue. And now we narrow down to the surrounding context.

Verse 11 comes before verse 12 and after verse 10. That's the context. And verse 10 comes at the conclusion, at least in the NIV, of a little paragraph that begins at verse 7. And in verse 7, James has issued the call for his readers, who have become believers in the Lord Jesus, followers of Jesus, those who are being made the very first fruits of what God is doing, he has called them to submit themselves to God.

And we spent last Sunday dealing with this whole issue of submission to God. And we saw that, as James makes clear to us, if we're going to be submitting to God, then it involves resisting the devil. Verse 7. It involves drawing near or coming near to God.

Verse 8a. It involves making sure that we keep short accounts with sin, our hands needing to be washed routinely, as they represent our actions, and our hearts in need of constant purification, representative of our attitudes. And then in verse 9, we need to be involved in daily repentance, which takes sin seriously.

And then in verse 10, it is imperative that we bow down before God and humble ourselves before Him, because, as we said last Sunday night, there is all the difference in the world between the man who lifts himself up and the man who is lifted up. And our part is to bow down, and God's part is to exalt. And in the exaltation of ourselves, we fall foul of so much.

And it is, I think, just that issue of humility again, which leads James to go directly to this issue of slander. Presumably because slander is a subtle form of self-exaltation. When we slander another, we do them down.

And often we like to do people down because it makes us feel that we've just gone a little higher up ourselves. There is, if you like, a link, if not a direct correlation, between the exaltation of self and the defamation of another. Because it is by the latter we seek to achieve the former.

If I can run you down, then I may be able to feel a little better about myself, even though I know myself to be a wretched character. But as long as I can find a more wretched character, or somebody that I can infer is a little more wretched than me, then I won't feel so bad when I drive off in my car. After all, there's a number of wretched people there.

I know just how terrible they are, therefore I feel a little better about myself. Now, that's the context. Let's define our terms as well.

What are we dealing with here in this issue of slander? The word is katalalea, if you care, in Greek. It's an easy word to remember. Katalalea, laleo to speak.

Kata, against, to speak against. If it sounds like tattiness, it's pretty close. Although tattiness, I think, is a fairly English reference rather than an American reference.

I don't hear many Americans saying, so-and-so was being catty. But English people use it quite a lot. Oh, she was so catty.

I couldn't believe how catty she was. That's what they say. So catty.

Scottish people don't say it either, so don't feel bad. But it is representative of a form of backbiting and doing down. Slander is to talk against or to talk another down.

Not to talk down to another, but to talk another down. And inferentially, and usually, to do these things behind the individual's back. So that it is this notion of seeking to exalt myself by defaming another, to speak against them, to speak in such a way as to reduce them, and usually to do it in a cowardly way where they are not present to be able to respond to my charges and my allegations.

That's what he's saying here. Slander is directly related to gossip, as I say, to backbiting, which is how Tyndale, when he translated the New Testament, translated the word to malicious talk, to false reports, telling lies, the unhelpful repeating of stories about the wrongs or offenses of others. The unhelpful repeating of stories about the wrongs and offenses of others.

Yes. The unhelpful repeating of stories about the wrongs and offenses of others. It would be a horrible generalization to say that many of the magazines at the checkout when we are scanning the groceries would be a lot thinner were it not for their commitment to be involved in the unhelpful repeating of stories about the wrongs and offenses of others.

A steady diet of that, which is why most of those magazines are unhelpful, a steady diet of that will begin to form our thinking and channel it in grooves that will so easily translate to doing the same thing. And to the extent that our hands get dirty and morally defiled by those things, that's the importance of what James has just said about wash your hands, you sinners. That stuff dirties you up.

And if you don't clean yourself up from that routinely and regularly, we may find that we have actually taken on board the very enjoyment and the voyeurism that is represented in being able to do others down. It is, says somebody slander, the sin of those who meet in corners and gather in little groups and pass on

confidential tidbits of information which destroy the good name of those who are not present to defend themselves. That's a pretty good and accurate assessment of what's going on in slander.

So the context is the Bible, always. It's the book, as in the letter of James. It's the surrounding text, as it calls for humility and says, make sure you don't think you're the judge of the world.

