

### 1. Introduction

- a. James devotes an entire section of his book to the issue of the tongue—our words, their power, and how we use them
- b. In writing to Christians, James is identifying one of the greatest weaknesses within the church—the use or abuse of words and speech

### 2. The Power of Words

- a. V9. The fact that our words curse those who are made in God's image.
  - i. God speaks creation into being. He doesn't snap his fingers. He speaks and makes us in his image.
  - ii. Our very words can destroy someone in this condition—someone who bears the likeness of God can be “cursed” by our speech
  - iii. Humans possess this unique gift of words to express. They can destroy and they can heal.
  - iv. With words comes a responsibility because words are so very powerful enough to be able to curse a creature made in the image of our God
- b. Words reveal who we really are and what's inside your heart (v. 11, 12)
  - i. James gives the example of the fig tree and the spring of water to show us that ultimately our heart controls our tongue
  - ii. He's essentially quoting Matthew 12:34b (out of what fills the heart, the mouth speaks)
  - iii. We find out who we are by speaking.
  - iv. Words have power not just meaning. They penetrate and pollute. They can set the whole thing on fire.
- c. Words affect everyone (listener AND speaker)
  - i. James 3:6—Words have a power over the hearer as well as over the speaker. (setting a fire on the speaker as well)
    1. Proverbs 12:18. Words pierce
    2. Proverbs 12:13. A mans harmful speech will harm himself.

### 3. The Practice of Words

- a. Your tongue is the key to changing your whole self (James 3:2)
- b. James offers advice on what to do or not do in regards to the tongue
  - i. Don't boast and don't curse—but these are impossible to do by sheer will power alone
  - ii. Praising God is the antithesis to cursing men, not praising men (James 3:9)
- c. A word can change everything. How do we begin to change our words?
- d. What word do we need? One person is called the Word (John 1:1) and he “dwelt” among us.
  - i. What does it mean that Jesus is “the Word?”
  - ii. Because God is a speaker and in giving his Son, he gives us the word we always needed.
  - iii. This is the word we've always looked for. To undo the words of our parents. Our friends. Everything that ever harmed us.
  - iv. Jesus gives us the great word. Approval. Affirmation. Acceptance. (Matthew 25:23 in the parable, Jesus connects his approval of the master to the servant)
  - v. Jesus got the silent treatment from God so that God could give you the truest and most loving words of acceptance
    1. Let this sink in and you will begin to be changed in how you use your words
    2. When you fail to speak to others in truth with love, you're forgetting how God first spoke to you in truth with love through the cross of Christ
    3. How can we say “I'm sorry” for our words? Because he first said “I'm sorry” for our words—he took on our sin and wrongs even though he didn't deserve it
    4. The worst thing we can get than words is the silent treatment—and it was Jesus who got the silent treatment on our behalf