

Epistle of James VII The Power of the Tongue

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James 3:1: “My brethren, do not many of you become teachers, knowing that **we** will receive more severe judgment.” The key thing here we need to remember is that James includes himself; he doesn’t say ‘you teachers’; he says *we!*

Verse 2: “Because **we** frequently offend... [sin] ...everyone of us...” —*to miss the mark*. If you offend in one point of the Law, you’ve transgressed the whole Law. The word ‘offend’ is the same word *as sin*. This is what he’s talking about. He’s talking about the Christian’s perception of sin, how you feel inside. Not the manifestations of what it is to other people. It may not be a sin to people in the world, but it is a sin in your mind. That’s what we’re talking about here.

“...If anyone does not offend in what he says, this one *is* a perfect man *and is* able also to hold in check the whole body. Remember, we put bits into horses’ mouths in order that they may obey us, and we direct their entire bodies. Consider also *that* ships, being so large, and being driven by strong winds, are turned about by a very small rudder, wherever the will of the one who is steering may decide [for himself]” (vs 2-4)—indicative of a middle-voice verb; this is something that he did himself.

- your life is like the boat
- the sea is the world
- the wind is the power or the force

—whether it is the power of God’s Spirit (Acts 2); the Holy Spirit came as a ‘mighty rushing wind’ *or* the power from the ‘prince of the power of the air.’

Verse 5: “In the same way also, **the tongue is a little member, but it boasts great things**. See how large a forest is set ablaze by a little fire.”

Just this year we had the fires in the east Oakland hills. What an awesome firestorm that was. It was started by a little, teeny fire that was left unattended. The wind came along. How are rumors of the tongue born? *Almost like the wind!* There’s a saying in Proverbs: ‘a little bird shall carry it.’ Today we have the great assistance of telephones. So, whatever is said can be just taken right out very quickly. “...how large a forest is set ablaze by a little fire.”

Once these things get going, they create their own wind, they create their own power as it were. Some of the firemen look at these fires as if it’s a personality that these fires have, because

they’re totally unruly. You can be standing in one place, as a fireman putting out a fire, and the fire will leap clear over you and set another building or house or trees ablaze. The next thing you know you’re caught right up in the middle of it. This is very apropos when he says, “...See how large a forest is set ablaze by a little fire.”

Verse 6: “And **the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness**.... [that’s where it begins] ...So has the tongue been set among our members, *the one member that* defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of life, and is set on fire by Gehenna. Now then, every species of animals and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But the tongue no human being is able to tame; *it is* an unrestrainable evil, full of death-dealing poison” (vs 6-8).

“And **the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness**...” Let’s see what Jesus said about the tongue. Isn’t it with the tongue that you express what comes to your mind? ***Sin begins in the mind!*** *The tongue is that vehicle which expresses it!* That’s why he says, ‘Brethren, we’re all constantly *missing the mark* or *sinning!*’ If you could, how many conversations would you go back and reclaim? Or, if you had conversations recorded on a recording, how many of them would you like to run through the magnetic eraser and get rid of as never existing? *You can! That’s called repentance!* The operation of the magnet is called *forgiveness through the blood of Christ!*

Jesus talks about the tongue and the sin and forgiveness and the lack thereof. I’m constantly amazed how much that James’ epistle reflects the teaching and thinking of Matthew. Why do you suppose that is? *I think that it is because Matthew was written first!* It is known that Matthew probably was the only Gospel written in Hebrew. Very possibly that was so. It was written to the Jews in the synagogues who were following Christ.

Matthew 12:31: “Because of this, I [Christ] say to you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men...” That comes from the tongue, from the mind. I’m covering this so we understand ***there is hope!*** The way we control our tongues more is to kind of get them out there so far that we, many times, step on them; then it hurts. There are many times I feel like that.

Unfortunately, the ones whom we use this on most of all are the ones we love. It’s sort of a

natural human proclivity. I won't say hypocrisy, nor double-standard—though it may appear like that—that sometimes we treat people that we don't know—as well as we know our family—on the surface, better than we do our own family.

