

ON DEFAMING CHARACTER

James 4:11-12

April 15, 2007 Sunday p.m.

INTRODUCTION

- A. Radio host Don Imus said his two-week suspension for insulting Rutgers female basketball players is appropriate. "I will try and serve it with some dignity," Imus called them "nappy headed hoes" on his April 5th radio show. "Imus said in an interview on the NBC's Today Show, which was also carried on his radio program. "I don't think it's a slap on the wrist. I think it's significant."

The suspension begins next week. Also on his show Tuesday, Imus said he made a "stupid, idiotic mistake" and that he is not a racist.

"I'm not a racist," he said. "I've demonstrated that in my deeds and work."

Imus also said his staff had been trying to set up a meeting with the Rutgers players so he could apologize, but he said he didn't expect forgiveness.

Members of the basketball team and their coach, C. Vivian Stringer, plan to speak publicly about the firestorm at 11 a.m. EDT Tuesday.

NBC News has decided to suspend him, allowing him to finish the week on MSNBC, but suspending the simulcast of his radio show for the two weeks after that. CBS Radio also said it would suspend Imus for the same period.

NBC News President Steve Capus released a statement:

"Beginning Monday, April 16, MSNBC will suspend simulcasting the syndicated 'Imus in the Morning' radio program for two weeks. This comes after careful consideration in the days since his racist, abhorrent comments were made."

- B. Webster says that slander and libel are used synonymously to mean defamation of someone's character.
1. Has anyone ever defamed or slandered you? Probably so.
 2. In his letter James discusses the subject of slander and our Christian response to it (4:11-12-RE

I. FIRST, JAMES SIMPLY SAYS DON'T DO IT-v.11a.

- A. I'm sure Don Imus wishes he would have followed James' advice on this matter.
- B. His point is that slander, libel, defamation, etc. has no place in the life of a Christian or church.

II. WHY?

- A. First, slander is the opposite of what Paul says in I Thessalonians 5:11.
1. Some pride themselves on speaking "their mind" which is the truth as they see it.
 2. However, the caveat or caution is whatever we say must be "in love" regardless of how true we may think it to be.
- B. Second, slander is evidence of our pride.
1. In 4:10 James already warned them and us to humble ourselves before God.
 2. In 4:6 James he provides the motivation for humbling ourselves.
 3. James' point is that our motive for tearing someone else down is to build ourselves up, even if we don't recognize this.
- C. Third, slander violates God's law-v.11b.
1. Exodus 20:16 may have been what he was thinking of.
 2. James earlier said keeping the law is directly related to how we treat other people. Slander violates this love we should have for others.
 3. Also, slandering others "judges" that this law is wrong or doesn't apply to us-v.11c.
- D. Fourth, slander usurps God's position-v.12. Its God's place to judge others, not ours.

CONCLUSION

- A. An elderly man had serious hearing problems for a number of years. His family tried again and again to convince him to get a hearing aid. Finally he relented. He went to the doctor and was fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed him to hear 100 percent.

A month later he went back to the doctor. The doctor said with a smile, "Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again."

The old man replied, "Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to their conversations. I've changed my will three times!"

B. Perhaps our grandparents had the best advice: "If you don't have anything good to say about someone, don't say anything at all."