

Christian Communication Part 2

(James 3:1-12)

Introduction

Good morning, Lighthouse! Are you ready for the Word of God this morning? Today is a continuation of last month's message. Last month the focus was walking through Ephesians 4 in the manner of how we are to communicate, today's will be the power behind it. To warn you now, you will be told "Good afternoon" at the end of service. A Greek philosopher asked his servant to provide the best dish possible. The servant prepared a dish of tongue, saying: "It is the best of all dishes, because with it we may bless and communicate happiness, dispel sorrow, remove despair, cheer the fainthearted, inspire the discouraged, and say a hundred other things to uplift mankind." Later the philosopher asked his servant to provide the worst dish of which he could think. A dish of tongue appeared on the table. The servant said, "It is the worst, because with it we may curse and break human hearts; destroy reputations; promote discord and strife; set families, communities, and nations at war with each other." The best yet worst gift we have. The tongue is you in a unique way. It is also one greatest power's God has given us. It can be used for great good or great evil. It is been said to be the tattletale that tells on the heart and disclose the real person. Sounds a lot like what Jesus said: "of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45) Additionally, the misuse of it is perhaps the easiest way to sin.

Throughout Scripture, the tongue is variously described as wicked, deceitful, perverse, filthy, corrupt, flattering, slanderous, gossiping, blasphemous, foolish, boasting, complaining, cursing, contentious, sensual and vile. This list is not exhaustive. How many here can testify how much trouble things they said put them in? Most if not all our sins have involved our tongue

in one way or another. Both when lost and saved, our tongue or words have extensively put us in lots of trouble. This brings us to our text this morning, James 3:1-12.

Background

Author: James the half-brother of Jesus. There are have been two men presented for authorship, James the son of Zebedee, and James the half-brother of Jesus. However, because of James the son of Zebedee's (or brother of John) early Martyrdom, it leaves James the half-brother of Jesus author. (We count him as the half-brother because Jesus had no biological father).

There are few significant aspects of James as the author. First, he never addresses himself as the brother of Jesus. James 1:1a "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. . ." Can you imagine being the brother of Jesus? I most likely would've been "oh, there goes perfect Jesus again, mom and dad's favorite." Though being the brother of Jesus, he writes himself to be a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. So, what's considered more honorable? I would argue being a servant of Jesus is a greater honor than being the physical brother of Jesus. Consider these statements made by Jesus: Luke 22:24-26 (24) And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. (25) And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. (26) But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. Matthew 23:11-12 (11) But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. (12) And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

The position of a servant may not seem much but being a servant of Jesus is the highest honor.

A second significance is James did not become a believer until after Jesus' resurrection. James along with the rest of Jesus' brothers started out rejecting him as the Messiah.

John 7:1-5 "(1) After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. (2) Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. (3) His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. (4) For there is no man that

doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. (5) For neither did his brethren believe in him.”

Another significance about James is sometime after Jesus’ resurrection, he gets saved and later becomes the head of the Jerusalem council and a key leader.

Recipients: “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.” His audience are Jewish Christians that have been scattered out due to persecution brought to the church.

Theme: Living faith. To encourage persecuted and suffering Christians to live out their faith and grow in spiritual maturity in a hostile world. The focus is more practical living rather than doctrinal truth. Now that some of background has been covered, let’s read our text together.

Scripture

James 3:1-12 (1) My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. (2) 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. (3) Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. (4) Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. (5) Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! (6) And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. (7) For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: (8) But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (9) Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. (10) Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. (11) Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? (12) Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

Outline

I. The Truth of the Tongue, vv. 1-2.

A. The warning of being in the position of a teacher, v. 1.

(1) My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

1. “My brethren, be not many masters.”

- a. This word for master is used for teacher and often used to describe rabbis.
- b. The usage of the word “brethren” indicates these are Christians he is writing to.
- c. During this time, many wanted to become leaders or spiritual teachers, James is warning regarding that position.

2. “Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”

- a. This was his reason regarding not having many masters or teachers among them.
- b. The position of a teacher in the church is a great responsibility and requires great accountability before God.
- c. By no means is James trying to discourage anyone from seeking the position of a teacher or condemning the position of itself.

d. 1 Timothy 3:1 “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”

- e. There will be greater condemnation (that word means judgement) meaning there will be a stricter judgement unto who are spiritual teachers. It is easy to take the position of teacher lightly in the church, without considering its cost in terms of accountability.
- f. Sunday school teachers, Basic Bible Truth teachers, and ministers of the Gospel, never take your position lightly. Those who are not in positions of teaching, respect your teachers, encourage them, recognize their positions before the Lord.

