

JAMES 3:3-12
THE POWER OF THE TONGUE!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to James chapter 3 as we continue our study through this letter that James wrote to Jewish Christians who were persecuted for their faith in Christ and had to flee their homes, their families, their jobs. They had to leave town you might say.

And keep in mind that James is calling his brethren, these Jewish believers to maturity and commitment. I believe the Holy Spirit is also calling us to do the same as we read through this letter. He wants us to grow in the Lord, to mature in the faith.

And James hits them hard as he calls for them to embrace the trials that they are facing with joy and to guard against the temptations that come your way. We saw that in James chapter 1 as the focus was on ***THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING!***

James moves on in chapter 2 and he is calling for them to manifest a heart of love and concern for people, all people. Not just the rich, not just the influential, but all people; the poor, the disadvantage, they needed to reach out to them and help them. And we saw that in James chapter 2 as we focused on ***THE BELIEVER AND SERVICE!***

Now, as we move into James chapter 3 you might be thinking he is going to be a little gentler with us, a little easier with us, but that is not the case. Again, he is not trying to be mean or unloving, but he wants us to mature in the faith, to be totally committed to the Lord and these are the things that will be manifested in our lives if we are.

We will endure suffering with joy because we know the Lord is in control. We will reach out to people because we understand that we are all created in the image of God; black, white, tall, short, thin, heavy, rich, poor and whatever else you would like to put in there!

And now for the tough one here in James chapter 3, ***THE BELIEVER AND HIS SPEECH!***

In other words, a mature Christian, a Spirit-filled Christian has power over their tongue! There are no excuses here like, "I'm just not good with people!" No, that is an excuse and it does not fly. If your tongue is blasting people, putting them down, mocking them, attacking them, be careful, it just shows where you are standing and that is what James is addressing! You are immature in the faith and you need to grow up!

I realize that some of you are thinking, "Wow, should have read ahead about what was going to be taught this morning!" No, you are right where you need to be, and it is where we all need to be because I think this is an area that we all need to deal with.

And let me say this before I go on. I am not picking on anyone. I am not pointing the finger at anyone. This is for all of us. And if you feel that I am picking on you, maybe it is not me but the Holy Spirit who is convicting you and you do need to listen.

I know, hard lessons and I am fully aware of that because this is the study the Lord gave to me and it really is not my study, this is what the Holy Spirit gave to James and he is giving to us!

I do realize that maybe some of you feel that this is not too important to you; but let me say this. It is very important to all of us because our words can either build up or tear down, they can edify or crucify. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

In 1899 four newspaper reporters from Denver, Colorado set out to tear down the Great Wall of China. They almost succeeded. Literally. The four met by chance on a Saturday night in a Denver railway depot. Al Stevens, Jack Tournay, John Lewis, Hal Wilshire. They represented the four Denver papers; the *Post*, the *Times*, the *Republican* and *Rocky Mountain News*.

Each had been sent by his respective newspapers to dig up a story – *any* story – for the Sunday editions; so the reporters were in the railroad station, hoping to snag a visiting celebrity should one happen to arrive that evening by train.

None arrived that evening, by train or otherwise. The reporters started commiserating. For them, no news was bad news; all were facing empty-handed return trips to their city desks.

Al declared he was going to make up a story and hand it in. The other three laughed.

Someone suggested they all walk over to the Oxford Hotel and have a beer. They did.

Jack said he liked Al's idea about faking a story. Why didn't each of them fake a story and get off the hook?

John said Jack was thinking too small. Four half-backed fakes didn't cut it. What they needed was one real whopper they could all use.

Another round of beers.

A phony domestic story would be too easy to check on, so they began discussing foreign angles that would be difficult to verify . . .

China was distant enough, it was agreed. They would write about China.

John leaned forward, gesturing dramatically in the dim light of the barroom. Try *this* one on, he said: Group of American engineers, stopping over in Denver en route to China. The Chinese government is making plans to demolish the Great Wall; our engineers are bidding on the job.

