

“Steadfast Part 5: The Power of our Words” (2-19-23)

Introduction: James has already introduced us to two characteristics of the mature believer . . .

- Chapter 1 - patience built in trial
- Chapter 2 - a living an active faith, faith that works

Today’s Focus: Chapter 3 - controlling the tongue

1) Our words steer our course

James 3:1-4 (ESV)

(1) Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (2) For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. (3) If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. (4) Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.

Note: James begins with the picture of a bit and a rudder. These are great pictures of how the tongue affects me personally. **My words set my direction and keep my course.**

- **Personal Story** - Waking up **anxious** and starting to speak that out and feeling my mental state spiral, and being prompted by the Lord with this choice:

Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)

(6) do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Note: The course was changed thru prayer & thanksgiving!

- **Personal Story** - A season of frustration & complaining: story of blessing the house

Philippians 2:14-15 (ESV)

(14) Do all things without grumbling or disputing, (15) that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

2) Our Words bring either death or life

James 3:5-8 (ESV)

(5) So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! (6) And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. (7) For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, (8) but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Note: Now he’s giving us a picture of the power of the untamed tongue affecting not just our selves, but those around us. James is saying in our flesh and our immaturity, our tongues have the power to reduce entire forests to ash.

Check out the Message Translation of this verse (This is Eugene Peterson's paraphrase version):

James 3:5-6 (MSG)

(5) A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything—or destroy it! It only takes a spark, remember, to set off a forest fire. (6) A careless or wrongly placed word out of your mouth can do that. By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell.

This really emphasizes a crucial point from the Proverbs about the true weight of our words. Here's the verse in both ESV & The Message again . . .

Proverbs 18:21 (ESV)

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.

Proverbs 18:21 (MSG)

Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit—you choose.

3) Our Words flow from our Heart

James 3:9-12 (ESV)

(9) With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. (10) From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. (11) Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? (12) Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

Note: Gossip, back biting, slander, all of this resembles The Father Of Lies, but we are called to be people of BLESSING!

James example of Fresh and Salt water coming from the same spring reveals that this is a heart issue. Let's see Jesus' words on this from Matthew 12 . . .

Matthew 12:34b (ESV)

. . . For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Note: What am I rooted in? For that determines the fruit. My speech is a barometer for where my heart is rooted - this is why David cries out "Create in me a CLEAN heart."

Application: Walk soberly with the knowledge that my words matter, and partner with God in speaking Blessing over those around me.

- Words can wound, and they can heal.
- Build walls, and demolish strongholds.
- Cause wars, and they can bring peace.

Proverbs 12:25 (ESV)

Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.

- **Personal story** - Sophia in the storm at the beach.

4) Wisdom from Above

James 3:13 (ESV)

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

Psalms 141:3 (ESV)

Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!

Note: The mature believer knows when to open his mouth, and when to keep it closed. I don't need to have all the answers, I don't need to make them see it my way.

James 3:14-16 (ESV)

(14) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. (15) This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. (16) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

Psalms 39:1, 3 (ESV)

(1) I said, "I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence." . . . (3) My heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue

Note: When I feel jealous, when I feel selfish ambition and a need to exert myself and my way, mature wisdom knows to keep my mouth closed, and come back to God and cry out, create in me a clean heart.

This is harkening back to what James already said in Chapter 1 . . .

James 1:19-20 (ESV)

(19) Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; (20) for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Note: Sow in anger, strife, jealousy and you will not be pleased with the results.

James 3:17-18 (ESV)

(17) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. (18) And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Note: Let this be a filter for my speech!! Is it pure, peaceable, merciful, sincere? My words are seeds, that will either produce a harvest of death or a harvest of life.

Colossians 3:16 (ESV)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Conclusion: Closing story from Krystal

Proverbs 16:24 (ESV)

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.

- **Personal Story:** Our words can hurt or they can be a healing balm - Your Words Matter