Why? *Because family arguments are for the family!* That's why! *Family difficulties are for the family!* So, we do make this differential between the family and other people. However, when it gets to the point that it is noticeable to you or to someone in your family that you're nicer to other people than you are to your own family, then you need to stop and take stock and re-group and begin asking God to help you do what you need to do in your family, because after all, they're the ones that you love. What's that old song? *You Always Hurt the One You Love!* That's the way it ends up.

- Think of that in relationship to God!
- Think of that in relationship to Christ!

Does God love us? *Yes!* 'For God so loved the world...' That is in all of *its un-glorious evil!* '...that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall have everlasting life.'

Do we hurt God? *Yes, we do!* That's what He's talking about here, *blaspheming!* What was the greatest hurt that God took from the tongue of men and the action of Satan? *The crucifixion of Christ!* So, you see how in-depth that this Epistle of James really is!

You can take all of these words, and you can say, 'All right, let's apply these Scriptures to the judgment, condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and remember what Jesus said when He was on the cross. What was the first thing He said when He was crucified and that cross was lifted up? ***'Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing!'*** That's a tremendous amount of love, but that is also forgiving a tremendous sin and heinous crime. Maybe with that you can understand why it is so against God to be self-righteous. Just remember, ***'Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing!'***

Verse 31: "...every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men **except the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit**; that shall not be forgiven to men." This is total rejection of the Holy Spirit. This is not some simple, little thing that a man does. This is by choice! Total blasphemy against God! It says the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit comes from God the Father and you are rejecting the work of God the Father.

Verse 32: "And whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but

whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in the coming *age*. Either make the tree good and the fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt; for a tree is known by its fruit" (vs 32-33).

The whole purpose of the book of James is for us to clearly see *how to lineup our lives and our conduct according to the Word of God*; to let the Word of God come as the 'sword of the Lord' and prick our consciences, for us to realize we've got a long way to go in overcoming our own human nature and our own internal hypocrisies.

I know it's having that affect on me, just personally, as I go through and translate, read, study, prepare, and then bring the sermons, I'm speaking an awful lot to myself. And especially when you go back and consider when he says *we*—he's including himself. If the half-brother of Jesus Christ—who saw Jesus grow up; who rejected Jesus until after He was crucified, and then Jesus appeared to him—includes himself right in there with all of the rest of us of all of humanity, that's a pretty powerful statement by James.

Verse 33: "Either make the tree good and the fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt; for a tree is known by its fruit. Offspring of vipers, how are you able to speak good things, being evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings out good things; and the wicked man out of the wicked treasure brings out wicked things. But I say to you, for every idle word that men may speak, they shall be held accountable in *the* day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned" (vs 33-37).

How then do we find a way out of this difficulty? Cut the tongue out? *No! That won't stop the mind!* That may stop the effect! That's why we are to let the Spirit of God enter in. Remember, to the Laodiceans Jesus said, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. And if 'any man will open I will come into him and sup with him.' This means we need to draw closer to Christ. And the model daily prayer is: 'Forgive us our sins.' That's on a daily basis. All of that will be covered by the blood of Jesus Christ; therefore, you will not be condemned. Rom. 8 says very clearly that *if* we have the Spirit of God, and *if* we are yielding to God, 'there is no condemnation.' That's what we need to keep in mind.

James 3:6: "And the **tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness**. So has the tongue been set among our members, *the one member that* defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of life, and is set on fire by Gehenna."

Let's go to the book of Psalms and see some of the Psalms in dealing with the tongue. It's also by the use of the tongue that *conversion* comes; if we confess our sins, talking to God. If we confess that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10), and believe from the heart that He as the Savior, died, was crucified and resurrected, we shall be saved. Of course, there's a lot that goes behind that to make that up.

An excellent example of the use of the tongue, good and bad; Psalm 5:1 "Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my meditation." That's where the words start. That's why the Psa. 1 starts out: 'Blessed is the man that meditates on the Word day and night'

Verse 2: "Hearken to the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for to You do I pray." The most important thing we can do with our tongue and our mind is pray to God. Not be like the hypocrites and stand on the corner and make long prayers 'to be seen of men.'