Harold was skeptical. Why would the Chinese want to destroy the Great Wall of China?

John thought for a moment. They're tearing down the ancient boundary to symbolize international goodwill, to welcome foreign trade!

Another round of beers.

By 11:00 p.m. the four reporters had worked out the details of their preposterous story. After leaving the Oxford Bar, they would go over to the Windsor Hotel. They would sign four fictitious names to the hotel register. They would instruct the desk clerk to tell anyone who asked that four New Yorkers had arrived that evening, had been interviewed by reporters, had left early the next morning for California.

The Denver newspapers carried the story. All four of them. Front page

In fact, the *Times* headline that Sunday read: GREAT CHINESE WALL DOOMED! PEKING SEEKS WORLD TRADE!

Of course, the story was a phony, a ludicrous fabrication concocted by four capricious newsmen in a hotel bar.

But their story was taken seriously, was picked up and expanded by newspapers in the Eastern U.S. and then by newspapers abroad.

When the Chinese themselves learned that the Americans were sending a demolition crew to tear down their national monument, most were indignant; some were enraged.

Particularly incensed were the members of the secret society, a volatile group of Chinese patriots who were already wary of foreign intervention.

They, inspired by the story, exploded, rampaged against the foreign embassies in Peking, and slaughtered hundreds of missionaries.

In two months, twelve thousand troops from six countries joined forces, invaded China with the purpose of protecting their own countrymen.

The bloodshed which followed, sparked by a journalistic hoax invented in a barroom in Denver, became the white-hot international conflagration known to every high school history student . . . as the Boxer Rebellion.

The power of the word! As seen in Paul Harvey's "Rest of the story." Nations have risen and nations have fallen to the tongue. Lives have been elevated and lives have been cast down by the tongue. Goodness has flowed like a sweet river from the tongue, but so has the cesspool. The tiny tongue is a mighty force in human life indeed.

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, pp. 135-137

Now there is some debate if that story actually caused the Boxer revelation or not but the power of our words, the things that we say can have huge consequences.

And here's the thing. The tongue is an index of our character because it shows us who we are by what we say! That is what James is dealing with in these verses and my prayer is that we would listen to what the Holy Spirit is showing us and not only hear these things, but that we would also apply these things to our lives.

Remember what James said, "**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**" James 1:22.

This morning we are going to focus on three points in the verses we will be studying, in a message I have called, ***THE POWER OF THE TONGUE!*** They are as follows:

THE POWER TO DIRECT – JAMES 3:3-4

THE POWER TO DESTROY – JAMES 3:5-8

THE POWER TO BLESS – JAMES 3:9-12

So, with that as our background, let's begin reading in James chapter 3 starting in verse 3 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we look at ***THE BELIEVER AND HIS SPEECH!***

JAMES 3 **VERSES 3-4**

Keep in mind that James is giving us two illustrations to show us how something that is so small can control something that is so strong, so big. And to do this he speaks of a horse and a ship!

So, let's begin with a horse. These creatures can weigh anywhere from 800 pounds to 2,200 pounds when they are adults. They can be massive! Think about the Clydesdale horses, they are huge.

Imagine the power that they have and yet, what controls these massive creatures? Just a small bit that is placed in their mouth, that is all that is needed to control them.

But here is the problem. If you lose control of the harness that is attached to the bit of the horse, he will be out of control, he will do his own thing!

But if the rider has control of the harness and the bit, he can direct the horse in the direction that he wants it to go! The small bit can control a large horse!

Keep that idea in mind, that there needs to be someone who is controlling the horse, Someone has to have control of the harness and the bit that is in the mouth of the horse!

The next illustration that James uses is that of a large ship and what controls the ship. And as you look at the size of ships today and the size of what controls them, it is amazing. You see, what directs the ship is the rudder!

