

JAMES 3:1-2
THE DANGERS OF TEACHING?

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to James chapter 3 as we continue this letter that James wrote to Jewish believers who were scattered from Jerusalem because of the persecution they were facing for their faith in Jesus!

And James is writing this letter to encourage them to grow up, to mature in the faith. He does not want them to remain spiritual babies any longer. And thus, James gives to them some tough words to spur them on, to get them moving in the right direction!

James opened up this letter by speaking about *THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING* in James chapter 1. And this idea is that the mature Christian needs to embrace the trials that he is going through, the testing of his faith with joy and to be on guard against the Devil tempting you to sin in the testing of your faith!

He put it like this as he opened up his letter, **“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”** James 1:2-4.

Then, in James chapter 2 we focused on *THE BELIEVER AND SERVICE* or how mature Christians manifests the qualities that reflect his love for the Lord. And that love for God is manifested in how we treat others.

Thus, we see a mature Christian who cares not only for the rich, those who are noteworthy you might say, but for the poor, for the disadvantage, reaching out to help them and bless them!

In other words, he is to show no partiality, he is to accept people, be courteous to all, show people compassion, be consistent in how you treat people, come to the aid of those in need, because faith without works is dead!

James put it this way in James chapter 2, **“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. . . . But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? . . . For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”** James 2:17, 20, 26.

This morning we are going to begin James chapter 3 and if you thought the other two chapters were challenging, I think this one is even more challenging for us. The focus of James chapter 3 is *THE BELIEVER AND HIS SPEECH!*

Now don't go planning a vacation so you miss out on this one! As hard as this may be for us to hear, it is important that we do hear it so that we can grow in the Lord, mature in the faith!

Obviously, James recognized some problems that these believers were having controlling their tongues. Remember that he already warned them back in James 1:19-20 as he wrote, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”**

The tongue is a pretty small part of the human body but the damage that it can do can be devastating to others, and to ourselves. And we can have great reasons, in our mind, why we said what we said, that they needed to hear these things, that they deserved the tongue lashing that I gave them or whatever reason.

And James said that we need to listen before we speak and when we do speak, don't rush into it and when we have to speak, that we don't let wrath flow from our lips because you are **“not producing the righteousness of God”** by your actions!

And if you are still not taking this seriously, James goes on to say in James 1:26, **“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.”**

I have seen some people who think they are so strong in the Lord and when you listen to how they tear people down, the words that they say, well, as James says, he **“deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.”**

His faith or the faith he says that he has is worthless because his actions, the words that he is speaking forth say otherwise! What a horrible witness we can be with the words that we say.

Make no mistake about it, the tongue is a powerful weapon and it can be used for good or for evil!

One writer put it like this,

The power of speech is one of the greatest powers God has given us. With the tongue, man can praise God, pray, preach the Word, and lead the lost to Christ. What a privilege! But with that same tongue he can tell lies that could ruin a man's reputation or break a person's heart. The ability to speak words is the ability to influence others and accomplish tremendous tasks; and yet we take this ability for granted.

- Source Unknown

Like I have said, the words we say are powerful. They can build up or tear down. And I think we enjoy tearing down more than building up because tearing down takes no effort at all. But to build someone up, that takes work. And many times we feel that they don't deserve it, that they are not nice to us so why should I be nice to them. And the reality of that is simple. God calls us to be nice to people, to build them up and not try to destroy them.

Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 12:34-37, **“Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”**

Jesus is saying that if you want to see where you are at spiritually speaking, listen to what comes out of your mouth! It will show you where your heart is at. ***OUCH!*** Right?

And God wants you to see where you are at, not for condemnation but for restoration, so you can let go of those words and speak that which is good.

And please understand I am not saying we just agree with what everyone says but we inspect what they say with the Word of God and we correct where correction is needed! And that correction is done in love! Today we just want to be friends with everyone and it really doesn't matter what they believe, what they say and that is very wrong and very dangerous!

James will be making the same point as Jesus and he will show us that the words that we speak, the words that we say are just a reflection of our character, of who we are, of who is controlling our life.