Verse 3: "My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning I will direct my prayer to You, and I will look up, for You are not a God that has pleasure in wickedness; nor shall evil dwell with You. The boasters shall not stand in Your sight. You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak lies... [corrupt sayings] ...the LORD abhors the bloody and deceitful man" (vs 3-6). Of course, then, that's with the tongue again.

What's that old Indian saying, 'White man speak with forked tongue.' That is true! Talks about in 1-Tim. 3 that a minister is not to be 'double-tongued'; which ties in with one of the verses where he's not to give a blessing on one hand and turn around and give a curse on the other hand—being double-tongued or political.

Verse 7: "But I, in the abundance of Your loving kindness, I will come into Your house... [ties in with James 3] ...I will bow down in Your fear toward Your Holy temple. Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness..." (vs 7-8).

That's the 'trying of the reins and the heart'; to *lead* us, that we are conquered by God. We are not a wild horse or a mule out here in the wilderness any more, but *we are directed by God, going in the direction that He wants us to go!*

"...because of my enemies; make Your way straight before my face, for there is no Truth in their mouth; their inward part is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue. Hold them guilty, O God; let them fall by their own counsels..." (vs 8-10).

He's not praying down a curse, that he's

saying, 'God, I want you to curse these people.' He's saying, 'O God, destroy them.' How? "...let them fall by their own counsels..." In other words, let them get trapped in their own devices. How many times do we get trapped in our own devices and stupidity?

"...cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against You. But let all who put their trust in You rejoice; let them always shout for joy... [there's another use of the tongue: joy and happiness] ...because You defend them. And let those who love Your name exult in You, for You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield" (vs 10-12).

Psalm 50:16: "But to the wicked God says, 'What right have you to declare My statutes, and to take up My covenant in your mouth?'" Direct condemnation of those who take a *form* of Christianity and create a 'religion.' How many people have taken the name of Christ?

Verse 17: "Yea, you hate to be taught, and you cast My words behind you." We don't like this Sabbath, we'll get rid of this. 'We don't like this clean and unclean meat, I like my pork—we'll get rid of that. We love our Christmas tree, so we've got have Christmas—we'll take Christmas and we'll put Christ in it.' It won't work!

Verse 18: "When you saw a thief, then you were pleased to be with him, and you have taken part with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit" (vs 18-19). See how these things do. Look at all of these 'garbage' newspapers that come along: *The Star, The Enquirer*—all of that. A lot of those 'frame deceit.'

Verse 20: "You sit; you speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. These things you have done, and I have kept silence; you thought that I was like yourself, but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes. Now, consider this, **you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver**" (vs 20-22).

There are those things that have to be considered. That's why repentance is so important. That's why being focused in on the Word of God and the Spirit of God is so important; so we can control our tongues. Hopefully, by the time it comes to the day that we exhaust our last, we will have made some accomplishment that way. I could look back when I was a teenager that I had a very vile mouth and temper. My mother can tell some hair-raising stories about the villainy of my mouth and blasphemous vituperations coming out of it. When I was trying to work on my motorcycle and I'm not a mechanic—oh, bad! bad!

This is actually a prophecy of Christ as they were entrapping Him in their web of lies, Psalm 57:4: “My soul is among lions...” Those are all the Sadducees and Pharisees and scribes and the demons behind them.

“...I lie among those who breathe out fire, the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword” (v 4). Sometimes you might feel that way in the world.

Psalm 109:2: “For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me... [prophecy of Christ] ...they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. And they surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause” (vs 2-3). There is the way the tongue is, setting on a course of fire, the fire of hell.

James 3:7: “Now then, every species of animals and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.”

When we do that, we are forcing them into a behavior that we want. We entice them—not by beating, but by feeding. You’ll notice that if you go to Sea World, or something like that, even these big giant whales—the killer whales—every time they do something they’re rewarded. You can’t get an animal to do it by beating it. You must train it. It may have to have some discipline, some sharp slaps or snaps as it were.

Verse 7: “Now then, every species of animals and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. **But the tongue no human being is able to tame...**” (vs 7-8).

- apart from God
- apart from God’s Spirit
- apart from God’s way

You cannot of your own self tame your own nature! Cannot do it!