Now I want you to think about this. The Queen Elizabeth weighs some 83,673 gross tons and yet its rudder weighs only 140 tons!

That little rudder, compared to the ship, controls the direction of the ship. And here is the problem. If the rudder is broken then the pilot will not be able to steer the ship, it would be out of control.

That means someone has to have control of that rudder and that is the pilot! If no one is steering the ship, then the ship will be out of control.

And what we are looking at here is ***THE POWER TO DIRECT!*** And here's the thing, the tongue has the power to change the direction of a person's life for good or for evil.

Solomon said in Proverbs 18:21, "**Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.**"

Solomon has a lot to say about the tongue, what comes out of our mouth. The words we speak have great potential for good or for evil depending on what comes out. And Solomon is making the point that the words we speak could bring death or it can bring life.

As one person said, "Keep your words warm and sweet for you might have to eat them!" We need to be prepared for the consequences of what we say so be careful what comes from your mouth!

And I think the point that James is making is even though the tongue, being a small member of our body, has the power to change the course of a life.

Think about the words we have spoken that have destroyed friendships, relationships, jobs! They can be deadly, and we think we have things under control, but ***WE*** don't! That is the problem.

Then what can we do? The Psalmist prayed and so should we, "**Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.**"

We must be able to surrender to the Lord before we speak, or we will be in trouble. One writer put it like this, "This means that both the bit and the rudder must be under the control of a strong hand. The expert horseman keeps the mighty power of his steed under control, and the experienced pilot courageously steers the ship through the storm. When Jesus Christ controls the tongue, then we need not fear saying the wrong things - or even saying the right things in a wrong way!"

Let me explain it like this, with this story. We are told,

A man working in the produce department was asked by a lady if she could buy half a head of lettuce. He replied, "Half a head? Are you serious? God grows these in whole heads and that's how we sell them!"

"You mean," she persisted, "that after all the years I've shopped here, you won't sell me half-a-head of lettuce?"

"Look," he said, "If you like I'll ask the manager."

She indicated that would be appreciated, so the young man marched to the front of the store. "You won't believe this, but there's a lame-brain idiot of a lady back there who wants to know if she can buy half-a-head of lettuce."

He noticed the manager gesturing, and he turned around to see the lady standing behind him, obviously having followed him to the front of the store. "And this nice lady was wondering if she could buy the other half" he concluded.

Later in the day the manager cornered the young man and said, "That was the finest example of thinking on your feet I've ever seen! Where did you learn that?" "I grew up in Grand Rapids, and if you know anything about Grand Rapids, you know that it's known for its great hockey teams and its ugly women."

The manager's face flushed, and he interrupted, "My wife is from Grand Rapids!" "And which hockey team did she play for?"

- Source Unknown

Think about the power of the spoken word. I don't think we realize how much our words can influence people. And that can be good or bad as I have said.

Let me show you how words can influence people for evil. We see in many of the mosques today young people going in and listening to the radical imams preach hate and violence against non-Muslims. They are being filled day in and day out with this hatred towards others and before you know it, those words have influenced them to be suicide bombers or to kill people!

Maybe you think I am exaggerating what impact our words can have, I am not! Listen to this story of a Muslim extremist who turned to Christ. We are told,

Mr. Mohammad's particular experience, however, does not fit easily into this narrative. He lives in a majority-Muslim country, has little interest in seeking asylum in the West and treads an unlikely path followed by few former jihadis.

His is a story that began in a Kurdish part of northern Syria, Afrin, where he grew up in a Muslim family. Mr. Mohammad flirted with extremism in his teens. His cousin took him to hear jihadist preachers as a 15-year-old, and he adhered to some of the most extreme interpretations of Islam, "even the ones you haven't heard of." But when war broke out in Syria, after the country's 2011 uprising, Mr. Mohammad initially joined the secular Kurdish forces in their fight for autonomy.