And by the way, while you're at it, make sure that you are not using your tongue to speak against and to do down behind the backs of your brothers and sisters. Now with that, let us just notice three things. The first thing is, to engage in slander is not impossible, but it is incongruous.

It is incongruous. And the very incongruity is revealed to us in the opening word of the verse, isn't it? Brothers, or brothers and sisters. Immediately it is said within the framework of a family.

And you have a family and so do I. And despite all the years that have passed, some 24 now since I went away from the UK, I still routinely and regularly am in touch with both of my younger sisters and my brother-in-laws and my nieces. And despite the distance of thousands of miles and the fact that I speak to them individually and not usually as a group, I enjoy happy and harmonious and joyful and encouraging relationships with each of them. Why? Because none of us engage in slander.

I never tell bad things about one sister to another. Mercifully, I don't think they tell the bad things they know about me to each other. We do not speak about our nieces in a way that would exalt things or prioritize things that were either unkind or unhelpful or untrue.

And as a result of that, whether it is the voice on the phone or whether it is the warmth of the embrace from the airport, there is a love that unites us that neither distance nor the passage of time has been able to erode. I don't say that for self-commendation. I say it simply to illustrate the fact that it is incongruous within the framework of the nuclear family to slander one another because we are from the same womb, we are from the same bloodline, we have the same mom and dad, we have the same origins, we have been united under the same leadership and so on.

It is absolutely incongruous. However, it is not impossible. As many of us know to our shame and to our disappointment, we don't need to be separated by thousands of miles geographically to find that we are separated by thousands of miles, as it were, emotionally.

And often at the root of that is some Thanksgiving dinner where somebody said something about so and so who mentioned that Uncle Fred who had been over at such and such a house on the Tuesday after the fifth Thursday and so on. Before you know where you are, it is almost impossible to trace it back to its roots. It is like taking a bunch of feathers and distributing them all up the high street of Shebrin Falls and letting the wind blow them everywhere and then being asked after an hour has elapsed, now go back down the high street and pick up all those feathers.

Virtually impossible to do. Such it is with slanderous words. Once they are out, it is virtually impossible to retrieve them.

Hence the significance of what is being said. If it is incongruous within the nuclear family, it is incongruous within the spiritual family. What does it mean to be a Christian? It means to have God as our Father.

Not as some remote figure, but as a Father who has provided forgiveness for us in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is that which unites us with those who are also in Christ. So that although we may be

separated from one another by dint of our intellectual capacity or our social status or our abilities and capacities, the fact of the matter is that we find ourselves united when we bow and recognize that we are from the same bloodline.

Because it is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ which is cleansing us from all of our sins. So we look at our brother and we look at our sister and say, Hey, what do we have to talk about save the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ? If we forget who we are in Jesus and if we forget what we are to one another or if we choose to deny these things, then we may find ourselves passing on pieces of information that create division rather than create harmony and unity. Yes, something has gone badly wrong in the nuclear family when those from the same bloodline slander one another.

And something has gone badly wrong in the spiritual family when the same takes place. That's why from the very beginning of the Bible, God is concerned about these things. In Leviticus, He urges upon His people, You shall not go up and down as a tail-bearer among your people.

Do not go up and down as a tail-bearer among your people. Tittle-tattle, the tattler, the little juicy pieces of information. Why not? It's in Congress and it's wrong.

We should never report what may hurt another person unless to conceal it would hurt worse. We should never report what will hurt another person unless our concealing of the fact would cause greater havoc. Somebody said when we are tempted to engage in slander, we should breathe through our noses.

You can try that on your own while you're driving home. And we should keep in mind when we are interested in receiving the information because remember, a slanderous tongue needs two ears that love that information to really do its work. If you've got some information and you can't tell anybody it, it's really frustrating, especially if it's bad and bad news travels fast.

Did you hear about so-and-so? Don't want to hear, don't want to hear. Oh, someone else, someone else. No, it takes the two ears, you see.

And listen, and listen carefully. Keep in mind that whoever gossips to you will also gossip of you. Whoever gossips to you will gossip about you.

