

- **\*Read James 3:1-13\*** We have spent a lot of time in the **letter of James** over the past few weeks. One reason for this is because of the great practical nature of this letter. The focus of the book is to encourage disciples to persevere through the trials that we might face in this life. This theme is well established in **1:2-4**.
- This year we have been focusing on glorifying God throughout our lives. We probably could've just used this **letter of James** as the template for our series with all of the many different subjects that it contains. But we will for sure use this month's lesson to focus on glorifying God through our words. Every person has the ability to communicate in one way or another, and we are responsible for those words that we share with others. This lesson will focus on the teachings that Peter would have for all of us to remember when it comes to the great power of the tiny tongue.

### **I. Though small, the tongue holds great power. (vv.3-5)**

- A. Compared to other parts of the body, the tongue might seem small, weak, and insignificant.
  1. The bridle in the horses mouth is small, yet it controls the horse.
  2. The rudder of a boat is small, yet it changes the direction of the whole vessel.
  3. The smallest of flames or embers can ignite the most devastating of fires.
- B. Even though it cannot boast of great size or might, the tongue and the words it produces have great power that must be handled with great responsibility.
  1. The illustrations of this chapter should make this point very clear to us.
  2. Our tongues are not the largest muscles in our bodies, but they play a key role. Without our tongues, we would not be able to communicate with others as efficiently as we do.
  3. We know that our words are vehicles of thought, and without our tongues, we would not be able to share our thoughts with others as easily as we do.
  4. This should lead us to understand that our words can have a huge impact in our lives.
  5. These few verses are preceded by the warnings against becoming teachers because there is great responsibility in doing so. We should be working towards the point where we are in control of our tongues and have become that mature man of God. **(3:1,2)**

### **II. It is imperative to bring the tongue under control. (vv.7,8)**

- A. The undisciplined tongue can cause horrific damage.
  1. The words of the tongue (in reality any words we either orally say or write or type or text out) carry great power within themselves, and we must seek to bring that power under control.
  2. If we fail to discipline our tongues and keep from saying harmful things, then our words can cause trouble that we might not be able to reverse.
  3. Think about the words that we say, once they are said they can't be taken back. We might try to do some damage control, but those words can never be erased.
  4. In the same way, the things we put on the internet, once they are out there, they will remain there forever. How many famous people have gone off on Twitter or Facebook or Instagram about something and they quickly realize their mistakes in saying whatever it is that was said. They erase the tweet, post, or picture message, but what has already happened? Someone has already taken a screenshot and now that post will live forever. **("Put away from you a deceitful mouth and put devious speech far from you" Prov. 4:24)**
  5. The effects of the tongue are also far reaching. Words are not confined to time or space. The words I say in one place can have far reaching effects in another place entirely. And words that are said today can have effects years down the road. (check your politicians for examples of such)
  6. The old saying of thinking before we speak has never been more needed in society. Before, you might be able to get away with it orally, but in today's world...well...anything said is here to stay.
- B. Therefore, we must give great effort to make sure that our tongues are under control.
  1. The Christian should give every effort to bring his or her tongue under control. Paul said he gave great effort to make sure that his body was disciplined. **(I Cor. 9:27)**
  2. We cannot control the words of others, which might be James's point in **v.8**, but we are very much responsible for every word that we produce.
  3. We must recognize the evil potential of our words, and do everything we can to not poison those around us with our words.

4. We must recognize that this is a battle that we must always be fighting. We must always be giving the effort to control our words for the tongue, as James says, can be a restless evil that is always looking for opportunities to hurt others. We very well might want to say something hateful, but we must give that effort to restrain ourselves and not speak evil. **(v.8)**

### **III. The tongue is capable of great good and great evil. (vv. 9-13)**

- A. The tongue can greatly help or harm others.
  1. Our words can be the difference between someone being encouraged or discouraged, helped or hindered, healed or harmed....What do our words do for others?
  2. Someone might say, well if my words hold so much power then I just wont communicate for fear of doing it poorly..., but that isn't James' point at all.
  3. James is not calling for cowardly silence, but instead he is calling for godly wisdom to be shown through our speech.
  4. The next step in considering our speech is to ask how it is that we can come to use our words for the betterment of others.
- B. Whether our tongues do good or evil is based upon our hearts.
  1. Jesus gave effort to make this point clear to His listeners in **Mark 7:14-23**.
  2. The Pharisees and Scribes wanted to make a big deal about Jesus's disciples eating with unwashed hands, but Jesus wanted them & the people to recognize that such things didn't defile a person. The true defilement comes from the person's actions, & those evil actions originate in the heart. **(vv.21-23)**
  3. In **Matthew 6:22,23**, in the context of the heart and motivations for actions, Jesus says that the "eye" or I believe He is referencing the heart needs to be good and full of light. However, if we allow it to be bad and full of darkness, then everything about us will be full of darkness.
  4. Again, consider the illustrations of James...a fresh water fountain can't produce salt water and a fig tree cant produce olives. **(vv.11,12)**
  5. If we desire to have our words be pure then we must begin with the heart....

### **IV. We ought to prepare our hearts so we can glorify God with our tongues.**

- A. The thoughts and intentions of our hearts ought to be pure if we desire to glorify God with our words.
  1. If we want to say the right things, then we need to be thinking about saying the right things.
  2. Seasoning our words with salt **(Col. 4:6)** isn't something that happens at the spur of the moment.
  3. The preparation begins in the heart, and we must make sure that we are preparing our hearts to have good things flow from them. **(Prov. 4:23)**
  4. If within our hearts we are constantly thinking hateful thoughts, if we are thinking arrogantly, if we are thinking impurely, or if we are never considering those around us, then why in the world would we expect for good things to flow from it?
  5. If you are struggling with saying the right things or having words seasoned with salt, then I would encourage you to first consider your heart and what you are allowing it to be filled with.
- B. If our hearts are pure, then we will be able to glorify God with our tongues in many ways.
  1. If good and pure thoughts are the substance of our hearts, then words that bless others and please God will be the produce of our lips.
  2. We will gladly offer words of encouragement to those who are struggling.
  3. Our speech will be wholesome and others will see our dedication to our Lord.
  4. We will know just how to respond when someone says something hurtful towards us.
  5. We will know how and be able to respond to the one that is need of God's Word.
  6. We will not only know what to say, but we will always know how to say them the right way.
  7. Through doing these types of things, we will be the salt and light of the world that we ought to be **(Matt. 5:12-16)** and others will see Jesus living in us. I don't think there is anyone we would rather be like that Jesus because He always knew the right things to say at the right times.

Within each of us is the great power of our words. Each word we utter or write or text can be the difference between someone being encouraged or discouraged. Those words can be the difference between righteousness and unrighteousness. So how will I use my words? That question will begin to be answered by how I have been preparing my heart. May I allow God to help mold my heart with pure things so that my words will be pure. May God help me to be slow to speak and quick to think. May God be glorified in every word that we say, and may those around us be blessed when we use the great power of the tiny tongue.