Mr. Mohammad's subsequent ideological journey rarely made complete sense. But by his account, he became traumatized by the deaths he witnessed on the front line, which in turn re-energized his interest in the extremist versions of Islam that he had learned about as a teenager.

"When I saw all these dead bodies," he said, "it made me believe all these things they said in the lectures. It made me seek the greatness of religion." Or, at least, his violent interpretations of that religion.

When a friend invited him to defect in summer 2012 to the Nusra Front, a group that seeks to establish an extremist state, Mr. Mohammad readily agreed. As a Nusra fighter, he continued to witness extreme brutality. His colleagues executed several captives by crushing them with a bulldozer. Another prisoner was forced to drink several liters of water after his genitals were tied shut with string.

This time, however, Nusra's propaganda made the violence seem tolerable. "They used to tell us these people were the enemies of God," Mr. Mohammad said, "and so I looked on these executions positively."

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And in the end, this man came to saving faith because the words that were used to bring violence into his life, he now heard the words of peace and joy found in Jesus Christ and through his conversion, this angry, violent man, became a man of peace who is now wanted by Islam, to put him to death! But the words of Christ brought life to this man and not death!

Again, our words do have an impact upon people as Warren Wiersbe shares with us. He said, "On April 21, 1855, Edward Kimball went into a Boston shoe store and led young Dwight L. Moody to Christ. The result: one of history's greatest evangelists, a man whose ministry still continues . . . Yes, the tongue is like a bit and a rudder: it has the power to direct. How important it is that our tongues direct people in the right way!"

So, the tongue has ***THE POWER TO DIRECT***, and yet, it is up to us the direction our words will have, for good or for evil!

And, as we read on, we will see that the tongue not only has *THE POWER TO DIRECT*, but it also has *THE POWER TO DESTROY A LIFE!*

VERSES 5-8

In these verses we see James speak of the power of the tongue to destroy and to do this he uses the illustration of a forest fire and how devastating it can be. It takes just a spark to burn down a lot of forest! Let me explain. We are told,

The tongue has awesome potential for harm, as the forest fire analogy suggests. At 9:00 one Sunday evening, October 8, 1871, poor Mrs. O’Leary’s cow kicked over the lantern as she was being milked, starting the great Chicago Fire, which blackened three and one half miles of the city, destroying over 17,000 buildings before it was checked by gunpowder explosions on the south line of the fire. The fire lasted two days and cost over 250 lives.

But, ironically, that was not the greatest inferno in the Midwest that year. Historians tell us that on the *same* day that dry autumn a spark ignited a raging fire in the North Woods of Wisconsin which burned for an entire month, taking more lives than the Chicago Fire. A veritable firestorm destroyed billions of yards of precious timber – all from one spark!

The tongue has that scope of inflammatory capability. James is saying that those who misuse the tongue are guilty of spiritual arson. A mere spark of an ill-spoken word can produce a firestorm that annihilates everything it touches. . . . The tongue contains and conveys all the world system’s wickedness. It is party to every evil there is, and it actively obtrudes its evil into our lives.

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, p. 138

Now please understand that James is not saying that it would be much better for us if we never spoke a word. It may be easier than exercising true self-control over the tongue, but it is not practical nor is it what God wants us to do!

Think about it, the bit, the rudder, and the fire can all do tremendous *good* when they are controlled properly. That is the key and we will talk about that in a few minutes. But just keep in mind that the way to control the tongue is to surrender your whole life, your whole body, including the tongue to the Lord.

And the next illustration that James speaks of is that of wild animals. Think about what we do with them. We can take wild animals, huge creatures, ferocious creatures and tame them.

We can make bears ride bicycles and I am not talking about the Chicago Bears but wild animals!

We can get lions to do tricks, not win the Super Bowl but do tricks, and we can get elephants to stand up on their hind legs on our command. How human nature can tame beastly nature and yet the tongue, as small as it is, we have no control of, it can’t be tamed!