And there are two things that will control your life. It will either be the Spirit of God or the Devil and his demons! As hard as that might be to accept, what else is there?

Now you might say, *“Hey, I am going to do and say whatever I want because I am in charge of my life!”*

True, but that is a doctrine of demons in that it is the same thing Satan did as he rebelled against God!

So, who are you going to listen to? Who are you going to follow? Whoever it is, be it the Lord or be it the Devil, that is what will flow from your life.

Let me show you what I mean. Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16-26, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”**

Yes, there is a battle going on. The flesh is warring against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh and whatever you are feeding the most will be manifested in your life! We need to walk in the Spirit and that flesh will not be seen!

This morning in our study we are going to be dealing with teachers and I have called this study, *“The Dangers of Teaching?”*

Now as some read these verses they don’t think they fit with what James is going to say as he talks about the tongue and controlling what comes forth from our lips. But think about it, teachers are examples to others as they teach them different things.

And for the man of God, they are teaching people the things of God and they can be the best teachers but if the things that come forth from their lips is not honoring God, then people tend not to listen to them.

Let me show you how important it is. We are told,

Life is a matter of building. Each of us has the opportunity to build something - a secure family, a good reputation, a career, a relationship to God. But some of those things can disappear almost overnight due to financial losses, natural disasters and other unforeseen difficulties.

What are we to do? Daniel Webster offered excellent advice, saying, *“If we work on marble it will perish. If we work on brass, time will efface it. If we rear temples, they will crumble to dust. But if we work on men’s immortal minds, if we imbue [fill] them with high principles, with just fear of God and love of their fellow-men, we engrave on*

those tablets something which time cannot efface, and which will brighten and brighten to all eternity.”

- Morning Glory, July 3, 1993

Now some of you may be thinking, “Well, I guess this is not for me, I am not a teacher!” You are wrong about that because there are people always watching you, learning from you and what are you teaching them by your actions, by the words you are speaking?

So, this is for all of us and specifically, it is for those who are teaching the Word of God as we will see!

I have broken these verses we will be looking at this morning into three sections and they go like this,

DIVINE JUDGMENT – JAMES 3:1

WE ARE SINNERS – JAMES 3:2a

THE ACT OF TEACHING EXPOSES THE TONGUE – JAMES 3:2b

So, with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in James chapter 3, starting in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we begin looking at ***THE BELIEVER AND HIS SPEECH*** and specifically, in our study this morning, ***THE DANGERS OF TEACHING?***

JAMES 3 **VERSE 1**

In this section, for teachers, we see this idea of ***DIVINE JUDGMENT*** and that does not sound good. And we will deal more with that in a few minutes but just keep in mind, if you are doing what is right, then you do not need to fear!

For example. If you are driving down the road and you are going the speed limit, when you see a police officer you have nothing to fear. But if you are speeding, I bet you begin to fear and slow down. Why is that? Because you broke the Law, you did that which you knew was wrong!

And here, these words of James remind us that being among the teachers in God’s church is more than a matter of having natural or even spiritual gifts; there is an additional dimension of appropriate character and right living.

One writer put it like this, “James found that this department of church-work had become extremely popular. Hence his warning about its serious responsibilities. God will judge us on the last day ***with special strictness*** on account of our influence over others.” (Moffatt)

Keep in mind that in the days in which James lived, the Rabbis were master teachers and they loved to receive the honor, the respect, the praise from their fellow Jews. It was really all about them and their behavior was superficial, and eventually, what was on the inside overflowed outwardly in their actions and their words.

In Matthew 23:1-7 we see this played out for it was no secret. We are told, **“Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works**

they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, “Rabbi, Rabbi.””

Obviously, Jesus is rebuking them here. First of all, they placed themselves into a position that God did not and thus, they had no authority to add human tradition to God’s Word, no one does!

They were *false spiritual leaders* that lacked *integrity*, they lacked *sympathy*, and they lacked *humility*.

You see, they loved the title, they loved the honor, they loved the attention, and they lacked the humility!

It’s one thing to teach something innocuous like gardening - a subject that has no eternal impact upon a person’s life.

