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Review:

Lesson 5 in James 2.14-26, we saw the 2nd temptation - professing faith without works. That there is a difference between saying one has faith and then proving it by the works and deeds that are actually done for The Lord in love.

James clarified the kind of faith that saves, showing the difference between dead faith, demonic faith, and true living faith.

He explained that 'works' is not a gift bestowed on some, but the giving, living, loving obedience that comes when one has living faith. It is walking out what we are talking about.

He showed us the Jewish interpretation of the Shema from the Old Testament (Deut 6:4-5) and that demons are 'believers' and shudder when confronted with the Lord; but they do not love nor do good works. James says that orthodox doctrine by itself is not proof of saving faith.

We saw the examples of Abraham and Rahab as they proved their faith by their works. Then we were left with some marks of saving faith from Pastor David Guzik – 'Nine points on what faith is'.

- Did you go thru them in your quiet time?
- Can you answer 'yes' Lord, by His grace they describe you?
- Do you have some work to do in the faith department?

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**Temptations & Trials
Especially Teachers – James 3:1-12
The Tongue is a Fire - Expectation, Illustration**

3) *

3 ¹ Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. ² For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. ³ Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. ⁴ Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. ⁵ So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things.

See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. ⁸ But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰ from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. ¹¹ Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

James has explained to us two characteristics of the mature Christian: they are patient in trouble (James 1) and they practice the truth (James 2). In this section, he shares another characteristic of the mature believer: power over their tongue.

The power of speech is one of the greatest powers God has given us. With the tongue, man can praise God, pray, preach the Word, and lead the lost to Christ. What a privilege! But with that same tongue he can tell lies that could ruin a man's reputation or break a person's heart. The ability to speak words is the ability to influence others and accomplish tremendous tasks, and yet we take this ability for granted.

- 4) * ***3 ¹ Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.***

James is referring to those who teach the Word of God. Teachers must use their voices to share God's truth, and it is easy to commit sins of the tongue. Furthermore, teachers must practice what they teach; otherwise, their teaching is hypocrisy. Think of the damage that can be done by a teacher who is unprepared, whose spiritual life is not up to par, or who do not teach God's truth.

James is not intending to discourage true teachers, but to warn the prospective teacher of the seriousness of the roll of teaching as found in the definition of teacher

Teacher [g1320 *disaskalos*] – an instructor. NT - one who teaches concerning the things of God and the duties of man, who undertakes the work of teaching with the special assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Stricter Judgment [g2917 *krima*] – condemnation, judgment, the sentence of a judge. NT - this usually expresses a negative verdict, causing the teacher to face stricter/harsher judgment or greater condemnation than the student.

Matthew 23:8 ⁸ But do not be called Rabbi; for **One is your Teacher**, and you are all brothers.

1 Timothy 1:6-7 ⁶ For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, ⁷ wanting to be **teachers** of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

God will call teachers of His Word and equip them to do what He wills. The first step being able to hear His voice, second step is obedience to do His will, third step may be training or tutoring, remember that where God guides – He provides. Teaching is an amazing gift, and if you have been given this gift then don't keep it wrapped up but open it and embrace what God has given you – understanding that:

Pastor David Guzik “It is easy to take the position of teacher lightly in the church, without considering its cost in terms of accountability. Jesus warned *to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much have been committed, of him they will ask the more.* Luke 12:48

The words of Jesus and James remind us that being among the **teachers** in God's church is more than a matter of having natural or even spiritual gifts; there is an additional dimension of appropriate character and right living. “James found that this department of church-work had become extremely popular. Hence his warning about its serious responsibilities. God will judge us on the last day **with special strictness** on account of our influence over others.” (Moffatt)

If you are called to be a teacher of God's Word, will we do what He gives you (no matter what the job) perfectly – NO! We won't. Will we make mistakes – YES! But, if you are called to be a listener, that's wonderful. In either place understand that the key of your life is to learn to be content where God has placed you.