One writer put it like this and when you think about it, he nails it. He wrote, “I am more deadly than the screaming shell from the howitzer. I win without killing. I tear down homes, break hearts, and wreck lives. I travel on the wings of the wind. No innocence is strong enough to intimidate me, no purity pure enough to daunt me. I have no regard for truth, no respect for justice, no mercy for the defenseless. My victims are as numerous as the sands of the sea, and often as innocent. I never forget and seldom forgive. *My name is Gossip.*”

What can we do about it? Remember what David’s cry was, “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.” Psalm 141:3.

We can't do it on our own because self gets in the way and that is not a good thing because self tends to exalt self and puts others down.

I am certain that if I was to go around this room and asked you if you have ever said anything that you regretted, all of you would say "Yes!" and I am sure you would have more than one example, just as I would have. Don't worry, I am not going to do that!

But isn't it easy for us to let words fly out of our mouths, and when they do, many times they are so destructive.

And being religious is also dangerous because they tend to look down upon others and exalt themselves. They miss the whole point. But Jesus didn't! Remember when the Jewish religious leaders were coming against Jesus and His men for not washing their hands according to the Law that they made up. And we are told in Matthew 15:16-20, "**So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 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.'**"

True defilement does not come from putting certain foods in your mouth, but what comes out of your mouth, that is where true defilement comes from.

Isn't that interesting. Jesus is saying that what comes out of our lips, what we say with our tongue is only a reflection of what is in our heart, it is a heart issue!

If you are self-centered then evil will come forth. If God is on the throne of your heart, then your speech will be seasoned with salt, it will be gracious!

Paul tells us in Galatians 5:17, "**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.**"

And I think we understand this. Paul is telling us that there is a war going on, a battle going on in our lives. That flesh nature that was crucified is now trying to resurrect itself and show its ugly face, but the Spirit of God is trying to control your life also.

Who wins? It all depends on who you surrender your life to at that given moment. But prepare ahead of time how you will respond by spending time with God and heading the Spirit's guiding!

You see, Paul said in Galatians 5:16, "**I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**"

And Paul tells us in Romans 6:12-14, "**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.**"

Thus, may we walk in the Spirit so the words that come from our lips will be seasoned with salt, they will be a blessing to people and build them up and not tear them down!

Again, you might not think much about this. You may even be frustrated that we are taking so much time dealing with this issue, the tongue or the words that come from our lips.

But let me put this in perspective for you in regards how deadly our words can be. For every word in Hitler's book Mein Kampf, 125 people died in World War II.

So please take this to heart, words that we speak can be deadly!

Listen to this because it will drive home this point. We are told,

Xanthus, the philosopher, once told his servant that the next day he was going to have some friends for dinner and that he should get the best thing he could find in the market.

The philosopher and his guests sat down the next day at the table. They had nothing but tongue - four or five courses of tongue - tongue cooked in this way, and tongue cooked in that way.

The philosopher finally lost his patience and said to his servant, "Didn't I tell you to get the best thing in the market?"

The servant said, "I did get the best thing in the market. Isn't the tongue the organ of sociability, the organ of eloquence, the organ of kindness, the organ of worship?"

Then Xanthus the philosopher said, "Tomorrow I want you to get the worst thing in the market."

And on the morrow the philosopher sat at the table, and there was nothing there but tongue - four or five courses of tongue - tongue in this shape and tongue in that shape.

The philosopher again lost his patience and said, "Didn't I tell you to get the worst thing in the market?"

The servant replied, "I did; for isn't the tongue the organ of blasphemy, the organ of defamation, the organ of lying?"

Well done, servant; you certainly taught the philosopher a lesson, the same lesson the Apostle James wants to teach us in the third chapter. The tongue can do great good, and it can do great evil.

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

How true that is. The tongue can be used for good or for evil!