You can take that to the bank. You can be dead certain in your office, in your home, wherever it is. The same individual that says, now, I'm only telling you this because it's true, will, once they have elicited enough information from you, go back down the line and do the self-same thing with the next person.

That's why David sets us on the right track when he says, I'm going to have nothing to do with that stuff. I will be a ditch to that information, as in the forest fires of Southern California when you see the helicopters moving and trying to douse the flames. At the same time, feverishly digging out are people trying to create a wide enough ditch so that the fire which is now here may not be able to jump to there.

And the wider the ditch they can make it, and the faster they can make it, the less chance there is of the fire being able to jump to the next canyon. Our lives in Christ are supposed to be like those ditches when it comes to slander, so that the slanderer says, well, there's really no way I'm going to be able to get it over to there, passing it through her, because she's just like a big ditch. She doesn't really like to listen to it, and she never passes it on.

That's right. First then, slander is not impossible, but it is incongruous. And secondly, that we're guilty in this regard cannot be denied.

That we're guilty in this regard cannot be denied. James is not addressing a hypothetical situation here. He's not saying, brothers, do not slander one another.

Of course, I know you don't slander one another. Sorry, I didn't really mean to write that down. No, he's saying, brothers and sisters, please don't slander one another.

It's not hypothetical for Paul when he signs off at the end of his second letter to Corinth, or his second Corinthians, as we have it in our Bibles. And he says, I'm afraid that when I come, I may not find you as I want you to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, faction, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder.

Oh, boy, that's something to look forward to, isn't it? Can't wait to come and see you, and visit with you in your church. However, I fear that there may be... Again, he's not addressing a hypothetical situation. Peter is not addressing a hypothetical situation where in 1 Peter 2, having reminded his readers that they have been born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, he then says to them, therefore, 1 Peter 2, 1, rid yourselves, get rid of all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Now, why is the command issued? Because we're guilty. We're guilty. I am guilty of slander when I report negatively on a person's views of a subject without knowing what those views really are.

Now, this may be unique to pastoral ministry or to theological would-be's, but it is a sore temptation to take a sound bite without ever sourcing it, without ever finding out how comprehensive it is, and then passing it on to someone else. Did you hear what so-and-so said on the radio the other day? Did you hear what was reported the other night? Whatever it might be. And I haven't done the hard work of finding out whether it was taken completely out of context or whether it represents a genuine expression of the person's convictions, but because there is some sinister design and desire to exalt oneself, it just adds a little sugar and spice to it to be able to pass that on with all of the negative inference.

It's slander. I am guilty of slander when I act as if I know the motives of people and then impugn those motives. Oh, the only reason she's helping is because.

Well, the only reason he's saying that is because. Well, that's to jump ahead, isn't it? James says in 12th, he says, who do you think you are? Who are you to judge your neighbor in this way? You don't know the motives of people's hearts. Oh, I'm sure the only reason she was invited was because.

See? It's all slander. I'm guilty of slander when I call into question the commitment of my brothers and sisters, when that commitment doesn't meet my expectations. See, we're very good on commitment.

Well, is she committed? No, I don't think she's committed. Is he committed to the thing? No, I don't think he's committed. Why not? Well, because I've got an expectation of what commitment means.

It may not be a biblical expectation, but it's my expectation. And as long as the person doesn't meet my framework and my design, then I can just write them off as uncommitted. They're not committed.

Slander. They may be as committed as they can be. I don't know what their circumstances are.

I don't know what they face at home. I don't know what's going on inside of their heads or their hearts. I can make inferences from what I see on the outside.

But that's all that I know and that's all that I see. And on the strength of that, if I then determine that the issue that we're confronting here is the absence of commitment, then I just put myself in the position of God. And there's only one person who gets on that throne, and that's God alone.

Thirdly, and then finally, what are we saying? That slander is incongruous. It is undeniable. And thirdly, it needs to be got rid of in obedience to the Word of God and in submission to the Spirit of God.

You see, what we have to do with this sin, this respectable sin, as Jerry Bridges refers to it, what we have to do with this sin is drag the ugly beast out into the light of God's Word. It's a very uncomfortable thing. It's a very painful thing to read the Bible and for it to confront us that we are out of line with God.