But think about what a pastor, what a leader, what a teacher does. He is teaching spiritual truths from the Bible and if he is teaching them wrong, they can damn a person to hell forever!

Maybe you think I am going overboard with that statement, I am not! Think about it. Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Scientists, and all the other cults are teaching their people spiritual issues, but they are wrong, and they are condemning their people to Hell!

Now you may be thinking, “Yes, Pastor Joe, that is true. But those are cults, they are not Christians!” That is true but look at what is going on in the church today, the false teaching, the secular humanism, the New Age, the eastern mysticism, the psychology and the boat load of other garbage that is not found in the Word of God!

Remember the false prophets in the days of Jeremiah? The nation was on the brink of devastation as the Babylon’s were going to come in and invade the land and take the Southern Kingdom of Judah into captivity!

And there were many false prophets claiming that they were speaking for God and they were not. They were speaking contrary to what God was saying through the prophet Jeremiah! They were giving people a false hope and God was speaking forth judgment because of their wickedness, their spiritual adultery!

In Jeremiah 23:1-2 we are told, **“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!’ says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: ‘You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,’ says the Lord.”**

Notice what these shepherds were not doing. They were not watching over the sheep that God has entrusted to them. And because of that God was going to bring judgment upon them for the evil that they had done. Notice what the Lord says here about them, **“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!”**

In Jeremiah 23:9-11 we are told, **“My heart within me is broken Because of the prophets; All my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, And like a man whom wine has overcome, Because of the Lord, And because of His holy words. For the land is full of adulterers; For because of a curse the land mourns. The pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up. Their course of life is evil, And their might is**

not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; Yes, in My house I have found their wickedness,' says the Lord."

Why is Jeremiah so overwhelmed by what he is seeing? He tells us the reasons and you can understand why he is so down.

The prophets, the religious leaders were leading people away from God and it took all his strength away. He was weakened by all he was seeing.

You see, as these false prophets spoke the people were just listening to their lies and they were rejecting the truth of God. And he is so broken over this he begins to stagger, it is hard for him, he is overwhelmed. I can't tell you how broken I am as I look at the church today and see how false doctrine is just flooding in and those who are exposing it are put down, ignored! It is very sad.

And make no mistake about it, Jeremiah had a love for the Lord and His Word that drove him forward to speak what he believed. And he had a love for his people and this was just too much! And thus, he gave to them what they needed to hear not what they wanted to hear!

Don't you feel the same about our nation, about the people who refuse to turn to God and the false teachers that are leading them away from God?

And Jeremiah speaks of what this wickedness has brought upon the land, it is dry, it is barren all because they turned from the Lord and towards wickedness. This "**land that was filled with adulterers**" carries with it the idea of both physical and spiritual adulterers!

And those who were responsible for this were the priests, the leaders. They were bringing into the Temple idolatry, wickedness.

We see that even today where the church brings in the teachings of this world instead of the truths of God's Word. The outcome of that wickedness is abortion is right, homosexuality is good, gay marriages should be allowed, and-so-on.

The leaders were the ones to guard against these things and in Judah and in our nation today they are the ones who are promoting these things!

In Jeremiah 23:14 we are told, "**Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: They commit adultery and walk in lies; They also strengthen the hands of evildoers, So that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, And her inhabitants like Gomorrah."**

They moved away from the truths of God found in the Word of God and it brought all kinds of immorality into the land and in the end, they were no different than Sodom and Gomorrah! Don't tell me there are no consequences with false teachers and false teaching!

And as you look at the church today and compare the morality of the church with the morality of the world, there is not that much difference! We have not learned the lessons and, because we refused to deal with false doctrine, it has moved us away from God even though people are claiming that they are drawing closer to God through it!

Make no mistake about it, that is what the Jews believed as well, and judgment was at the door! I wonder how close we are?

And lastly, in Jeremiah 23:16-17 we are told, "**Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the Lord. They continually say to those who despise Me, "The Lord has said, 'You shall have**

peace”; And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, “No evil shall come upon you.””

I wish more Christians would take heed to these words and not listen to the false teachers, these worthless shepherds that at not teaching the people the Word of God.