B. The reason for the warning, v. 2.

(2) 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.

1. “For in many things we offend all.”

a. The word offend here means “to stumble.”

b. “Offend” or stumble here does not imply a fatal fall, but something that trips us up and hinders our progress with the Lord.

c. James includes himself among those who stumble. But he does not excuse his or our stumbling. We know that we all stumble, but we should all press on to a better walk with the Lord, marked by less stumbling and causing others to stumble.

2. “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.”

a. An accountability we all have and especially teachers will be in things we say.

b. There is not one person who is not failed the Lord in this area.

c. Those who never stumble in word, the same is a perfect (or mature) man. No one has been able to master it yet, except Jesus Christ.

d. If you have absolute control over your tongue, you have reached complete spiritual maturity and able to control the whole body. Anyone who claims they have, and they no more sin with their words, I would challenge that.

II. The Power of the Tongue, vv. 3-6.

A. The illustration of the horse's bridle, v. 3.

(3) Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

1. This illustration is appropriate because the bit lies on top of the horse's tongue, and when attached to the bridle it is possible for the rider to make the horse obey. (Thankfully James already laid out good illustrations, so I don't have to come up with my own.)
2. Controlling the horse's mouth controls the head, which controls the entire body as well.
3. Likewise as it is with believers, we need our tongues controlled with everything else following submission.

B. The illustration of the ship's helm, v. 4.

(4) Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

1. The ships sizes of James' time aren't quite as large as modern ones such as cruises, but they were relatively large. The ship Paul traveled on his voyage to Rome held 276 people on board (Acts 27:37).
2. James' point is the helm which steers and controls the ship is so small, yet it can turn something so great, so it is with the tongue and our body.
3. The problem of an unruly horse is not solved by keeping it locked in the barn, or a hard-to-steer ship by keeping it tied to the dock. In the same way, even a vow of silence is not the ultimate answer for the misuse of our tongue. However, sometimes keeping silent is the proper response.

C. The illustration of the fire, vv. 5-6.

(5) “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! (6) And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.”

1. This illustrates the destructive power the tongue can cause.
2. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the top 5 causes of fires are 1. Cooking unattentively 2. Heating equipment failure 3. Electrical failure 4. Smoking without proper disposal and 5. Candles left unattended.
 - a. Things as simple as spark can cause huge fires leaving homes, buildings and lives devastated. Proverbs also use the tongue in comparison to fire.
 - b. Likewise, if our tongues are not properly under control, the devastation and hurt that can be caused is great. The fire of the tongue has been used to burn many.

Illustration: As kids we were taught the famous phrase: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” This child's rhyme is far from true. The bitter pain of a word spoken against us can hurt us for a lifetime, long after a broken bone has healed. What others say to us and what we say to others can last a long time, for good or for evil. The casual sarcastic or critical remark can inflict a lasting injury on another person. The well-timed encouragement or compliment can inspire someone for the rest of their life.

Proverbs 25:11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

Proverbs 26:18-19 (18) As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, (19) So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?

3. It has been said “A sharp tongue is the only edge-tool that grows sharper with constant use.”
4. Our words do matter. If we want to start becoming mature Christians, we must start guarding our tongues.

III. The Impossibility to Tame the Tongue, vv. 7-8.

A. Every kind of animal has been tamed by mankind, v. 7.

(7) For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

1. Animals from all these categories have been tamed by humans.
 - a. Even the smartest, most powerful and wildest of animals are tamed.
 - b. Powerful animals like lions and bears do tricks at the command of humans.
2. Adam was given the responsibility to name all the kinds of creatures. Even after the fall Noah was even responsible to bring every kind of animal on the ark.
3. It's been said God told Adam “I named all the stars, naming all the animals is the least you can do.”

B. The tongue has been tamed by no mere human, v. 8.

(8) But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

1. In contrast, while all kinds of animals have been tamed, the tongue no man can tame. Our tongues are even more unruly than a wild animal.
2. The tongue is also a deadly poison.
 - a. With the tongue being this powerful, it requires careful attention.

b. Would you ever let a lion, or a venomous snake run loose here in the church? (Some places in so called churches don't mind the snake part).

c. Likewise, an uncontrolled tongue should never run loose in God's house.