Just like a wild animal, when a human being is running wild and refuses to be tamed, refuses to submit to direction, then the only thing you can do is let it run wild. In the case of human beings, until they reach the bottom! They have to reach the bottom! Lots of people like to intervene and in some way stop human beings from reaching the bottom, because after all, we want to help.

I know a man who had a terrible, terrible drinking problem; absolutely terrible drinking problem! Everyone tried to help him. His church tried to help him; tried to get him in on this rehabilitation program, tried to help his wife to help him and he’d still go out and drink. He’d still go out and get drunk and couldn’t stop. Finally, he ended

up with three DUIs. He finally had to sit in jail. When he was sitting in jail, the thing happened, which was necessary. It’s just like the tale of the ‘prodigal son.’ ***When he ‘came to himself.’*** That’s what he did; he *came to himself*. Now he’s out, he’s sober, he’s living his life properly, just got a job; but he had to hit the bottom! He had to *come to himself*.

It’s just like any wild animal out there, until they come to the point that they are trainable—not that an animal makes up his mind. I’m sure they are certain choices; certain submissive instincts that an animal must do. You have some animals that, by nature, are easy to train and break—I know this with horses. You have some that are bucking broncos all their lives. You can’t trust them. Don’t walk behind them, even though you put a saddle on them and ride them, don’t walk behind them! BAM! They’ll kick you. If you ever get kicked by a horse, that’s pretty bad!

Here’s a little article by a man, and he was saying about how he had to control himself, speaking of taming animals:

There was an old man who often complained of pain and weariness in the evening, as many of us do. A friend asked him why he complained so. The old man replied, ‘Alas, I have everyday so much to do. I have two falcons to tame, two hares to keep from running away, two hawks to manage, a serpent to confine, a lion to chain, and a sick man to tend and wait upon.’

‘Why, he must be joking!’ said his friend. ‘Surely no man can have all those things to do at once.’

He said, ‘Indeed, I’m not joking! But what I’ve told you is the sad, sober truth, because the two falcons are ***my two eyes, which I must diligently guard.*** The two hares (rabbits) are ***my two feet, which I must keep from walking I the ways of sin.*** The two hawks are ***my two hands, which I must train to work,*** that I may be able to provide for myself and my brethren in need. The serpent is ***my tongue, which I always bridle, lest I speak unseemly.*** The lion is ***my heart, which I have to continue to fight lest evil things come out of it.*** And the sick man is ***my whole body, which is always needing my watchfulness and care.***’

Good description of human nature! That’s why this analogy fits so nicely, as far as likening it to human beings. We have to ask ourselves: What is our nature? Some are more gentle than others. We all have the thing we need to do to figure to get

straightened out.

Proverbs 18—here is the power of the tongue; this is true, and I tell you the hardest challenge to do is to try and use your words in a reasonable way with people who are unreasonable. *That's the hardest thing to do, especially when they're doing wrong!* The only thing I can say is when you have situations like that the only thing you can do is pray, and ask God to help you. There are times when I go to God and I say, 'Oh, God, help me! I just don't know what to do or say! There will be times in your life when it's like that, especially when you've offended someone; then it becomes even worse and more difficult.

Proverbs 18:21 "**Death and life are in the power of the tongue...**" That's why the death penalty; 'I sentence you to death,' says the judge. That's the power of death. 'I commute your sentence,' says the governor. *That is life!* God says, 'The wages of sin is death! ***But the gift of God is eternal life.***' All comes from the mouth of God.

Verse 21: "Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue, and those who love it shall eat the fruit of it." Immediately this reminds you of gossipy people and talebearers.

Verse 8: "The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." That's how words can affect people; go right into their heart, mind and feelings.

Let's keep that in mind. There are some people who need sharp words. Jude tells us how we are to handle some of these things.

(go to the next track)

This is when the Church was right smack in the middle of the power struggle between the forces of Satan trying to tear the Church apart. This is probably right at the beginning of what we call the Catholic Church today, the very division that occurred within the Church when this took place. There was this fight right within the Church, right absolutely within the Church!