We're out of line with His truth. Brothers, don't slander one another. But I do slander people.

Oh, now I understand verse 9. Verse 9. Grieve, mourn, and wail. What does that mean? Well, it is to face verse 11 and say, I'm not supposed to slander people, and I have been slandering people. What should I do about that? Well, first of all, I should repent, which is to grieve and mourn and wail.

In other words, it's to take seriously what God takes seriously. It is to call sin, sin. It's to recognize that I feel guilty because I am guilty.

This is not spurious guilt. I can't externalize this. I can't blame it on anyone else.

It is out of my own evil heart that these feelings and attitudes come, and then I give voice to them with my tongue. Yes, it is devastating, isn't it? We need to learn to say routinely with John Newton, I am a great sinner, but Christ is a great Savior. I am a sinner.

You see, until we recognize that the gospel is for sinners, that only bad people go to heaven, we'll get this consistently wrong. The gospel, the good news, is for sinners. Why don't we just say in verse 8, Wash your hands, you sinners.

To whom is he referring? A different group of people? No, the same group of people. Who are these people? These are the people who have been chosen according to the purposes of God, who have become the children of God through the instrument of God's Word, and who now are being fashioned as the first fruits of all that he has designed for us. And it is to these people, changed by God, made new by God, included in the family of God, that he issues the exhortation, Wash your hands, you sinners.

And then I say, well, okay, fine. And then it goes, Don't slander anyone. Oh, I guess I better wash my hands then.

Because I just did. And instead of being superficial about it, Well, it doesn't really matter. You know, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all our righteousness.

You know, scooby-doo, dibbidy-doo, dip-dip, dibbidy-doo, doesn't really matter. No, we've got it entirely wrong. Entirely wrong.

That's the significance of verse 9. When we are aware of how magnificent is the love of God to us in Jesus, and how disastrous is my own rebellious heart, then it ought to make me grieve and mourn and

wail. Not to treat it in some superficial fashion, whereby I say, well, this is not really an issue. It is an issue. It is an issue. And indeed, it is the very respectable sins that are killing the church. The things that we say, this isn't really that important.

A little deceitfulness here, a little slander there, a little judgmentalism over here, a little gluttony over here, a little self-aggrandizement over there. Nah, this doesn't really matter. Yes, it does.

It divides people, destroys praise, confuses the watching world. You see, when we're honest, and this is how to deal with it, when we're honest, we have to recognize that every day in a thousand different ways, we're all tempted to make ourselves the center of the universe. And one of the ways in which I know that I'm the center of the universe is when I think that I'm better than everybody else.

And that's why it helps me just to pass on a little nugget of information that lets you know that Mr. So-and-So is really not such a terrific guy after all. Unlike moi. That's the inference.

Just want to let you know that this guy is a, or this guy said a, or she was a. I feel so much better now. All we like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way.

Is that just something that is a verse for us before we come to trust in Christ? I hope not. Because I am a wandering sheep. I don't know about you.

And every day in a thousand different ways, I am tempted to go astray. And in some of these ways, I do go astray. And when I am aware of the fact that I have gone astray, what am I supposed to do? Where do I go? How does this get fixed? It gets fixed in the gospel.

In the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ. That the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. That is, as the psalmist says, and as Paul quotes it in Romans 4, you know, blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin the Lord does not count against him.

Who has been put in a right relationship with God on account of what Jesus has done. So that God, in 2 Corinthians 12, was not counting their sins against them, because He was counting their sins against Him. So that to be in Christ is to be covered over with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby all of my acceptance is on account of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done.

That is good news. That shows us our sin, and shows us our Savior, and brings us to faith. It is the same gospel that keeps us.

It's the same answer every day. I am a sinner, but Jesus is a wonderful Savior. He cleanses me, not only as Augustus' top lady says, He cleanses me not only from the guilt of sin, but from the power of sin.