3. The tongue is untamable, yet it can be brought under the power and the control of the Holy Spirit. Only God Himself is mightier than the human tongue.

IV. The Inconsistencies of the Tongue, vv. 9-12.

A. The contradicting usage of the tongue, vv. 9-10.

(9) Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. (10) Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

1. With our words, we bless God and glorify Him with it.

a. Every believer is called to do these things. God gave us our tongue and speech for the usage of His glory.

b. The Jewish Christian of this time were accustomed to pronouncing blessings and pray three times a day "Blessed be Thou, O God."

c. We can easily say amen to this, speak of how great our Lord is, and praise Him with our lips.

2. With the same mouth used to glorify God, we use it to curse other people made in the image of God.

3. This is total hypocrisy and tragically inconsistent.

4. Out of the same mouth proceeds both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things are not so to be.

a. This passage has been used to simply teach don't use cuss words or profanity. It is true any profanity or cussing should be removed from the

Christian's vocabulary, but what James is teaching is going beyond that.

- b. Christians are guilty to gossip, lying, cursing, slander, blasphemy, the list goes. Then with the same tongue say amen, glory be to God and speak blessings. My brothers and sisters, this is not how it ought to be.

B. The usage of rhetoric to illustrate the severity, vv. 11-12.

(11) Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? (12) Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

1. Fountains do not give out both sweet and bitter water.
2. Fig trees do not produce olives and vines do not produce figs.
3. Our speech should be consistently glorifying to God. We should not use one vocabulary or one tone of speaking at church, and a different one at home or on the job. Like a spring of water, our mouths should not send forth sweet water and bitter from the same opening.
4. James here is not communicating if you do these then you are no longer Christian or not saved, but things that are "ought to"
5. When God transforms us, He gave us the capacity for now, redeemed holy speech, and He expects our yes and no to be honest.

Application

This passage just said I cannot control my tongue, what are we supposed to do about?

The idea of the tongue being untamable is the concept without being in submission to Holy Spirit and living by God's commands and principles. I want to be practical here on steps we can take.

Here are 5:

1. Quit trying to live the Christian life on your own abilities.

If you think you can start controlling your speech and guarding your tongue without God's help and in submission to Him, you have a lot of frustrations ahead of you. It's going to take prayer, and dependence on the Lord and it will take daily confession to Him. Your mindset needs to be God will have it under control, not you.

2. Mind your own business.

Want to know the quickest way to cut down gossip? Simply minding your own business. Let gossip end with you.

3. Edify or shut up.

I don't know if the story is true, but I read a lady approached a famous preacher and told him "I think the gift and talent the Lord has given me is the ability to speak my mind." He replied: "I don't think the Lord would mind if you buried that talent." Speaking everything that comes to mind will get you into trouble.

Proverbs 17:28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

Think back when you were being taught manners as a kid. "If you don't have anything nice to say, then say nothing at all."

4. Start replacing your bad usage of speech with good usage.

The "stop that" mentality simply does not work with sins and habits. The principle laid out in Scripture is to put off and replace it with righteousness.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

5. Dig into God's Word and equip yourself with what God says about it. This principle applies with every sin you try to overcome. We don't to just generally God says not to or its bad but

equipping ourselves with passages in relation to it. Here are several Proverbs regarding the tongue.

Proverbs 10:19-21 (19) In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise. (20) The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth. (21) The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

Proverbs 12:25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

Proverbs 15:4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

Proverbs 16:23-24 (23) The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. (24) Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

Proverbs 18:20-21 (20) A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled. (21) Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Proverbs 21:23 "Whosoever keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles."

In conclusion, the tongue is a powerful gift from God, it can be used for great destruction or used for great good as God intended, for His Glory. We are to use it to edify, encourage and even preach the Gospel. The only means which is possible to start bringing it under God's control. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus according to the Scriptures for the sins of the world. If you have never placed your trust in Jesus to save you, the issue with your tongue is the least of your problems right now. You still need to have your sin problem taken care of. By God's grace Jesus did it all for you on the cross, your part is to put your trust in Him to save you.

*****Prayer*****