Jude is the other half-brother of Jesus. The Hebrew pronunciation of it would be 'Judas.'

Jude 16: "These are complainers *and* critics, who are walking after their own personal lusts..." That's what they were doing in the Church. Have we been a church situation where we have experienced some of this kind of thing? *Absolutely!*

"...while their mouths are speaking great swelling words, flattering persons for the sake of advantage.... [political chicanery!] ...But you, beloved, remember the words that were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

because they said to you that in *the* last time there would be mockers, who would be selfishly walking according to their own ungodly lusts. These are the ones who cause division; *they are* psychic, not having *the Spirit of God*. But you, beloved, *be* building up yourselves on your most Holy faith, praying in *the* Holy Spirit, *so that* you keep yourselves in *the* love of God while you are personally awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Now on the one hand, show mercy to those individuals who are doubting" (vs 16-22).

Now, here's how to handle the different people and different situation and the use of the tongue. Some sharply, some meekly, some with authority, some with coercion and begging, making a difference; *have compassion*.

Verse 23: "But on the other hand, save others with fear..." You just tell them, 'Your life is going down the tubes and you're going straight to hell.' Sometimes you have to use those kinds of words.

"...snatching *them* out of the fire, hating even the garment *that has been* defiled by the flesh" (vs 23).

'You're going to ruin your life; look where you're going.' What is the last thing you can do to get someone's attention? That's what he's saying! Here these problems are going on in the Church and we don't all go around and hold our hands in a prayerful motion and just be the ideal of meekness. We are to be meek before God, that is true; but there are some situations that have to be handled with power and authority. They have to be handled differently.

On the other hand, we've lived through the experience where church ministers, that's all they ever used was power and authority and beat up the congregation! This is in the extreme case where there was a division going right on within the Church, on a mass scale in most congregations.

Verse 24: "Now to Him Who [Christ] is able to keep them from falling, and to bring *them* into the presence of His own glory, blameless in exceeding joy, to *the* only wise God our Savior, *be the* glory and greatness, *the* might and authority, even now, and into all the ages of eternity. Amen" (vs 24-25).

That's one powerful epistle! When I got in there and I really understood what was going on in the book of Jude, that is something! ***With the tongue we have all that in the power of the tongue!***

James 3:9: "With it... [our tongue] ...we bless God *the* Father, and with it we ourselves curse people who are made in *the* likeness of God." This is

height of hypocrisy! That's what He wants us to get rid of; let's understand that. We all understanding what 'blessing God is.' The Greek there is *to eulogize or speak well of*. Where is 'cursing' people, the word 'curse' here is *to pronounce a curse down from God on other people*. That's what that means.

This doesn't mean you're out there and your tongue slips and you have a swear word once in a while. This means you're actually coming before God, blessing Him and then turning around in the same prayer and are asking God to bring down a curse upon other people. The Jews did this in what was later called 'the minim.' The 'minim' was a benediction that everyone in the synagogue had to pronounce; a curse against Christ, a curse against Christians. If you stumbled one word with the 'minim' in the synagogue, you were thought to be a Christian and kicked out.

You'll understand a little later when we get into some of these things, why it was written to them that they were not to be blaspheming, because that's how then they could be blaspheming to save their little necks, to stand up there and curse. We think that that's unthinkable, but some people do that. We're not be calling down the 'curse of God' upon people; even our enemies. What did David say? *Let them fall by their own devices!* What should our prayer really be? *That God would put it in their minds to repent!* That's what it really should be. That's what it means 'loving our enemies' in the things that we say and do.

Matthew 5:33: "Again, you have heard that it was said to those *in ancient times*, 'You shall not forswear yourself, but you shall perform your oaths to the Lord.'" There were two kinds of oaths:

1. go and ask God to curse, ask God to bless
2. you would swear by God, swear by yourself

Jesus says, v 34: "But I say to you, do not swear at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, because it is *the* city of the great King" (vs 34-35)

So, in either of these cases, if you took a swearing—of blessing or cursing—and invoked any of these things, then it was supposed to be a valid thing. But it's not. He's saying, 'no way.'

