

October 4, 2020 Faith Under Fire Pt 5

**James has up to this point given us the 1st of 5
Key Marks of a Spiritual Mature Person:**

Chapter 1: A Mature Person Is Positive Under Pressure

Chapter 2: A Mature Person Puts His Faith Into Action

Today we discover the 3rd Key

Chapter 3: A Mature Person Has Power Over Their Tongue

James 3:1-12... 1 Not many should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what they say, they are mature, able also to control the whole body. 3 Now if we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we direct their whole bodies. 4 And consider ships: Though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how a small fire sets ablaze a large forest. 6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among our members. It stains the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 Every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish is tamed and has been tamed by humans, 8 but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness. 10 Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way. 11 Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.

TAKING ON THE TASK OF TAMING THE TONGUE

PORTIONS ADAPTED FROM:

- * Rick Warren: How To Manage Your Mouth Developing a Faith That Works – Pt 8
- * Warren Wiersbe. The Bible Exposition Commentary Vo. 2. James. P. 357-362
- * James M. Stulac. James. IVP NT Commentary. p 120-130
- * Kurt A. Richardson. \James. New American Commentary. Vol. 36. P. 145-162.

JAMES 3:2...For we all stumble (fall, make a mistake) in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what they say, they are MATURE, able also to control the whole body.

Chapter 3 ...Mark of Maturity A Mature Person Has Power Over Their Tongue Taking On The Task Of Taming The Tongue

James must have felt strongly about addressing the problem of the tongue as he mentions it in every one of the five chapters in this short 108 verse letter.

- ***James 1: 19... My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger,***
- ***James 1:26...If anyone thinks he is religious without controlling his tongue, his religion is useless and he deceives himself.***
- ***James 2:12... Speak and act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom.***
- ***James 3:1-12... specific addressing in several verses***
- ***James 4:11... Don't criticize one another, brothers and sisters. Anyone who defames or judges a fellow believer defames and judges the law. If you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.***
- ***James 5: 9,12 ... Brothers and sisters, do not complain about one another, so that you will not be judged. Look, the judge stands at the door! ¹² Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "yes" mean "yes," and your "no" mean "no," so that you won't fall under judgment***

The Power of the Tongue

“Everybody seems to have something to say. The average American has 30 conversations a day and you'll spend 1/5 of your life talking. In one year your conversations will fill 66 books of 800 pages a book. If you're a man you speak an average of 20,000 words a day. If you're a woman you speak 30,000 words a day. (Like the guy who was asked, "Do you resent that your wife has the last word?" He replied, "No, I'm just glad when she finally gets to it!" Or the wife who broke her jaw. When they took an X-ray it turned out to be a motion picture.)

Some of us are born with a silver foot in our mouths. We have this natural ability to say the wrong thing at the wrong time. Nothing is opened more wrongly at the wrong time than our mouths. (Like the stock boy at the grocery store. Lady asked him, "Can I buy half a head of lettuce?" He walked back to the manager to ask, not realizing she was walking right behind him. He said, "You're not going to believe this, there's an old bag out there who wants to buy half a head of lettuce." He turned around and saw her standing there and said, "And this fine lady would like to buy the other half.") (Rick Warren)

Our mouths get us into a lot of trouble. James talks more about the tongue than anybody else in the New Testament “In order to impress on is the importance of controlled speech, and the great consequences of our words, James gives us six (6) word pictures of the tongue: the bit, the rudder, fire, a deadly poison, a fountain, and a fig tree. You can put these into three (3) meaningful classifications that reveal the three (3) powers of the tongue.” (Wiersbe. P.358)

1. POWER TO DIRECT WHERE I GO (vs. 1-4)

Bit & a Rudder

"When we put bits in the mouths of horses...we can turn the whole animal." (vs. 3)

"Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go." (vs. 4)

The tongue “has tremendous influence and control over my life. Where are you headed in life? Where are you going to be ten years from now? Look at your conversation. What do you like to talk about? What do you talk about the most? We shape our words and then our words shape us. James says, “The tongue is small, it's tiny”. And because it's tiny we think it's insignificant. But it has tremendous power. v. 3 Consider a bit in a horse's mouth. You've got a huge stallion, 2,000-3,000 pounds, and a 95 pound jockey on his back. The jockey can control the tremendous mighty horse by a little piece of metal stuck strategically over his tongue. Likewise your tongue controls the direction of your life wherever you want to go, and a little bit of a word or a phrase can influence the total direction of your life.

Then he says, “Consider a ship”. The Queen Mary has 3 acres of recreational space. The anchor is equal to the weight of ten cars. Yet a relatively small rudder directs the huge ocean liner out in the middle of the waves and winds and seas. A little rudder keeps it on course.

