

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Growing up, I used to get sick a lot.

I suffered from asthma and other respiratory conditions.

And I remember going to the doctor and one of the first things she would do was have me open my mouth, stick out my tongue and say ahhh.

And the reason that the doctor did this was to get an indication of what was going on in my body.

In the same way, that which is produced by the tongue – our words – also provides us with an indication of the health of our spiritual bodies – our hearts.

[Mat 12:34 NKJV] 34 "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Everyday, you and I speak thousands of words. Some of us a lot more.

Some are carefully planned and selected; others are spoken impulsively. Some are spoken quietly; others are spoken with more volume.

Some of our words are spoken with the desire to help and encourage; some with the motivation to hurt, belittle and retaliate. However, most of our words are spoken with little, if any, thought about how they will affect others.

In our text this morning, James is going to speak to us about the importance of every word that we speak.

Because every word that we speak will make an impact – by those who hear our words and by God who will judge us by the words we speak to one another.

[Mat 12:36-37 NKJV] 36 "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Let's pray...

[Jas 3:1-12 NKJV] 1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he [is] a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. 3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue [is] a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed

by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. [It is] an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring send forth fresh [water] and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

So far, in our study through James, we have seen James address the issues regarding enduring trials; we have seen him tackle how we respond to one another, the importance of walking in obedience as we become doers of the word and not only hearers.

Now, he is going to write about the words that we speak –

And he had already toughed the surface of this back in 1:26 when he wrote about the importance of bridling the tongue.

[Jas 3:1-18 NKJV] 1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

I used to listen to talk radio when I was younger – especially during a 4 year period in my life when I was working the graveyard shift.

There was a particular show I enjoyed – and every Friday they would have a segment with a top 10 list.

Remember, there was a time when everyone had a top ten list for everything.

Top 10 ice cream flavors

Top 10 movies of all time

Top 10 left handed quarterbacks

And the show would encourage the listeners to call in with their guesses – and if a caller guessed the number 1 answer, they would win a prize.

This was before the time of google – so one would have to be a collector of useless facts or be very lucky in their guesses.

I remember one Friday, the topic was – what are the top 10 most hazardous professions.

People would call in with guesses such as: Police Officer, Firefighter, Pilot, Scuba Diver, Linemen – not the football players but the guys who put up the high voltage lines.

And no one was able to guess the top two.

It turns out that the top two were fishermen and tree loggers.

But if James would have been around and listened to the show, he would have said – “No,no,no - the most hazardous profession is not a fishermen or a logger but that of a teacher of the Word of God.”

You see, James begins our text with a warning to those who aspired to be teachers of the word of God.

The key word is aspired – they wanted to be teachers.

Remember who James is writing to – to mostly Jews who had been scattered and persecuted –

And there was something about the persecution that caused some of them to want to teach the Word of God.

Teaching God's Word, however, is a gift.

The apostle Paul tells us that God gives gifted men to the church as pastor-teachers

Turn with me to Ephesians 4,

[Eph 4:11-12 NKJV] 11 And He Himself gave some [to be] apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

To the church in Corinth, Paul says that God is the one who appoints teachers. (1 Cor 12:28)

Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit as **He sees fit**, and not as we desire or aspire to them - and that certainly includes teaching God's Word.

And just in case there were, among them, those with the gift of teaching, James reminds them that teachers, like himself, "shall receive a stricter judgment."

James is including himself – he uses the word, we.

God will hold those He has appointed to teach strictly accountable for the influence they had over the church.

Are they indeed feeding the flock with the word of God or are they simply entertaining them?

You see, the danger of being a teacher of the word of God lies in the power of the tongue.

Because with the tongue, one can speak in error

With the tongue, one can speak misjudgment, or speak inappropriately, or one can misrepresent Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit.

Not only will those that teach be judged on what the words they speak but on their character –

Do they practice what they teach? Because if they don't, that is hypocrisy.

You see church, there is a tremendous amount of damage that can be done by a teacher who is unprepared, or whose spiritual life is not up to par.

And James makes it clear that the individual who teaches will be accountable for the damage they have done.

2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he [is] a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

Even though we are born again, there is still the constant struggle that we fight everyday with the flesh.

We want to be obedient to the will of God, but the flesh wants to simply satisfy its natural appetites.

Not only do we struggle against the flesh but there are also the spiritual battles that go on as well.

And these two things cause us to stumble.

The word that James uses here for stumbles is the word for trip up.

And what James is saying here is that our relationship with Jesus Christ is described as a walk. We are walking with Him through our lives on a journey home.

We're walking and all of a sudden, boom – we stumble on something.

Sometimes we catch ourselves before we hit the ground and sometimes we go down hard.

And we all have unique stumbling blocks. Notice that James is including himself.

And even though our stumbling blocks may differ – James says to start with the tongue.

James sees the tamed-tongue as a bridle that can guide you, keeping you and me from stumbling. In fact, he says you will be "perfect," meaning you will make progress in your walk, growing and maturing.

Somehow the tamed-tongue affects "the whole body."

Now, does this mean that we are only supposed to concern ourselves with the words we speak?

Is it simply editing what we say?

No-

The tongue is not just the actual words we speak, although they are important. It's the heart behind the words.

Turn with me to Luke 6,

[Luk 6:45 NKJV] 45 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

We can "produce evil" even if our actual words sound good.

Satan's speech to Eve in the Garden of Eden certainly sounded good.

So did his enticements to Jesus, in the 40-day wilderness temptation.

So do his enticements directed to you and me.

The implication here is that we can tame your tongue by dealing with our heart in the power of the Holy Spirit.

While it is true that "no man can tame the tongue," (we will see James make this point later) we must remember that God can tame it.