Verse 36: "Neither shall you swear by your head, because you do not have the power to make one hair white or black. But let your word be *good*, your "Yes" be yes and your "No" be no; for anything that *is* added to these is from the evil one" (vs 36-37)—because out of the same mouth proceeds blessings and cursings. He's saying these

things ought not be so.

Verse 43: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, **love your enemies**, bless those who curse you..." (vs 43-44).

How are you to love your enemies? *You pray for them!* I like the admonition from *Fiddler on the Roof* when the young man came up to the rabbi and said, 'Rabbi, is there a blessing for the Czar?' And the rabbi stroked his beard and looked around a little bit and said, 'Yes, may the Lord bless him and keep him far away from us!' That may be one way to pray for your enemies. Another way is that *you pray that their minds would be changed*.

- your curse is not going to change them
- your anger is not going to work the righteousness of God
- ***But God can change their mind!***

It is such a simple, little thing that you never think of it. That's why when you ask God for grace and favor in other people's eyes, that's what you are doing. You are asking God to put it in their mind. What if you're dealing with someone that really is causing you some problems? Or, you're dealing with someone that is almost inextricable to handle? ***You pray and ask God to help you!*** Maybe God will even change the whole situation. He may even cause you to lose your job, so you get a new boss. You've been asking God to help you with this boss; 'I can't get along with him.' God heard your prayer and then you lose your job and you wonder why you're losing your job. Well, God is answering the prayer. Can He provide another one? ***Yes, He can!*** And, lo and behold, what happens? ***You get a nice boss!***

It also gives us appreciation for what we have. Sometimes we tend to look at so many things from our own perspective—especially if we're going to do without—that we forget to be thankful for what we have. That's why in all things—in prayer and supplication—"let your request be made known to God." Not the 'gimmees,' but that *God's will be done*. Not that you can force your will on someone, but that they have their mind changed because *they choose* to change. Only God can affect that! Sometimes that's pretty hard to do. Sometimes you gnash on your teeth and your tongue. If we literally gnashed on our tongue every time we said something wrong or something, we'd soon not be able to talk; our tongues would be so thick with scar tissue that we couldn't mutter a word. ***Pray for them;*** that's how you do it!

Verse 44: "...do good to those who hate you..." That's the hardest thing in the world. Did Jesus do good to them that hated Him? ***Yes!*** He said, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.'

Did He do good to the one that hated Him and Peter cut off his ear? *Yes! He healed it and put it back on!*

“...and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (v 44). This is the toughest requirement of a Christian. I’ll have to say, *it’s tough!* The most natural inclination is to do as James said, ‘Bless God, then curse your enemies.’ *No!* That’s why James gets right down into your gut! He does! *It forces you to see where you need to change!* The hardest thing to admit is, ‘yes, I need to change.’ You can start by saying, ‘God, I just don’t know, help me!’ That’s where to begin!

Notice what will happen, v 45: “So that you yourselves may be *the* children of your Father Who *is* in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *on the* good, and sends rain on *the* just and *on the* unjust.” God is even merciful to people in the world!

Verse 46: “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?... [from God] ...Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing?*” Oh, sure, they all sidle up to the bars—the whores and the whoremongers and drunkards and smoke their cigarettes and tell their dirty jokes and all this sort of thing—they all understand each other; no one’s kidding each other; they love each other; they except each other. We haven’t accomplished too much.

Verse 47 “And if you salute your brethren only, what have you done *that is* extraordinary? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing?*”

Oh, yes, we all belong to the same club. If you belong to the club you’re really *it!* I saw a movie where they were depicting one of these social club—I guess it was the Buffalo Club—and I didn’t watch but just a couple of minutes, and they all had one these buffalo things with these buffalo horns on it. As long as you were a ‘brother buffalo’ you were *in like Flynn*. That’s what he’s saying here. It’s not the social club you belong to or the circle of friends that you have. What have you accomplished in life? God, through Christ, said, ‘Forgive them, Father, they know not what they’re doing.’

Verse 48: “Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect.” That’s the whole goal we’re shooting for. James gives us a lot of good stepping-stones along that path, along the way, and *Christ is the way to accomplish it*. These things are brought here to help us to be able to get ourselves in proper order.