Now, let me show you what is fueling these words we speak that are so deadly. Look at James 3:6 where James said, "**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.**"

James is saying that the words we speak that are deadly come from the pit of Hell and they not only come from the pit of Hell, but they are *continually* set on fire by Hell!

James is saying that the uncontrolled tongue has a direct pipeline to Hell! That is how dangerous it is and thus, cut off that pipeline by drawing close to God and He will draw close to you!

And listen again to what James says in James 3:8, "**But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.**"

Poole makes these remarks on this verse. He wrote, "The poison of the tongue is no less deadly, it murders men's reputations by the slanders it utters, their souls by the lusts and passions it stirs up in them, and many times their bodies too by the contentions and quarrels it raiseth against men."

Make no mistake about it, "Its 'venom' is more deadly than a snake's because it can destroy morally, socially, economically, and spiritually." (Source unknown)

As we finish up this section, let me share this with you to show you how deadly our words, the tongue can be. We are told,

A scientist has found out that poison from the skin of a tiny South American tree frog is far more toxic than any other known venom. Rain forest Indians use the venom from the skin of the kokoi frog to poison their blowgun arrows.

There is a poison even more deadly - the poison from an evil tongue. "The tongue is a fire, a word of iniquity." "With their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (James 3:6 and context; Rom 3:13,14).

Are you a Christian, able to control your tongue? If so, you are a mature Christian. "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2).

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Make no mistake about it, the tongue has **THE POWER TO DESTROY!**

As we read on we will be looking at our last point, **THE POWER TO BLESS!**

VERSES 9-12

James nails this one and it is not an easy pill to swallow. James just tells it like it is.

He said that our tongue, the words that we speak can be used for the highest calling in that we can bless God! That is great.

But, he continues on and says that the same tongue that spoke words to bless God can be used for the lowest evil, to curse man! And James says that this should not be, obviously and yet, it is what we do see!

James puts it like this, "**Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.**" James 3:10.

If we are born again, if we have given our life to Jesus Christ, if He is Lord and Savior of our life, then our speech should be consistently glorifying to God! Doesn't that just make sense? I hope it does.

You see, our speech in church should not be one way and then, once we leave church our whole vocabulary changes and we curse man, the words that flow from our mouths are not glorifying to God. That should not be!

And I guess the problem is that the last part of a Christian's body to be redeemed seems to be their tongue! Please don't use that as an excuse.

Keep in mind that what is flowing from our mouths just reveals what is on the inside of us and if the inner man is not being built up then the flesh will be and what is manifested in our lives will not be good

Let me show you what we can do so that what flows from our lips will not only bless the Lord, but it will bless the body of Christ, it will bless people. And keep in mind that man can't tame the tongue, only God can. And the key will be surrender, surrender to the Lord and let Him work in us so that He can work through us and our speech will be a blessing!

We are told,

First, ***we must ask God to cauterize our lips***, confessing as Isaiah did, "Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty" (Isaiah 6:5).

Then ***we need to submit to the cleansing touch***: "Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for'" (vv. 6, 7).

Next ***we can prepare to serve***: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me'" (v. 8).

Isaiah's outline as a spiritual exercise, performed with all one's heart, will work wonders in our lives! Let us all do this today!

Second, hand-in-hand with the first step, there must be an *ongoing prayerfulness* regarding our tongues – regular, detailed prayer. This coupled with the first step, will work a spiritual miracle.

Third, we must resolve to *discipline ourselves* regarding the use of the tongue – not to criticize, not to give or receive gossip, not to belittle or demean or falsely flatter, not to lie, not to boast.

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, p. 138

And I will add one more, *be in the Word of God so the Spirit of God can guide you and direct your life*. That is important and if we are only hearers of the Word and not doers also, then we are deceiving ourselves and that is a dangerous place to be!

Now let me also say this. James is not saying that if you curse others, put others down, use profanity you are not saved. He just says, **“these things ought not to be so.”** James 3:10.