What they are doing instead is giving to them the philosophies of the world and to make it sound holy, they said things like, “*Thus says the Lord . . .*” or “*God spoke to me . . .*”

How can we know if something is of God or not? How can we know if what someone is saying or what someone is teaching is of God or not?

We don’t have to guess because God is telling us here that if their words are not found in My Word, they are not from Me, I don’t care what the prophets are saying! There are a lot of people today going around and supposedly speaking for God things God has never said. Be careful!

Remember what Paul said in Colossians 2:8-10, “**Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.**”

We are complete in Him, the Word and not apart from Him. May we not be taken in by the latest fad, this popular teacher or that one! And yes, they speak with great authority, but they are not of God!

May we not be taken in by the philosophy of this world because it is empty! May we not be taken in by man’s traditions! May we apply all that we do to the Word of God to see if it is right or wrong, if we should do it or avoid it!

Now the message that the false prophets had sounded great, it sounded good, the only problem was that it was not true! They were telling the people that God will give them peace and prosperity and that is exactly what they wanted to hear! They told the people what they wanted to hear, a positive message instead of what they needed to hear, as I have said.

Paul warned young Timothy to, “**Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**” II Timothy 4:2-4. They may not want to hear the message, but they need to hear the message so be ready to share the message of God from the Word of God and also be ready for the consequences, many times they will not like it!

Now, listen again to what James has said, “**My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**” James 3:1.

Please understand that James isn’t discouraging people to become teachers of His Word. If you are called by God, then step forward but understand that there is a responsibility to teach the Word of God accurately. It is not what you want to say, it is what God has spoken!

I think that many who are teaching God’s Word today have lost that fear of the Lord and thus, they are out to please men and that will give you some popularity down

here, but you will have to stand before God at the Bema Seat of Christ and you may not like what you hear!

We need to understand that as you teach God's Word there is a huge responsibility to present it accurately.

We are told in Ezekiel 3:17-19, **“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”**

You see, pastor/teachers and teachers are the ones who, **“... watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”** Hebrews 13:17.

Don't take this lightly, in fact, young believers should never be put in as a teacher until they mature in the faith as Paul said in I Timothy 3:6, **“not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.”**

It grieves my heart to see pastor/teachers and teachers who are lackadaisical about God's Word because they are hurting people and there is a judgment against anyone who does take this lightly, if you don't teach God's Word accurately.

Not a judgment of damnation but of losing your reward as I have said. Jesus said in Luke 12:48, **“... For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”**

And I do think that this judgment that James is speaking about for teachers has a two-fold application.

We have talked about believers who are teaching the Word of God not accurately and they will lose their rewards at the Bema Seat or the Judgment Seat of Christ as well as be chastened in this life so that they may repent and get right with God!

But for false teachers, unbelievers, they will incur a judgment at the Great White Throne Judgment spoken of in Revelation chapter 20!

The great Scottish Reformer John Knox was so awed and burdened by the responsibility to declare God's Word faithfully that before his first sermon, he wept uncontrollably and had to be escorted from the pulpit until he could compose himself.

One pastor reportedly said of preaching what could also be said of teaching, “There is no special honor in preaching. There is only special pain. The pulpit calls those anointed to it as the sea calls its sailors; and like the sea, it batters and bruises and does not rest. . . . To preach, to really preach, is to die naked a little at a time and to know each time you do it that you must do it again.”

I wonder how many would want to teach if they truly thought of it like that?

We need to understand that what comes forth from our lips as teachers is the Word of God and not the philosophies, ideas of man. There is ***DIVINE JUDGMENT*** for those who are teaching the Word of God to people!

VERSE 2a

Here we see the reality, that ***WE ARE SINNERS!***

That is a strange statement, isn't it? If it is true, if we all stumble, even teachers, if we can fall prey to sin, what is the use?

Now, in saying that, don't be discouraged by what James says here and don't negate it either.

The ancient Greek word translated "**stumble**" does not imply a fatal fall, but something that trips us up and hinders our spiritual progress. It refers to any moral failing that trips us up and hinders our spiritual progress. In other words, *SIN!*

Let me put it like this. James is basically saying, "***Look, we have all blown it in many ways and none of us are perfect in our walk.***"

And the idea here is that James, in speaking of teachers, is speaking of maturity and a sign that a person is mature in the Lord is his speech, what flows from his mouth.

