

JAMES 3:1-12

The Power of Words

You hear a lot of talk about the culture wars today, but there's one culture war that is often overlooked. It is the war over the kind of culture you are creating at home by your words or by your silence.

Prov 18:21 "death and life in the power of the tongue".

As parents our words are very important. What kind of reality are you creating in your home – words, tone, things unsaid? Is your home a place of critique or a safe place? Do words of grace reign supreme?

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Eph 4

Does your spouse want to see you at the end of the day?
That usually depends on what sort of words they expect to hear when you first see each other.

What does this have to do with James 3??? A lot.
This is one of the most practical passages in all of scripture.

1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. 3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. 4 Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. 5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. 7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; 10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. 11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

We need to have our hearts gripped and re-gripped by Amazing grace.

How does the gospel change us? James give clear instruction and pulls no punches about the use of our words.

** This text applies to spoken words and written words**

How we speak is at the top of the list of gospel change. How we speak gives people a window into our hearts.

Matt 12:34 For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

In scripture "heart=soul"

Before you think I've gone to meddling please remember

170bey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.

Not behavior, but protect your souls- and our speech reflects the condition of our soul / heart.

Paul Tripp - LEAD

It's souls that leaders are held accountable to protect. Soul points to the inner person, his thoughts, desires, motives, weaknesses, strengths, level of maturity, susceptibilities, etc. It means knowing someone at the level of his heart so that you can predict where he may step over God's wise boundaries.

v. 1-2 Warning to teachers

v. 3-5 disproportionate power of the tongue

v 5b-8 deadly potential

v 9-12 glaring inconsistency of the tongue

v. 1-2 Warning to teachers- A Professional Hazard

The audience has been dispersed so new teachers were necessary. Some needed to be addressed with warnings v 1-2, 14. "We all stumble in many ways." James includes himself as he demonstrates his own confession of sin.

NOTE: No hint of perfectionism in James or the rest of scripture. There are no perfect pastors, teachers, or church members.

It is not unusual that James directs our attention to the sin related to speech by warning 'teachers'.

"Teachers are more susceptible to judgment than others because they regularly engage in that activity which is the hardest to keep from sin-one's speech." Doug Moo

James broadens from teachers to all – 'anyone'.

v. 2 sign of maturity – control of the tongue. **If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.** That is a BIG "IF" ...

The impact of the tongue on our lives is huge.

Control of speech= control of one's whole life. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?

v. 3-5 The disproportionate power of the tongue

Some of you have horses and you know the reality of this.

The ability for a small person to control a 1000 lbs horse is possible by a small bit in the horse's mouth.

The massive animal is directed by something so small.

The same is true for the rudder of ship. Large ships are guided by a small rudder according to the will of the pilot

SO TOO FOR THE TONGUE! V 5

There is an inverse relationship between the size of the tongue and the amount of damage it can do.

"Our tongue is only the tip of the iniquity iceberg. The proof that all humans are inescapably flawed is right between our teeth." Douglas O' Donnell

This text puts us on high alert.

"It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, if you live near him." — J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit, or There and Back Again

The dragon lives between our teeth. Don't leave it out of your calculations as you seek to glorify God, or even if you don't seek to glorify God. Don't ignore this dragon no matter what path you are following.

THAT IS GREAT FREE ADVICE.

Words are powerful. They direct our lives and the lives of others 1-5

"We ask ourselves how we are to control the powerful forces within us that drive us into sin, and James replies by talking about something we never considered—do we control our tongues? There are pressures of adversity and the pressures of prosperity, there are sudden and unexpected shocks—the

blows which life administers to us. Can we hold our course? James' marine illustration is not at all wide of the mark as a description of life with its tides, currents and storms. Once again, there is a rudder to hold the ship on course, and the tongue is that rudder. This teaching strikes us as so unexpected. But should this surprise us quite so much? The control of the tongue is more than an evidence of spiritual maturity, it is the means to it." Alec Motyer

How often do you consider the role of your tongue in a besetting sin in your life? Do you consider how subduing the tongue might impact subduing that sin by the grace of God? Controlling the tongue is evidence of and a means to spiritual maturity.

We underestimate the power of words – One of the great lies of our culture is “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” FAKE NEWS

Our words impact others, as much, or more than anything we do.

Some of us are still deeply impacted by words that were spoken to us or about us when we were young – Good words or critical words.

“Get over it” is easier said than done because according to James, words are more powerful than we want to admit.

Words may seem small but they carry the power to shape our lives. Note the images used: rudder and bit

Words can unravel the fabric of your relationships. Words have caused murders, crimes of passion, suicide, divorce, run-away kids, broken friendships, wars. They can set a forest on fire.