Then what is his point? His point is this. He is speaking to these believers, whose tongue seems to cut people up, curse people, and he wants them to mature in the faith and stop doing these things. Don't remain carnal. Don't remain immature. ***GROW UP!***

Make no mistake about it, as we bless God with our speech it truly is our highest calling! And our blessing of God will be manifested in how we blessed others!

Let me show you what I mean. In I Chronicles 29:10-15, as David collected some of the provisions for the Temple, we are told, **“Therefore David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David said: ‘Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, We thank You And praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You. For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, As were all our fathers; Our days on earth are as a shadow, And without hope.”**

And we rejoice in that, we praise God and we bless God and then, from the other side of our mouth we curse our fellow man who was created in the image of God? That makes no sense, does it? No it doesn't!

And like I have said, James is saying that as Christians, that should not be. That is inconsistent with who we are, who is in control of our life!

Our speech should be filled with praise unto God, not just on Sunday or Thursday but as we leave the church and go out into the world. We should not sound vulgar, be obnoxious, sound like a sailor with our speech. Listen to this and you will see what I mean in regard to how people view what flows from our lips. We are told,

This is told of a Christian man whose most intimate friends could not find out anything about his religious affiliations.

One day a friend of his, on being told that he belonged to the church, exclaimed, “Why, I have known him intimately for some years, but I never dreamed he was a Christian!”

He could not possibly conceive how the mouth that spoke so violently and indecently of his fellow men could be opened in church to praise and bless God.

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You see, as we have been redeemed by God He has given to us the capacity of speaking things that are holy, that not only bless God but man who was created in the image of God!

And to show us how this should not be, James gives to us a couple of illustrations to show how our speech should not be used as an instrument for the Devil. Our speech should not be inconsistent because it doesn't make sense. Are you truly living what you say you believe?

Look again at James 3:11-12, **“Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.”**

Again, James drives this point home that blessings and cursing should not flow from our lips just as a spring is not going to send forth both fresh and bitter water through the same opening. Nor can a fig tree produce olives, or a grape vine produce figs!

And yet, when it comes to our speech we bless God and we curse man and this should not be!

I think Jesus makes that very point when He said in Matthew 12:34-37 of the Jewish religious leaders, **“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.”**

Again, what is going on in our heart will be manifested in our speech!

Thus, get right with God, give Him your whole life and as you do, good will come forth. If you refuse, you won't like what you hear and either will others!

You see, what we say can be an indication of what we are – it can reveal our inner character, who is on the throne of our hearts, who is controlling our life!

Make no mistake about it, bitter words will come from a bitter heart!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this in regard to the speech that flows from our lips. He wrote,

The tongue that blesses the Father, and then turns around and curses men made in God's image, is in desperate need of spiritual medicine! How easy it is to sing the hymns during the worship service, then after the service, get into the family car and argue and fight all the way home! “My brethren, these things ought not to be.”

The problem, of course, is not the tongue; it is the heart. . . . “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man” (Matt. 15:18). “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). As we fill our hearts with God's Word, and yield to the Holy Spirit, He can use us to bring delight to others, and we will be refreshing fountains and trees.

- Warren W. Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary NT, p. 869

I don't think we realize the power of the tongue or the power of the words that flow from our lips. But hopefully this morning you have a better understanding what God desires for your life, the words that you are to speak are to bless the Lord and bless those who were created in His image!

You see, what James wrote here was not just for the Jewish Christians who were immature in their faith back then, it is for all of us to grow up and let our speech reflect what we say we believe!

Remember the story I opened up with regarding the four reporters who provided the spark that ignited the infamous Boxer Rebellion just by the words, false words that they spoke!

Words can be very destructive, but they can also be a tremendous blessing!

When I first became a Registered Nurse, many moons ago, I was in my twenties and I went from working on a Telemetry Unit, where we cared for heart patients that didn't need the ICU, as an LPN, to getting my Registered Nurse degree and went straight into the ICU/CCU.

