

## James 5

Dr. David Shaw

James 3:1-12

Words matter. Actions matter too. James makes the point here that words are an action. A recent survey of our culture revealed that the following words are some of the most memorable to the last generation of Americans:

“Here I stand, I can do no other.” Luther

One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind – Neil Armstrong

I think, therefore I am Descartes

we hold these truths to be self evident Declaration of Ind

God is dead Nietzsche

Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall Reagan

“FREEEEEEEEEEEEEDOM!” Wm. Wallace Braveheart

As we move into this chapter and talk about the tongue, we are also talking about our thought life, our beliefs. THE TONGUE IS SO MUCH MORE THAN WE ACTUALLY SAY OUT LOUD. IN FACT, ACTUAL SPEECH IS ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE USE OF THE TONGUE.

John MacArthur helps put this section in line with the rest of the Book of James:

“Scripture contains many inscrutable truths, which, on the surface, seem to be contradictory or inconsistent and not able to be reconciled with each other by finite minds, For example, believers are chosen for salvation by the sovereign grace of God before the foundation of the world; yet they must exercise faith in order to be saved. As believers, we are kept safe by God’s sovereign decree; yet we must persevere. We will receive the Word, yet we must receive it.

Here James mentions another of the incomprehensible realities: *True believers will possess a sanctified tongue; yet, they must maintain a sanctified tongue.*

### THE IMPORTANCE OF WORDS

Words are an essential part of what makes us human.

The story is told of a Holy Roman Empower in the 1200s who wanted to find out what mankind’s primordial language was. He secured babies when they were born, gave them all the care and love they needed, but required one condition – absolute silence by their caregivers. What language would they come up with? They all died.

POSITIVE. Words can be used to heal, build up, edify, and encourage. Prov. 25:11

NEGATIVE Words can also be negative. They can be used to destroy, weaken, tear down, hurt. James describes this as a fire. In the great Chicago fire of 1871 there were 17,500 buildings destroyed, 300 people died, 125,000 people left homeless – all because a cow knocked over a lantern.

In everything we say, we need to consider the character and the influence.

#### WORDS AFFECT THE SPEAKER ALSO

It is fairly evident that words affect the hearer, but what about the speaker? James says we will be held accountable for what we say. John Knox is said to have felt this awesome weight before his first sermon. He is said to have wept uncontrollably and had to be escorted from the pulpit to compose himself.

Proverbs 18:6-7 says A FOOL'S LIPS WALK INTO A FIGHT AND HIS MOUTH INTO A BEATING. A FOOL'S MOUTH IS HIS RUIN AND HIS LIPS ARE A SNARE UNTO HIS SOUL.

James says the tongue is the key to holy living. So how do we do this?

#### THE WORD – TWO SOLUTIONS

1. For every kind of bird and beast, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it, we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. It would certainly seem that James is saying that we can't do it.
2. It would indeed seem hopeless, except for the last thing He says: WITH IT, WE BLESS OUR LORD AND FATHER.

We serve a speaking God. His words have power to create life. Even more astounding is the Bible's claim that JESUS is "the Word", made flesh. He is the logos.

Consider how Jesus never messed up with His tongue He always said the right thing. He always intercedes for us. As Francis Schaeffer says, "He is there, and He is not silent." He has spoken and He still speaks today. Are you listening?