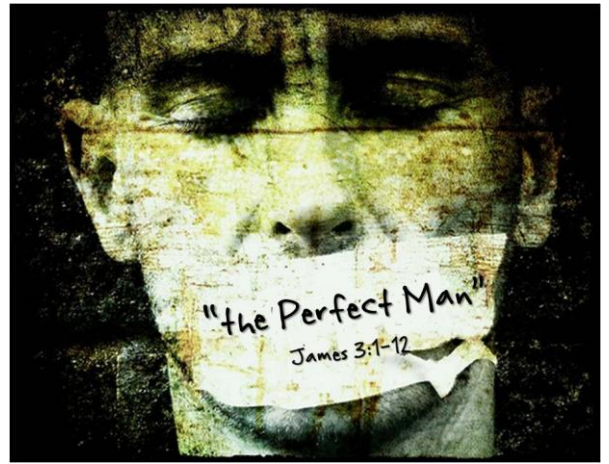


**James Series #6 - "The Perfect Man"**  
**Pastor Tim Dodson - Jesus Fellowship of Believers**  
**April 27th, 2014**



**James 3:1- 12** *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 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. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 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.*

**One of the driving points of the Book of James is the fact that if a person claims to have faith, then there will be some evidence to that faith.** Real life, concrete and quantifiable evidence. A genuine faith indeed produces good works, but it also produces a controlled tongue.

It seems that within the greater Christian community, folks would never think of committing the gross sins of things like murder, adultery, stealing, drunkenness, etc, but we have 'graduated' other 'light' sins to life on the fringes of the faith. Stuff like lying, lust, gluttony, coveting and gossip. James seems to be adept at dragging these fringe issues back into the mainstream. He speaks of this issue of the tongue...this "little" issue, as an "unruly evil, full of deadly poison"...as a "small spark that sets a forest on fire." So no matter what your opinion is, ...no matter how we might 'grade' certain sins, James is certainly serious about this one.

I think any life engaging activity will clear up any ambiguity you might have on this issue pretty quick. Certainly I have come to a personal clarity concerning this subject while serving as a pastor. The amount of trouble our tongues get us into! Not to mention the level of shame we bring upon the kingdom of God! I have seen the ramifications of simple gossip and loose talk, as well as having been on the receiving end of some profanity that would make sailors blush, as well as everything in between, *all from declared believers*. This is especially critical in a world where we have a plethora of social media where we can snipe at each other from a distance like unmanned drone attacks.

Through the years...the things I have heard come out of the mouths of those who call themselves God's kids is beyond shocking, it's astonishing. Flat out inventions and fables delivered purely for effect...to hurt and defame, to f-bomb laced tirades of anger that nearly generated restraining orders. Often such was delivered from people who Psalms 55 speaks of as not "*an enemy who taunts me — I could bear that. It is not my foes who so arrogantly insult me — I could have hidden from them.*" But rather "...*my equal, my companion and close friend. What good fellowship we once enjoyed as we walked together to the house of God.*"

I have often wondered from where we get our justification for such action. I have come to believe it is because we think we are warranted in our special situation. Because we have a “*really good reason.*” “*They deserve it*”... “*I’m just paying them back*”... “*they started it*”...etc. But the reality is still that we are throwing people ‘under the bus’ because we are angry or because we are jealous or because of some other human fleshly trait of the ‘old man’ that we claim is dead. The practice is of course always spoken of as “ungodly” until we are doing it. Then we have all sorts of reasons why we have special dispensation to be judge, jury *and* executioner. The fact is, our mouths have caused incredible and unconscionable damage to the faith and integrity of Christianity. I mean, if the world can’t expect righteous behavior in this area, then why would they believe that God and faith have the power to do *anything*?

**Be aware, that James started this bit aiming at me before he came looking for you!** Pastors are held by both God and man to a high standard and rightfully so. We are *supposed* to be setting the example! And indeed we are...one way or another...a *good* example or a *bad* one. The Amplified Bible renders verse 1 as, “*Not many of you should become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we teachers will be judged by a higher standard and with greater severity than other people.*” Ouch.

Because of a pastor/teacher’s influence upon those he shepherds, there is naturally a higher responsibility and accountability. If you remember in the gospel accounts, Jesus was seriously hard on the religious leaders of His day because they were supposed to be the examples. But so often, both then as well as now, we have leaders operating out of self-interest and pride, and they therefore fail, *and did fail then too*, to practice in their own lives what they taught to others. Jesus never had a lot of patience for religious hypocrites, and we read several instances in the gospels of him “kickin’ butt and takin’ names” with those guys! So the warning is given by James...be careful before you step up and grab yourself a pulpit, because there is a definite price to be paid for that privilege.

A lot of folks today see the position of pastor or teacher as a very appealing role because of the ability to affect the lives of others or perhaps simply because they think it’s a path to power. Seldom do those same folks take into account the incredible responsibility that come with such a position, as well as the certain accountability before God.