What flows from our mouth can stumble us, hinder our progress and thus, grow in the Lord, mature in Him.

Allow the Holy Spirit to have control of what flows from your lips. This is especially true of pastor/teachers and teachers, but it is also true for all of us.

You see, as a teacher it does not give you a platform to teach what you want to teach. And the reason for that is our heart is wicked and what comes from our heart may not be good.

Then what are teachers to do? They are to let God speak forth from His Word and I am always amazed at what He does.

You see, over the years that I have been teaching I have seen how God ministers to people through His Word. The studies I do are about 3 to 4 weeks ahead of when I teach them. But what ends up happening is that God knows ahead of time what we are going through, what we need to hear, and it ends up being that is what I am teaching.

I can't tell you the number of times people will come up to me after a study and say things like, "***That is exactly what I needed to hear!***" Or, "***Wow, how did you know I was going through that?***" God is amazing and as we are teaching through His Word He will speak to us where we are at.

We don't have to make a passage fit what we want it to say and that is a dangerous thing to do. I have seen people who try to do that to promote their cause or what they want to believe, and it is totally out of context. And it is dangerous!

Again, the heart is wicked, and we need to be careful. Let me show you what I mean with a few verses that deal with this issue.

In Psalm 52:2-4 we are told, "**Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. You love evil more than good, Lying rather than speaking righteousness. You love all devouring words, You deceitful tongue.**"

You see, we should use our tongue, our mouths, for construction, building people up, and not destruction, tearing people down! May our speech be seasoned with salt and not Tabasco sauce!

In Psalm 64:3-4 we are told of those who speak out of their wicked heart, that they are those, "**Who sharpen their tongue like a sword, And bend their bows to shoot their arrows - bitter words, That they may shoot in secret at the blameless; Suddenly they shoot at him and do not fear.**"

Again, as Christians, this is not what should flow from our lips, it is not what we should be saying. We are not to cut people up. That should just make sense and the same

is true of a teacher. They are there to build up the people of God, to teach them the things of God and even to correct them as needed!

And lastly, in Proverbs 21:23 we are told, **“Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles.”**

Yes, James says that we sin many times and in many ways. It is a kind of repeated stumbling on our part, but don't continue doing that. Guard your tongue, guard what comes out of your mouth and the only way to do that is to submit to the Lord and surrender to Him so that your actions will reflect what is in your heart, a heart that is given over to God instead of self! Keep yourself from trouble by guarding what flows from your lips!

And this is truly a heart issue. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 15:18-20, **“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”**

Now we will deal more with this as we get to our last point, but I do want you to understand that not only what you do, but also what you say, is a reflection of your heart, so be careful!

I realize that we are sinners but don't use that as an excuse to say things that will hurt people.

I remember growing up that saying, ***“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me!”*** And I said it to people who were mean to me when I was a kid and you probably did too!

And as much as we may have said it, the reality is, words do hurt us and sometimes they can leave a lasting scar in our lives. For those who have been hurt, you need to give it to the Lord and He can bring healing into your life.

For those who have used words to hurt people, you need to repent and get right with God. We will see James make a powerful point that negates all the reasons we try to justify our speech in a few weeks. But I will share these words with you now. He said in James 3:9-10 regarding the tongue, the words we say, **“With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.”** What is flowing from your mouth?

So, yes, ***WE ARE SINNERS***, but we need to be careful and draw close to God, build up the spiritual man, so that what God is doing on the inside will overflow in the things we do and the things that we say. We will build people up and not tear them down. As James said in regard to sinful speech, **“My brethren, these things ought not to be so.”**

VERSE 2b

And the last point that James makes here in regard to teachers is that ***THE ACT OF TEACHING EXPOSES THE TONGUE!*** That should just make sense because it is hard to teach if you don't use words. Yes, it can be done, but the primary way that teaching is done is through words! Yes, people will watch our actions, but understand the things we say need to be truth, they need to be from the Word of God!