What do you do with constructive criticism, when something needs to be brought up? *Well, I’d say pray about it, and just do like the Bible says:* Go to the individual involved and talk it over with them. Who knows, you might find out that that person is

really trying to work on that problem. It may or may not be. Maybe they don’t even know anything about it. Maybe it never even occurred to them. On the other hand, maybe they’re right in the middle and they know exactly what you’re doing. Then you’ll know what the scoop is.

I know that in some churches you don’t dare say anything to the minister. I don’t want any of you to get in a situation where you think you can’t say anything to me. That’s fine, you can! Hey, I’m not perfect; no one is perfect, you’re not perfect and we’re all in this boat together. That’s why James says, ‘Beloved brethren, **we**’—he’s including himself. He’s not exempting himself from any of this. I know that in some churches they just worship a man more than God.

We have to be careful not to rush in and ‘put holes in someone’s boat or tip it over’ and that kind of thing. That’s true! That’s a good analogy. This is really quite a chapter. It gets to everyone of us personally. And going through and preparing this, it’s gotten to me personally. I’ve got to ask myself:

- What have I said?
- What have I done?
- What am I saying?
- What am I doing?
- How am I going to handle these things?

I stand just as convicted as any other human being with this. This is not some minister sitting up here preaching from the ‘ivory tower of righteousness.’ Human nature is *human nature*; that’s just the way that it is.

Hopefully, with God’s Spirit, we can get a hold of the reins, get the bit in our mouths, get the direction from God and do better. But, I tell you, this book of James is really something! I’m very glad we’re going through it and getting into it. I don’t ever recall doing an in-depth study of the book of James in all the years of being a minister. I look at that and think: how dumb, how stupid, how ignorant! But that’s the way it is. So, we go on and admit it and say let’s learn it, let’s repent and change and grow and go on from there.

I’ll tell you one thing that God will always do: whenever you make a blank statement about a category of people—can be race, sex, age, nationality—my experience is that God is going to put you in contact with someone of those people that you have condemned, which is going to contradict what you’ve said; 99 times out of 100 that will happen! That’s just the *living Word of God* in action, and God’s way and action in your life.

Proverbs 10:20: “The tongue of the righteous *is as* choice silver...” Here’s the goal that

we need to have. That we can say the right things, from God's Spirit, to inspire them to do what they need to do.

"...the heart of the wicked *is* worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many..." (vs 20-21). If there's any one motto that a minister or teacher ought to have, here it is right here:

- What are you saying?
- What are you teaching?
- What are you preaching?
- How are you saying it?
- How is it being done?
- Who are you affecting?
- Are you feeding people

or

- Are you spewing out your own ideas?

"...but fools die for lack of wisdom" (v 21). Let's not be foolish Christians (Matt. 25—parable of the Ten Virgins; five were wise, five were foolish).

I tell you, brethren, studying the Bible is so absolutely fantastic that you can study and go through it. What you need is the Spirit of God to really help keep everything alive and vital and nourishing and powerful, all the time. It's there and we have to make the effort. Let God's Word do that for us.

Proverbs 12:17: "*He who speaks truth shows forth righteousness... [showing forth the righteousness of God] ...but a false witness deceit.*" Sometimes in the Proverbs you have to take the verb of the first statement and insert it in the second statement, because the verb is understood from the first to the second.

Verse 18: "There are those who speak like the piercing of a sword..." Sometimes God's Word is that way, going 'right down to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit (Heb. 4).

"...but the tongue of the wise heals" (v 18). To help the person: to encourage them, to inspire them.

Verse 19: "The lips of truth shall be established forever, but a lying tongue *is* but for a moment." Then we get into what James is talking about:

Verse 20: "Deceit *is* in the heart of those who imagine evil, but to counselors of peace *there is* joy."

If you want to do an auxiliary study just go through the book of Proverbs and list out all of the Proverbs that have to do with *speaking, with the tongue, with righteousness of the tongue, with wickedness of the tongue*. It will really quite a lesson.