Many people think, if the tongue has such influence maybe it's best to say nothing. Not talk at all, be silent. (A guy joined the Trappist monastery. For three years he was given a probation period where he was not to speak at all, but at the end of each year he could say two words. The first year at the end he said, "Bed hard." At end of the second year he said, "Food cold." At the end of the third year he's about had it. He comes in and says, "I quit". The head priest says, "That doesn't surprise me. All you've done is complain since you got here.") James says that my tongue directs where I go, so I've got to learn to control it”. (Rick Warren)

2. POWER TO DESTROY WHAT I HAVE (vs. 5-8)

Fire & Poison

"Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue is also a fire..." (vs. 5)

"...it sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell." (vs. 6b)

"If you want to stay out of trouble be careful what you say!" Proverbs 21:23 (GN)

"All kinds of animals...have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." (vs. 7-8)

"Have you ever met a verbal arsonist? Their words are always inflammatory. James says that words, like a fire, can burn people. Why do you think they call it "Dean Martin's Celebrity Roast"? Because you can burn people with what you say. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." It does hurt. Fire and words under control can give tremendous warmth and light, but fire and words out of control can be devastating. It can destroy miles and miles of homes and lands and peoples". (Rick Warren)

Follow this chain of events..." you come home from work and you're tired and grumpy and cranky. The husband walks in and yells at the wife. The wife yells at the oldest kid. The oldest kid yells at the baby sister. The baby sister goes out and kicks the dog. The dog goes and bites the cat. The cat comes in and scratches the baby. The baby bites the head off the Barbie doll. Wouldn't it be a whole lot simpler if the husband just bit off the head of the Barbie doll himself? Chain reaction, the course of hell. " (R. Warren)

The tongue can be like a poison. The word in Greek is literally "snake venom". Just a few drops can kill. You can assassinate somebody with your words. Assassinate their character. The tongue is a deadly weapon.

No wonder King David said in ***Psalms 141:3,4...***³ ***LORD, set up a guard for my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips.***⁴ ***Do not let my heart turn to any evil thing or perform wicked acts with evildoers. Do not let me feast on their delicacies.***

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

3. THE POWER TO DISPLAY WHO I AM (vs. 9-12)

Delight or Defame?

Fountain & a Fig Tree

"Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be." (vs. 10)

"Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?...can a fig tree bear olives or a grapevine bear figs?"(vs. 11,12)

The tongue can display who you are on the inside, your real character. "It tells what's really inside of me. **First** James points out how inconsistent we are in our speech. v. 9 *"The tongue we praise our Lord and Father and with the same tongue we curse men who've been made in God's likeness. From the same mouth come praise and cursings. My brothers, this should not be."* We say these things out of the same mouth. We come to church on Sunday. The highest use of your mouth is to use it praising God. We sing praises to the Lord. Then we walk out, get into the car and on the way home we argue about where we're going to eat lunch. Isn't it amazing how quickly your attitude can change? The tongue is a strange contradiction. It's so inconsistent. It's amazing how quickly it can change, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. One minute we're praising God and the next we're cursing other people. Cursing here doesn't necessarily mean profanity. It means any kind of put down" (R. Warren)

Luke 6:43-45...⁴³ ***"A good tree doesn't produce bad fruit; on the other hand, a bad tree doesn't produce good fruit!"***⁴⁴ ***For each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs aren't gathered from thornbushes, or grapes picked from a bramble bush.***⁴⁵ ***A good person produces good out of the good stored up in his heart. An evil person produces evil out of the evil stored up in his heart, for his mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.***

"If you've got a problem with your tongue, it's much more serious than you think. You have a heart problem. A person with a harsh tongue has an angry heart. A person with an overactive tongue has an unsettled heart. A person with a boasting tongue has an insecure heart. A person with a filthy tongue has an impure heart. A person who is critical all the time has a bitter heart. **a person who is always encouraging has a happy heart. A person who speaks gently has a loving heart. A person who speaks truthfully has an honest heart**". (R. Warren)

THE PROBLEM: OUR HEART

THE SOLUTION:

1. GET A NEW HEART

"Rid yourself of all the offenses you have committed and get a new heart and a new spirit!" Ezekiel 18:31

How do I get a new heart? 2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new person. The old has passed away. Behold all things have become new." New life, new heart, new spirit. When you come to Jesus Christ, He wipes out everything you've done in the past. He says You're starting over. It's like being born again. You need a new heart.

We need to pray like David prayed in Psalm 51 "Create in me a clean heart, O God" because what's in my heart is going to come out in my mouth.

2. ASK GOD FOR HELP DAILY

"Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips." Psalm 141:3

(Also Psalm 19:14)

We can only control our tongue in our own power for so long. We need the power of the Holy Spirit within us to truly tame the tongue.

Prayer, Bible Study, and support from godly Christian friends can help you in this process.

3. THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry." James 1:19

You've probably heard the saying... 'Engage your mind, before you put your mouth into gear'.

But I say, 'Engage your minds with God's Word thru the Holy Spirit, before you put your mouth into gear'.

It's time for us to make a commitment to working with God through the Holy Spirit to begin helping us in the ***Task of Taming Our Tongue***