

## 1. Introduction

- a. The book of James is a practical letter looking at how Christians move past a mere profession of faith into a real possession of faith
- b. The letter is centered on a few key components:
  - i. Acting on our faith, Care for the poor (ch.1-2)
  - ii. Speech (ch.3)
  - iii. Living faithfully in the world around us (ch.4-5)
- c. He shows us that mastery of words and our speech is a mastery of life. We have to see the seriousness of words (3:1). If we could master our words, we would be perfect he says (v2)
- d.

## 2. The Power of Words

- a. The seriousness of words: people who teach and speak the most are going to be judged the most. (v. 1)
  - i. From this we learn that Christians are judged—specifically those who are held in a position of authority
  - ii. But this judgement comes “with greater strictness” (v. 1 ESV translation)
  - iii. This doesn’t refer to the ultimate judgement for our sins (see Romans 8:1) but rather an evaluation of the works we have done to build on the foundation of salvation through Jesus Christ alone—our works/actions/words will be “revealed” (see 1 Corinthians 3:12-15)
- b. The underlying principle goes for everyone who sets themselves up in a position of Christian instruction
  - i. To whom much is given much is required. (see Luke 12:48)
  - ii. He's trying to humble the blessed. He's trying to make the ones who have realize that much is now required of them.
  - iii. The “haves” must then be humbled and respect what God has given them—they must realize that they're probably not fully utilizing—or perhaps misusing—what God gave them.
  - iv. This makes look at the struggles of others and know God is probably far more pleased with them using what they have as resources.
- c. The power of words
  - i. The tongue is one of the few objects in the Bible which is said to have a life of its own (cf. v. 5 it “boasts”)
  - ii. It is a relatively small part of the body and yet has the power to control our will, words, actions, reactions from others, relationships, etc. (see 3:3-4)
  - iii. We have to recognize the power our words have in our lives and on the lives of others—James seems to think it's the difference between heaven and hell!! (see 3:6)

## 3. The Control of Our Words

- a. If words are so powerful, how can we begin to control our speech—what we say, when we say it, how we say it, etc.?
- b. We can't master it by will (v. 8)—it will consume us!
- c. We don't master the tongue because we don't actually realize we're saved by grace. We're not truly living in light of this fact each day—which is why the tongue gets the better of us.
- d. How do you get this mastery?
  - i. Look to the one who mastered words. Jesus stood before judgement and was silent. (as a lamb led to the slaughter Isaiah v. 53:7)
  - ii. Not boasting. Not complaining. Not criticizing. He was the Word. He was a great example.
  - iii. But it's the power that he gives. In his presence we must worship.
    - 1. Don't just be like Jesus but instead turn your worship to him with your tongue.
    - 2. James says the opposite of cursing man isn't honoring man—it's worshipping God (see 3:9-10)

3. Let that be on our tongues and we'll start to master it finally!
- e. Knowing that you're saved by grace by the one who was silenced will then give you the power—you'll be so busy praising him and adoring that grace, you'll have a hard time doing anything else
- i. What do you boast about? Think about what Jesus boasted about (the love of his Father)
  - ii. What do you complain about? Think about what Jesus complained about (my God, my God why have you forsaken me?)
  - iii. What do you criticize? Think about what Jesus "criticized"—he wept at the death of his friend Lazarus, he hated self-righteousness and threw over tables in the temple of those impeding worship, he put an end to sin by giving his life
  - iv. What do you defend yourself from? Think about how Jesus defended himself—in relative silence before an unfair jury which would lead to his death
  - v. Then, you can truly sing that old hymn:
    - 1. Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.