And the way we go about this is by admitting we have a problem, repenting and yielding ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We need to stop addressing the symptoms of our sin and stumbling and allow God to show us the root cause and allow Him to address it.

Only by doing this will it result in a God tamed tongue.

3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

I asked you to underline bits and rudder.

I think we all understand the purpose of the bit and rudder – they are there to so the horse takes us where we want to go or so the ship takes us where we want to go.

However, there is a reason that James uses the illustration of the bit and the rudder.

You see, both the bit and the rudder must overcome contrary forces.

The bit must overcome the wild nature of the horse, and the rudder must fight the winds and currents that would drive the ship off its course.

So in the same way that the bit and rudder have to overcome contrary forces – the tongue has to also overcome contrary forces.

We have the flesh and spiritual warfare to deal with.

Now, the thing with the bit and the rudder is that they will only be effective if they are controlled by someone with a strong hand.

Some people have no hand on the reins or rudder, and therefore say whatever comes into mind.

Others direct their tongue from their emotions or from aspects of their carnal nature.

When the bit is controlled by the expert horsemen, the horse is going to be under control. Same with the captain of the boat.

When Jesus Christ controls our tongue, it is only then that we don't have to fear saying the wrong things or even saying the right things in a wrong way.

Because He is in control.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue [is] a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

Here in verse 5,6 James provides the danger of the tongue.

Like the bit and the rudder that he used earlier, James reminds us that the tongue – even in its small size, it is very powerful.

He compares the tongue to fire.

Notice that he compares it to water. Because if get a bottle of water and dump on the floor – there is no way it is going to turn into a flood.

But if I drop a match in the midst of dry brush – guess what? It will multiply and it will continue to grow and grow and grow.

Church, the tongue is a deadly, powerful source of evil that taints every part of our being.

If we do not use our tongues with great caution, we are like spiritual arsonists, lighting careless fires that cause widespread destruction.

Most Christians would shrink back from sins like homosexuality, molesting children, or murder as being satanically depraved.

Yet we tolerate gossip, slander, deceit, half-truths, sarcastic put-downs, and other sins of the tongue as if they were no big deal.

James says that all such sins have their origin in the pit of hell.

The word that is used here for hell – is only found 11 other times when Jesus spoke of the eternal place of torment.

What James is saying here is that an evil tongue is set on fire by Satan himself.

Not only do they defile the one committing them.

They destroy others.

As a believer in Christ, we must confront these sins in ourselves and we must be bold enough to confront them in others.

7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. [It is] an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

James uses another analogy here. One from the animal kingdom.

Bridget and I took the girls to Sea World a few years ago.

And it amazing to see all the trained whales – (By the way - I don't think they have whales anymore), dolphins, and seals.

I have had the experience at county fairs of riding an elephant as well as a camel.

But James here refers to one beast that cannot be tamed – that is the human tongue.

And the reason that it cannot be tamed is because it is unruly – meaning that it doesn't stop – it never goes to sleep.

And another reason that it cannot be tamed is because of the deadly venom that spews from it.

Think about how someone can destroy someone's reputation through slander and gossip.

I remember reading the story of a gossipier.

This certain woman repeated a bit of gossip about a neighbor. Within a few days the whole community knew the story. The person it concerned was deeply hurt and offended.

Later the woman responsible for spreading the rumor learned that it was completely untrue. She was very sorry and went to a wise old sage to find out what she could do to repair the damage.

“Go to the marketplace,” he said, “and purchase a chicken, and have it killed. Then on your way home, pluck its feathers and drop them one by one along the road.”

Although surprised by this advice, the woman did what she was told.

The next day the wise man said, “Now go and collect all those feathers you dropped yesterday and bring them back to me.” The woman followed the same road, but to her dismay, the wind had blown the feathers all away. After searching for hours, she returned with only three in her hand. “You see,” said the old sage, “it’s easy to drop them, but it’s impossible to get them back. So it is with gossip. It doesn’t take much to spread a rumor, but once you do, you can never completely undo the wrong.”

That is the type of venom that the tongues spews out.

As I mentioned earlier, James does not say that the tongue is untamable. He says that no one can tame it.

It is humanly untamable. **Only God can tame it.**

However, when the Holy Spirit controls our heart on a daily basis, over time the fruit of the Spirit will appear.

These include love, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control, which all relate to the control of the tongue.

To tame this terrible tongue, we must daily walk in the Spirit, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Because ultimately, an evil tongue is the tool of an evil heart.

This is the point the James is going to make next.

9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.

Church, this is what the Pharisees did – they praised God with one breath and then they cursed Christ with the very next breath.

Peter did it – he stated in one breath “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” and a few weeks later we find him cursing saying, “I don’t know that man”

James here in verse 9 is speaking about the individual who comes to church on Sunday praises the Lord with one breath and with the next breath; they are speaking evil things about another person.

They sit at church singing hymns and worshipping God and as they are walking to their car they whisper, “Did you see so and so?” They are such a hypocrite!”

And what James is saying here is that the individual who does this – what they are really doing is exposing their contempt for God who made that other individual in His own image.

If we wouldn't speak these evil thoughts toward God, why then would we speak them about one of His dearly beloved children???

10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

James warns the early church and us - that we should not be doing these things.

If we indeed are practicing these things – then they are an indication of our spiritual immaturity.

11 Does a spring send forth fresh [water] and bitter from the same opening? 12

Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

The analogies that James uses here in 11 and 12 – provides us with the true problem of the tongue.

The tongue should be producing either blessing or curses – but the problem is that we find ourselves producing both – because it is untamable.

And if we find ourselves with an untamable tongue, we should confess it as sin and turn away from it and allow Him to tame it.

Having a tamed tongue is evidence of the work that Christ is doing in our lives.

That is why James is exhorting the early church.

Amen.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Let's pray...