I was the youngest person there in the Intensive Care Unit and I was young, did I tell you that?

And being young, having lots of energy, wanting to learn as much as I could during my orientation, I took care of the sickest patients. I had a wonderful preceptor who taught me so much.

One day, before we started our shift, she said, "Joe, you have been taking care of the sickest patients and I think you need a little break. We will take care of one patient on a ventilator, (breathing machine), who was stable, and the other patient came in with chest pain and he is doing fine. He no longer has chest pain. And, he is one of the anesthesiologists here at the hospital."

I wasn't happy, but I did what she told me, she was my preceptor.

So, I thought I would see my easy patient first, the one that came in with chest pain but was pain free now. "Was" is the key word!

And I walked in and assessed him, and he was doing fine. And then he said that he was having a little bit of chest pain, maybe a 4/10. So, I spoke with my preceptor and felt that giving him nitroglycerin was the appropriate thing to do to see if the chest pain went away.

Guess what? It didn't go away, and it just got worse, and worse, and worse!!!! It was a 10/10 and when I looked at his heart rate monitor, his EKG waves looked like tombstones. Now you don't have to know anything about heart rhythms, but when you see a tombstone for the waves you know what that means – **DEATH!**

Again, this was my easy patient. And he coded, no heart rate, no breathing. Everyone in the hospital was there in the room, doctors and more doctors besides everyone else.

And we put in a pacemaker, all kinds of drips were flowing into him. Doctors were yelling at me to get this and get that, and I was not sure what they always wanted. We put in an Intra-aortic balloon pump, not sure why because he had no heart rate.

And after a long, long time of trying, the doctors finally said, "Call the code!" It was over, he died!

I was devastated. I went home, and Julie was sitting outside, and I came to her and said, "I don't think I can do this. I could not save my patient today!" And my wife is sweet, and she tried to comfort me and encourage me, but I knew I was done!

The next day I went into work and my boss and my preceptor sat down to talk with me. I told them I wasn't sure if I could continue on. And my preceptor told me, "Joe, you can't save everyone. You do the best you can but there are times there is nothing you can do." And the words that she spoke blessed me and the lessons I learned made me into the critical care nurse that I am.

Do you see what words can do? What a blessing that was to me. And some thirty years working in all kinds of ICU's all began with the words that someone said to me to encourage me to continue on!

Remember what Paul said in Hebrews 10:24-25, "**And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**"

I have seen people who use their words not to stir people up in the work but to put them down for not doing this or not doing that and then they wonder why no one is following them! Go figure.

May our words stir people up, encourage them, and yes, even correct them in love in order to build them up!

Let me close our study this morning with these words that Warren Wiersbe wrote regarding the, "*Twelve Words That Can Transform Your Life.*" He wrote,

"If you use these words *and sincerely mean what you say from your heart*, you will find that God will use you to be a blessing and encouragement to others. There are only twelve of them, but they work.

"Please" and "Thank you." When you use these three words, you are treating others like people and not things. You are showing appreciation.

"I'm sorry." These two words have a way of breaking down walls and building bridges.

"I love you." Too many people read "romance" into these words, but they go much deeper than that. As Christians, we should love the brethren and even love our enemies. "I love you" is a statement that can carry tremendous power.

"I'm praying for you." And be sure that you are. When you talk to God about people, then you can talk to people about God. Our private praying for people helps us in our public meeting with people. Of course, we never say "I'm praying for you" in a boastful way, as though we are more spiritual than others. We say it in an encouraging way, to let others know that we care enough for them to meet them at the throne of grace.

Yes, the smallest but largest troublemaker in all the world is the tongue. But it does not have to be a troublemaker! God can use our tongues to direct others into the way of life, and to delight them in the trials of life. The tongue is a little member, but it has great power.

Give God your tongue and your heart each day and ask Him to use you to be a blessing to others.

- Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary NT*, p. 869-870