

Title: *'May the words of our mouths be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord'*

Date: *17th May 2015*

Scriptures: *James 3*

The Message:

The sermon today is the last in the series, '**7 Sermons you don't want to hear**' and it concerns **the words of our mouths**.

I know that we were not rejoicing when we heard that according to **Romans 14:12** there will come a time when all of us, every Christian is going to have to give a financial accounting of themselves to God.

And there probably won't be a chorus of '*Hallelujah's*' when I share with you that Jesus says, not me, but Jesus says in **Matthew 12:36** that on the day of judgment *men and women will have to give* WAIT FOR IT, **ACCOUNT** *for every idle, inoperative word they speak.*'

I don't know about you, but I would rather know these things NOW, so I can rectify them - *rather* than only finding out one day in heaven when it is too late to do anything about it.

Jesus continues in **verse 37** saying, '*For by your words you will be justified and acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned and sentenced.*' Jesus says for every careless word we have spoken we will be judged, because it is the careless words spoken when we are busy OR tired that reveal the condition of our hearts, for Jesus again said in **verse 34** of **Matthew 12** '*For out of the fullness, the overflow, the superabundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*'

Every word we speak can either be a brick to build with OR a bulldozer to destroy - they carry creative OR destructive power - they can either produce a good harvest OR a bad harvest in our lives AND in the lives of those we are speaking to.

This may well be a **sermon we don't want to hear**, BUT it is a sermon we **need** to hear, AND my prayer is that by the end of it we all purpose within our hearts *to love with our words AND build confidence in others, with our words.*

I wonder if you noticed when Janet read **James chapter 3** all the *word pictures* James uses to show the importance of our speech - James uses **8 word pictures**, who wants to have a go at reminding us of those **8 word pictures**?

Bit **rudder** **fire** **animals** **poison** **spring** **fig tree** and then James says, *the human tongue can be tamed by no man. It is a restless, undisciplined evil...*

James writes that the tongue is the hardest part of the body to control, which is probably why some don't even try - *but* do we realise that our ability to *control* our tongues is a true mark of Christian maturity - James writes in *verse 2* *'For we all often stumble and fall and offend in many things. And if anyone does not offend in speech, never says the wrong things, he is a fully developed character and a perfect as in mature man, able to control his whole body and to curb his entire nature.'*

And you know it's NOT just about the careless words we say, it is also about the hurtful **way in which** we speak, the tone we use when we speak. Sometimes we say the right thing in correcting a friend OR whoever, but our tone lacks love, kindness OR gentleness.

So then, let's have a look at each *word picture* in turn and see how they relate to our speech.

What then does a small **bit** in the mouth of a large, strong horse, a small rudder, which controls large and powerful oceangoing vessels have in common with the human tongue - they are ALL very **small** BUT very effective controllers?

Dictators, Hitler, Yasser Arafat, Saddam Hussein all used words to mobilize people to destroy others - words can divide churches - ruin reputations - AND destroy the character/the confidence of a spouse or child.

Small things control much!

We can speak impulsively, automatically and thoughtlessly - we can lash out at others - AND pass on gossip without giving any thought to what destruction might follow.

What we say and what we DON'T say are equally important. It is NOT just about saying the right thing at the right time, it is also about knowing when we should say nothing at all. James also is the one who encourages us in **chapter 1**

of his letter **verse 19**, to *be quick to hear* in other words, *a ready listener*, **SLOW to speak, slow to take offense and to get angry because anger** does not promote the righteousness God wishes and requires from us.

Fire: James then likens the tongue to a fire, saying, *'see how much wood or how great a forest a tiny spark can set ablaze,'* warning us of the destructive force of a small spark, it can destroy a whole forest. *There were often terrible fires in the bush surrounding where we lived in Mandini, the one year it destroyed the nature reserve, another year it destroyed hectares of sugar-cane, they often threatened our homes and the fire teams would be out all night trying to bring them under control* - our words can cause just as much destruction as one of those bush fires, and we need to recognise that.

Idle words quickly spread destruction, dividing people and setting them up against each other. **We** cannot be careless with our words thinking that we will just apologise later, because even if we do apologise, the damage remains!

Let us remember that like a fire, our words can neither control NOR reverse the damage they do.