Often today we see teachers who soften the impact of the Word, or go so far as to even distort it’s truth in order to gain popularity in the world and before his church. James makes it clear, along with a plethora of other biblical passages and writers, that pastors and scripture teachers will be held “feet to the fire” for such a knowing slight. 2Timothy 4:2-3 is one...calling a young pastor then and every pastor since then, Paul says “*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But **you** be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*”

**Few of us cannot relate to this battle with our mouths.** Even James can apparently identify personally as we notice he used the word “we” in verse 2... “*we* all stumble in many things.” But that cannot serve as an excuse. None of us get a “bye” on certain directives because they are hard, and none of us get to claim “*well, that’s just the way I am.*” Certainly none of us will ever walk in the perfection that Jesus walked in, but the man who controls the tongue is said to be “the perfect man,” which essentially means that the guy is mature...he is complete and whole. We *could* see the writing on the wall and surrender before we even get out of the gate. Or

we could suck it up and see it as obviously important to King and kingdom and grow in this area. I say **grow** because while I am absolutely not excusing anything or anyone, I am quite personally aware that this is not a switch to flip but rather a race to run.

Our passage says that the individual that is able to control the tongue is able to control the whole body. What comes out of our mouths is reflective of what's inside there...inside our hearts and minds. If a person is able to get a handle on his or her mouth then generally he has the rest of the areas of his life under control. Further, it seems that what actually comes out of there is just the 'tip of the iceberg.' Meaning that if garbage spews forth, then it's leaking out of the landfill dump that's inside of you. Jesus said in Matt 12:36, "*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.*"

Vs 6 of our text reads "...*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.*" We receive the meaning of the verse as applied to our individual lives and bodies. But it has a deeper meaning too. In light of the church, "*christ's body,*" we see the impact of all of this on the "members" of this "body" also. The passage says it "defiles" us as a greater body... a *church* body. That's why when some folks move on it can definitely be a "blessed subtraction."

We have often heard the phrase "slip of the tongue." In light of this passage, we know that such is really a "slip of the heart." Because the heart, like the mouth, is more than merely destructive, it is *deceptive*. Controlling our mouths will only come through constant recognition of its potential danger. We have to walk in humble discipline, and daily seek the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we can actually operate in God's kingdom without being a "bull in a china shop." The Bible tells us to "*be filled with the Spirit,*" and the original language literally means to be "*constantly or repeatedly filled and controlled.*" Throughout the scripture, we are warned again and again on this matter! "*He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.*" Proverbs 13:3

**So we see the mouth can be destructive and also deceptive, and now we also see it can be hypocritical.**

Verses 9-12 *With it (our mouths) we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 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.*

For it is certainly possible, if not commonplace, to go to church on Sunday and sing praises to God, and then on Monday curse and injure His creation.

All of this shines the light on the greater question, which is "*how do we say we are full of Christ and His Spirit, when this stuff is coming out of us?*" Such is a very valid question. If the practice of such is obviously overt sin, then we are either not reborn or we have surrendered to sin..1 John 2: 4-6 reminds us that "*He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*" And in the previous chapter of that letter, he says "*If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*" (1 Jn 1:6) And such sins are not ultimately against the individual we speak against, but they are primarily against God! Herein lies the root of the problem...

**Verses 11-12 tells us that not only *should* this stuff not occur, but in truth it *cannot*.** Or at least it cannot if we have been reborn. Being born again renews us and sets us on a new path, complete with a new nature , new

passions and a new drive. This could explain why so often many of us feel that our praise and worship hits a “glass ceiling” and leaves us feeling hollow and empty. Jesus remarks on this same issue in Matthew 12: 33-34, saying, “...*the tree is known by its fruit...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks...*” So James is merely stating the obvious... that a fountain *cannot* give both fresh water *and* salt water! The tongue speaks only what is truly in the heart.

You see, one can trace these issues back to the beginning...back when we first made a decision to come to Christ. How did you come to Him? What was your thinking process? Because the fact is...right from the beginning many of us came to Christ seeking something other than a profound change in our nature...to be effectively reborn a new creature that runs every issue of life through a new worldview...one where Christ calls every shot in our existence...for His glory! Many of us merely came for ourselves, and we did it as a business decision. One that was essentially an investment against hell and a hard life. It was never about *HIM*, but really only about *US*.

So what follows that kind of intellectual decision is a tacit approach to the throne of Christ. We tend to 'stand in the back' of the crowd. A "one foot in the door" kind of policy. We seek to be in just far enough to escape the judgment of hell and the hardships of a life that comes without divine intervention, but not so far in as to deny my flesh, my wants, my plans, and my opinions. Such a life is conspicuously absent of love, of passion, or motivation to be like Jesus, to live for Him...to live *through* Him in every matter. Thus the attributes of Christ never effectively manifest themselves through our daily living in any kind of consistent fashion. There is no substantial growth or maturing, because we really don't want that much of Him. We just want him to smooth out the bumps of life and let us into heaven when we die.

But I am here to tell you that such a plan is flawed at its root and it won't work. It is to these that Jesus says at judgment "*depart from me, I never knew you.*" Plenty of folks will attempt to debate that judicial verdict saying "*but Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.*" But that stuff never meant anything to such folks because it was never about His glory and a life that lives out our worship in a natural living manner.

I'm not saying that a rebirth in Christ is not personally beneficial. Far from it. But do we come to Him with a real understanding of our sinfulness? The *need* for redemption, rebirth, and an actual *change* in our nature? A religious and moral credo does nothing to change our inside, our very nature. Matthew 7:20-23 clearly tells us that, "*What comes out of a man, defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.*"

Luke 18:10-14 tells the story of "*Two men (who)went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'* And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The latter was a man who stood righteous before God. He understood. He got it. He understood his heart without the Spirit's leading, and thus I would wager he had very little to say negatively about anyone else. His mouth reflected His heart. As it does for all of us...