And again, as we see here, James is speaking of spiritual maturity and the Greek word used for “**perfect**” is TELEIOS, (tel’-i-os) and it can mean absolute perfection but that is impossible for any human being, except the Lord, of course. But if we walk in the Spirit we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh!

That, again, should just make sense. If we are surrender to the Lord, then what flows from our lips will be perfect. It will be what is needed in that given situation or what we are teaching on.

We need to allow the Holy Spirit to have control of our lips you might say. And I think we all know what happens when the flesh gets a hold of things, it is not good, it is not pretty and many times it is destructive!

One writer put it like this as he summed this up for us. He wrote, “‘If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man.’ To not stumble in word shows true spiritual maturity. This is especially relevant to teachers, who have so much more opportunity to sin with their tongue. We stumble in word about ourselves, with our boasting, exaggeration, and selective reporting. [And] We stumble in word about others, with our criticism, gossip, slander, cruelty, two-facedness, and anger; or with flattery and insincere words meant to gain favor.” Exactly!

I am sure you have been to the doctor before, right? And one of the things he asks you to do is to stick out your tongue and say “Ahhh!”

Why does he do that? Is it because he is having fun with you? No, it is because he is looking for any problems that could be hidden at the back of your mouth, things that are going on inside of your body, any disease processes that may be going on!

And that is what we need to do on a daily basis by being in the Word of God and allowing the Spirit of God to speak to our hearts on these things. And He does, and He will!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this,

“A judge speaks some words and a guilty prisoner is taken to a cell on death row. A gossip makes a phone call and a reputation is blemished or perhaps ruined. A cynical professor makes a snide remark in a lecture and a student’s faith is destroyed.

Never underestimate the power of words. For every word in Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf*, 125 people died in World War II. Solomon was right: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Prov. 18:21). No wonder James compared the tongue to a destroying fire, a dangerous beast, and a deadly poison (James 3:5–8). Speech is a matter of life or death.”

Thus, we can tell what our walk with the Lord is like by what comes out of our mouth, the words that we say to people or of people! Be careful, James is calling for us to grow up, to mature in the faith and one of the ways we do that is by our words, the things that we say. Are they of God or are they of the flesh?

Remember, this is a heart issue. And like a gun, guns don’t kill people, bullets do. That just makes sense. But there needs to be someone who will pull the trigger.

Think about the heart and how deceitful it can be. And as we apply this gun illustration to our speech, think of it like this.

The heart not only pulls the trigger on the tongue, but it also supplies the ammunition in the form of words that come from a heart of hatred, bitterness, unforgiveness and revenge. And, as I have said, these words can have a devastating effect on those they are directed towards.

In Psalm 141:3 we are told, **“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“Set a guard, O Lord, before my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips.”**

And I think The Living Bible puts it in words that we all can understand as it says, **“Help me, Lord, to keep my mouth shut and my lips sealed.”**

Okay, maybe you did not need to hear it like that, but I truly did! It is as James said, **“Therefore, by beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”** James 1:19.

May we learn these lessons as teachers of God’s Word! And really, this is for all of us as we will see over the next several weeks as James deals with this issue of the tongue. And it must be important, or the Lord would not be sharing this with us!

Remember what we have learned this morning.

That we understand that there is ***DIVINE JUDGMENT*** and thus, we need to teach God’s Word faithfully and not add to it or take away from it!

That we understand that ***WE ARE SINNERS*** and thus, need to surrender to God and seek His direction in our lives for the flesh is waring against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh!

And lastly, ***THE ACT OF TEACHING EXPOSES THE TONGUE*** because we teach using words. And thus, use the words you share to build people up and not tear them down. It will show you where you are at with the Lord, the words that you say, how you speak of people. So be careful.

And I will close with these words and please take them to heart.

The teacher begets others in his own image; he makes them like himself. If he dilutes or explains away the clear meaning of any Scripture, he hinders the growth of his students. If he condones sin in any form, he fosters lives of unholiness. No other book makes such claims on its readers as the NT. It calls for total commitment to Jesus Christ. It insists that He must be Lord of every phase of the believer’s life. It is a serious matter to teach from such a book!

- Source Unknown