Be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power. To be in Christ is to have the penalty of our sin dealt with. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

God does not drag that back up to us again. One day we will be saved from the very presence of sin, when in eternity we will enjoy a world, a new heaven and a new earth that is uninfected by all of this. But in the meantime, how are we to deal with the fact that just as our hands get dirty all the time, I spend Sundays saying hello, shaking hands, and then running immediately to wash my hands.

And I think you probably do too. These are dangerous places. Hospitals are dangerous places.

And just as my hands get dirty, so my heart gets dirty. And I go back again to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. I remind myself in the words of Graham Kendrick that God is at work in us, molding and shaping us, out of his love for us, making us more like Jesus.

In other words, we need constantly, as someone has said, and Jerry Bridges has quoted, we need constantly to preach the gospel to ourselves. Because it is in this encouragement of recognizing that the approach of God to his erring child is not the picture of a large finger, as it were, pointing out of the heavens, but would actually rather be the picture of a large hand, which of course is an anthropomorphism, but would be a picture of a large hand coming alongside and saying, come on back, we're going to work on this together. It's the difference between a good teacher and a bad teacher, really.

A bad teacher will walk around and say, you know what, you're an idiot. You're an idiot when you come into my class, you're an idiot when you leave the class. You don't pay attention to anything, you never do anything, you never do your homework, you never do anything.

Get out of my class, I'm fed up with you. Now, the teacher may justifiably say to me, Beg, you were an idiot when you came in the class, you're still an idiot. But you know what, and I've always told you this, I'm here for you every time you say help.

I'm here for you every time. It's the picture of a father teaching his daughter to ride a bicycle with his hand on the back of the seat, urging them along, come on now, I think we're in, we're going, I think we're going now, we're going, here we go. If you have a picture of God, which is a large finger from the heavens, then you just need to read your Bible.

Because the message of God's word in the gospel is the good news for slanderers. It's not to say, well, we did James 4, 11a about slanderers, but I'm so glad I'm not a slanderer. Because that would be a flat out lie.

It is to say, we just studied James 4, 11, and I was convicted of the fact that I find it easy to slander. And the devil gave me a right good working over during the sermon. He actually reminded me, while that chap was speaking, of some of the things that I said.

But I'm so thankful for the gospel. Because when Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see Christ there, who made an end to all my sin. We are just saved sinners.

Sin no longer reigns, but it remains. And the antidote to sin, always in our lives, whether slander or judgmentalism, or whatever it might be, is always to go back to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because all of us, like sheep, have gone astray.

Each of us has turned to our own way. But the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. In a sentence, it is the gospel that motivates us to be in our daily experience what we are in our standing before God.

Ethics is a call to try and do our best to fix ourselves by whatever endeavor we may prevail. And for some people, that is their experience of Christianity. They go to church and somebody tells them, you're an idiot when you came in, you're an idiot when you leave, but the best you can do is just go out and try and fix yourself.

And I'll give you a few principles and just try and put them into place. That is not the gospel. That is external religion.

The gospel is that what we are unable to do for ourselves, another has done. That all of our side of the equation is indebtedness and failure and disappointment and bankruptcy. And instead of God holding that to our account, as we come to trust in Christ, so He credits us with all of the righteousness of Christ and doesn't simply put us back to square one, because that would be just to go back to the Garden of Eden.

But He gives us all of Christ's righteousness in our account. And then He says, Come on, son. Come on, daughter.

Be what you are. Be what you are. That's what our wives need to say to us.

Hey, Alistair, why don't you be what you are? You're a son of God. You're not acting like one. The devil's a slanderer.

You shouldn't slander. Be what you are. Well, that's right.

I am. I'm in the family. That's incongruous.

That's wrong. Do you get it? If you'd like to talk about these things through the door to your left, my right, we'd gladly talk. And if you found this uncomfortable, wait till we get to judgmentalism, which gives you something to look forward to in the sleepy hours of the afternoon.

God, our Father, for your Word, we give you our humble thanks. What we do not know, please teach us. What we do not have, please give us.

What we are not, please make us. And now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and forevermore.

Amen. You've been listening to Alistair Begg. You're welcome to pass this message along to others, but please do not charge for this message or alter it without written permission from Alistair Begg or Truth For Life.

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