Proverbs 15:1: "A soft answer turns away wrath... [remember that the next time you get stopped for a ticket] ...but grievous words stir up anger... [if you get them mad at you, look out] ...The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours out foolishness" (vs 1-2). Oh, so true! "***The tongue is an unruly evil, who can control it?***"

Verse 3: "The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good. A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life, but perverseness in it crushes the spirit" (vs 3-4). People can become so perverted in what they think, say and do that it affects their spirit.

James 3:10: "From the same mouth comes out blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so!" We need to change that. He's saying this is a reality of life; these things ought to be so. We need to be making change in our behavior.

Verse 11: "Does a fountain pour out of the same opening sweet *water* and bitter *water*?" Is it? How many have ever drunk water from a sulfur spring? *It's like drinking rotten eggs!* If you've ever drunk water out of a sulfur spring you'll know exactly how that is.

I remember the first time, as a kid, my dad said, 'It's good for you. There are minerals in this. Don't worry about the smell, just drink it.' It was all you could do to drink it and keep your stomach from not spewing it back up. He's saying here that what God is wanting: ***He wants the inside to change!*** Because the source of the spring or the water is going to be either sweet or bitter.

Verse 12: "My brethren, can a fig tree produce olives, or a vine *produce* figs?...?" It's talking about what is being produced from the roots, the stem, the inside out. Of course, we're to bring forth fruit.

"...In the same way, no fountain *can* produce salt water and fresh *water*" (v 12).

That's how they were able to discover the Amazon River. When the Portuguese came down there, they were over 150 miles offshore and they could dip into the ocean and drink fresh water. There was so much water pouring out of the Amazon River that out that far to sea there was fresh water. They were astonished that it took them so long to get to land after they were able to dip out the fresh water. Imagine that, 150 miles out to sea. They knew that was a contradiction. They knew they weren't in the middle of the ocean. In the middle of the ocean it is just salt water, but now they had fresh water. That's how Brazil became a colony of the Portuguese. Same way with the fig tree here.

Hopefully *our fruit* is producing better and better as we go along. We're talking about what comes from the inside out.

Matthew 7:16: "You shall know them by their fruits. They do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit. A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, nor can a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree *that is* not producing good fruit is cut down and is cast into the fire. Therefore, you shall assuredly know them by their fruits" (vs 16-20). So, James is saying exactly the same thing.

John 15 shows that we are to be part of the vine. God the Father is the husbandman, and *we are to bring forth much fruit*. We're to bring forth the proper kind of fruit.

John 15:1: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. He takes away every branch in Me *that* does not bear fruit; but He cleanses each one that bears fruit, in order that it may bear more fruit" (vs 1-2). That's what it is with any tree, with any vine.

Verse 3: "You are already clean through the word that I have spoken to you. Dwell in Me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but only if it remains in the vine, neither *can you bear fruit* unless you are dwelling in Me. I am the vine, and you *are* the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; because **apart from Me you can do nothing**" (vs 3-5).

Verse 16: "You yourselves did not choose Me, but I have personally chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go *forth* and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; so that whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He may give you."

James 3:13: "Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him demonstrate his works through good conduct in *the* meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart..." (vs 13-14). He was trying to correct this very beginning of this carnal division within the Church.

"...do not boast and lie against the Truth. This wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, sensual *and* demonic; because where bitter envying and selfish ambition *are*, there *is* dissension and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and without hypocrisy. Now *the* fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace" (vs 14-18).

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) James 3:1-6
- 2) Matthew 12:31-37
- 3) James 3:6
- 4) Psalm 5:1-12
- 5) Psalm 50:16-22
- 6) Psalm 57:4
- 7) Psalm 109:2-3
- 8) James 3:7-8
- 9) Proverbs 18:21, 8
- 10) Jude 16-25
- 11) James 3:9
- 12) Matthew 5:33-37, 43-48
- 13) Proverbs 10:20-21
- 14) Proverbs 12:17-20
- 15) Proverbs 15:1-4
- 16) James 3:10-12
- 17) Matthew 7:16-20
- 18) John 15:1-5, 16
- 19) James 3:13-18

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Acts 2
- Romans 8, 10
- Psalm 1
- 1 Timothy 3
- Matthew 25
- Hebrews 4

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