

Psalms 15:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

Analysis

This verse describes the righteous person's speech ethics: no slander ('ragal' - going about as a talebearer), no evil to a neighbor, and no reproach against friends. The Hebrew 'ragal' literally means 'to go about on foot as a spy,' indicating gossip. James 3 echoes this teaching about the tongue's destructive power. Reformed ethics sees speech as covenant faithfulness—our words should build up, not tear down (Ephesians 4:29).

Historical Context

Written as wisdom for those dwelling in God's presence (Psalm 15:1). Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature consistently condemned slander as socially destructive.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How carefully do you guard against participating in gossip or slander?
2. In what ways do your words build up your neighbors rather than tear them down?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	כִּגְלֹל	עַל	לְשׁוֹנוֹ	לֹא	עֹשֶׂה
H3808	He that backbiteth	H5921	not with his tongue	H3808	nor doeth
	H7270		H3956		H6213
לְרֵעֵהוּ	רָעָה	וְחִרְפָּה	לֹא	נֶשֶׂא	עַל
to his neighbour	evil	a reproach	H3808	nor taketh up	H5921
H7453	H7451	H2781		H5375	
קִרְבּוֹ:					
against his neighbour					
H7138					

Additional Cross-References

Romans 13:10 (Parallel theme): Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Matthew 7:12 (Parallel theme): Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

James 4:11 (Evil): 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.

Leviticus 19:16 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.

3 John 1:11 (Evil): Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Isaiah 56:2 (Evil): Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

Proverbs 25:3 (Parallel theme): The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.

Proverbs 22:10 (Parallel theme): Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

Romans 1:30 (Evil): Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

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