Animals: In **verse 7** James writes, *'For every kind of beast and bird and reptile and sea animal, can be tamed and has been tamed by human nature. But the human tongue can be tamed by no man...'* what is James saying, he is saying that human ingenuity has tamed wild animals to make them useful, but no person, by his/her own power can tame the tongue. **Our speech has a power that few other capabilities have!**

Poison: **Verse 8**, *the human tongue is full of deadly poison* - what we say can be dangerous and deadly, so we need to use restraint in how we reveal our feelings of anger and frustration to others, **BECAUSE** this is what Jesus would have us do.

James then says something that stops me in my tracts every time I read it, with our tongues *we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who were made in God's likeness! Out of the same mouth come forth blessing and cursing. THESE THINGS, MY BRETHREN, OUGHT NOT TO BE SO!*

Because we are all created in the image of God we should have respect for one another. It is as simple as that, *yet*, we might be courteous to strangers AND impatient with our families - we may be compliant at work BUT abusive to our

families - we might be gracious at Bible Study BUT then destroy someone's reputation with gossip - we praise the Lord on Sunday but then Monday through to Saturday what is our speech made up of? **Our tongue's reveal either maturity OR immaturity *instead of fighting*** the ideal would be to be helpful, positive and encouraging towards others.

Spring: James then asks, *does a fountain send forth from the same opening fresh water and bitter? Can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine figs. Who is there among you who is wise and intelligent? Then let him by his noble living show forth his good works with the humility of true wisdom.*

Our speech as Christians can be very inconsistent AND James is saying this **OUGHT NOT TO BE SO!** Just as a spring cannot send forth fresh and bitter water OR fresh and salty water, AND a fig tree cannot bear olives, our speech shouldn't honour God one moment and curse another the next - but how do we rectify our inconsistent speech - how do we control what we say AND how we say it?

Tongue: We noted earlier what James said about the human tongue, *the human tongue can be tamed by no man*. NOTE James does not say that no one can tame the human tongue, BUT THAT **no man** can tame the human tongue.

The good news is **JESUS** can! You and I need to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to control what we say. **When** we feel offended OR unjustly criticized the Holy Spirit will keep us from retaliating, from lashing out AND remind us of God's love and heal any hurt we feel.

But how do we make sure our tongue is under the control of the Holy Spirit? BY not just reading God's Word daily, but by allowing God's Word to change us and change the way we think AND instead of *speaking our minds because somebody had to tell them off - maybe what I said will do them some good - I feel better for saying it* - we will exercise restraint and allow the peace and wisdom of God to guide what we say.

Psalm 141:3 says, *'Set a guard, O Lord, before my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips.'*

I remember being told, *though* I do confess I don't always remember to do it - that **BEFORE** we speak we should ask ourselves - **'Is this what I really want to say?' 'Is it true?' 'Is it necessary?' 'Is it kind?'** and if it isn't any of those things then we shouldn't say it!

Other ways we can bring our speech under the control of the Holy Spirit is by **waiting before we respond to a comment, criticism, OR a piece of gossip - we can make 5 positive comments to every negative one that we make about someone else - AND we can treat everything we say as a gift to another person. We should ask ourselves: 'Are my words a gift that I REALLY want to leave in their hands?'**

James, possibly recalling his own idle words recorded by John in chapter 7 of his gospel focuses on the tongue because he knows an uncontrolled tongue could cause major problems for those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. AND SO...

The question I ask myself and leave with you is, **does our speech reflect our Christian maturity?**

And, are the words of our mouths acceptable in the sight of God Who is our Rock and our Redeemer?

Reflection: James writes in verse 22 of chapter 1, *'But be doers of the Word, obey the message, and not merely listeners to it...'* so as we conclude our series on the **'7 Sermons you don't want to hear'** let us take some time to reflect on the sermons we have read and reflect on what we have done with the message, have we been doers OR listeners only?

Prayer

God be in my head, and in my understanding

God be in mine eyes, and in my looking

God be in my mouth, and in my speaking

God be in my heart, and in my thinking

God be at mine end, and at my departing. Amen.

Blessing:

Let the words of our mouths and the

Meditations of our hearts be acceptable in the sight of our Lord

As we go out to love and serve the Lord in the world.

Amen.