****SIDE ROAD**** While our words are powerful, we DO NOT HAVE THE POWER TO speak things into being. The new thought concept of “Manifesting” is a warmed over secularized version of the ‘word/faith’ movement which taught ‘name it-claim it.’ Just say it with your words with enough faith and you can make it happen. NO!! ONLY God HAS THE POWER TO SPEAK things into being.

v 5b-8 Deadly Potential – Fire

This potential is described in tragic detail – a world of iniquity set on fire by hell itself.

Does this shock or surprise you? Do we really give that much thought to the scorching fire unleashed by the tongue? WE SHOULD. It would save us from many regrets.

EX: “that speaker was ON FIRE.” The reference is to his or her words and delivery style, not to the combustible nature of the wardrobe.

EX: movies, shows, novels where there is a falling out and the typical conversation sounds something like this...”I said some things and then he/she said some things and now we haven’t spoken to each other for weeks, months or years.” **THINGS CAN ESCALATE MUCH FASTER THAN WE REALIZE.**

If you’ve experienced an out of control fire, then you know what this is like. It doesn’t take much for that flame to become a blaze out of control. Sinful words can set a marriage, a family, a church, a workplace or a nation ablaze.

Fire, where it’s not supposed to be, is frightening, right Dan

Take heed to what James is saying about the unbridled tongue. This imagery should scare us.

EX: Raylan Givens...The key word in firearm is "fire." When the pin hits the cap, makes the charge explode, meaning there's a spark, which should be of some concern to a man soaked in gasoline.

If our hearts are soaked in sin, then the wrong word from our tongue should be of some concern for it can be a spark that will set our life ablaze.

EX: fire is not something to be played with – Couple that didn't want to take their dry Christmas tree to the dump, so they decided to feed it slowly into their fireplace. It only takes a spark and BOOM, the tree explodes and burns down the house.

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2021/01/11/mckinney-resident-tries-to-burn-christmas-tree-in-fireplace-a-bad-idea-say-firefighters-called-to-scene/>

DON'T BE THAT COUPLE trying to feed unbridled words into your relational fireplace. Take a time out. Get alone and pray for a godly humble heart. Call in someone to mediate or referee. Overlook it. But don't play with fire.

Apply this to the unbridled keyboard which can create the blaze. This message intends to be sobering and frightening.

THE TONGUE IS:

-A fire

-A world of iniquity set among our members

-It sets on fire the course of life

-It is set on fire by hell – the source of this destruction is hell itself. The enemy comes to kill, steal, and destroy and the path of destruction is often the tongue.

Eph 4 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. 26Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27and do not give the devil an opportunity.

Your unresolved angry words give the devil an opportunity and he is an opportunist. He is lurking and waiting to get a foot or a toe in the door.

EX: the video drama #1 from last week's SS class – that short scene in the kitchen escalated really quickly, and it was all because of the unbridled tongues of the husband and wife.

Who saw that as an opportunity to destroy??? The Devil

Has he ever had an open door to YOUR kitchen, living room, or bedroom?

v. 7-8 No hope for a human remedy. This is a humbling reality. We can tame all manner of animals, but NO ONE can tame the tongue.

EX: Gerstner at conference: "Man is a rat".... Someone there was offended and said he should apologize so when they resumed Gerstner took the mic and said, "I need to apologize. Earlier I said, 'Man is a rat'. I apologize to the rat."

The rat doesn't set the world on fire with his words, but we do.

v 9-12 The Glaring Inconsistency of the Tongue

EX: Bob B - kids from rough background were taken to church on Wed night – cursing at each other on the way there and quoting Bible verses on the way home.

HOW many of us are like that on Sunday morning?

What a contrast – Blessing God vs cursing men – the highest form of speech vs the lowest form of speech. Cursing men or women doesn't have to contain profanity or vulgarity; it is simply to strike out verbally in anger.

Apparently, this type of problem was going on with the audience; likely on the day of worship. Blessing God then cursing men. This **MUST NOT** be tolerated.

v. 11-12 three images that show the inconsistency that must be avoided.

Genuine faith will lead to godly speech – **the good works that James has been talking about for two chapters begin with godly speech.**

EX: my life changed in this area immediately

v. 1-12 help us recognize our need. We need help. We need divine intervention and God did intervene by sending his Son to die for our unbridled tongues.

Consider the miracle of grace that you are even here and lifting your voice in praise, and hopefully your hearts in praise as well. Singing praises and giving thanks is a great way to tame the tongue.

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Only one man has been perfect regarding his tongue.

To show the sinlessness of Christ, Peter shows that ‘while being reviled, he did not revile in return.’”

1 Peter 2

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously

Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. He is the messenger and the message to sinners.

We need the Living Word to take control of our hearts so that our words are transformed.

Do you know him?

If you take His Name do your Words reflect His grace and glory?

Jesus is the way to the peaceable fruit of righteousness described in James 3:13-18

More on this next week

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