- 5) * **² For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.**

As we go through our lives, we are often stumbling as James says 'we all stumble in many ways'. But this stumbling is not referring to tripping and falling to the ground – this is the failure to do what is right in the sight of God, offending God's Person. This stumbling is willfully sinning, whether from knowledge or lack of knowledge. We all will stumble and offend at one time or another.

Stumble [g4417 ptaiō] to trip, err, sin, fail, offend, stumble, make a mistake. Something that trips up and hinders our spiritual progress.

"If anyone" James indicates a situation where someone never stumbles or makes a mistake in what they say or in their words, and *If* that were to happen they would be a person able to control their whole body – they would have become perfect. **Perfect** here may be indicating true sinless perfection which would have only been accomplished by Jesus Himself, not us. So perfect doesn't mean perfection but reference to those who are spiritually mature and able to control their tongues and their bodies.

The human tongue also must overcome contrary forces. We have an old nature that wants to control us and make us sin. There are circumstances around us that would make us say things we ought not to say. Sin on the inside and pressures on the outside are seeking to get control of the tongue. The point here is what is going on with the tongue and our words. Our tongues stumble often and for some of us that means hourly! Understand that even a vow of silence is not the ultimate answer for misusing our tongues.

Bridle [g5468 chalinagōgeō] to guide, hold in check, restrain

James 2:10 ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet **stumbles** in one point, he has become guilty of all.

- 6) * **Matthew 12:34** ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, **speak** what is good? For the mouth **speaks** out of that which fills the heart.
- 7) * **Proverbs 18:21** ²¹ Death and life are in the **power of the tongue**, And those who love it will eat its fruit. .
- If we cannot bridle our tongue – how can we restrain our body? We give it to the Lord.
- 8) * **Psalms 141:3** ³ Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.

³ Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. ⁴ Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.

We are brought two illustrations of how a small part is able to control a much larger entity. In our first illustration we find a horse. A large animal that can be used for pulling a cart, plow, chariot or

riding to a destination. No matter what it is capable of doing, it must be shown what you want it to do for you. Here is where the **bits** come in – a part of the bridle that goes into a horse's mouth, which amazingly is used to control the horse – and it complies! The driver or rider tells the horse what to do by means of the bridle, the steering wheel of the animal.

Bit [g5469 chalinos] a curb or head-stall (as curbing the spirit)

Psalms 32:9 ⁹ Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include **bit** and **bridle** to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you.

The second example is the ship. James would have known about ships from his cousins, the sons of Zebedee, James and John, and their business partners Simon and Andrew who were the first disciples called by Jesus, as found in **Matthew 4:18-22**.

The boats used for fishing were not normally very large, taking about four men comfortably. A large triangular sail was attached to a wooden support and suspended on a central mast so that it could be moved to catch the wind. Steering was from the rear, with a large oar that acted as a rudder. They often worked in partnership with another boat. (Manners & Customs of Bible Times)

Rudder [g4079 pēdalion] the blade of an oar, a pedal - a broad flat movable piece of wood or metal hinged vertically at the stern of a boat or ship that is used for steering and controlling direction to the left or right.

The rudder is something serving to guide, direct, or control the direction of a vehicle in the water, or as a stabilizer of an aircraft – in order to go **wherever the inclination of the pilot desires**. The point is – control the bit or the rudder and the whole horse or ship is controlled. So the bit and rudder have the power to direct, which means *they affect the lives of others*. A runaway horse or a shipwreck could mean injury or death to pedestrians or passengers. The words we speak affect the lives of others. A judge says, “Guilty!” or “Not guilty!” and those words affect the destiny of the prisoner, his family, and his friends. The president of the United States speaks a few words and signs some papers, and the nation is at war. Even a simple yes or no from the lips of a parent can greatly affect the direction of a child’s life.

- Never underestimate the guidance you give by the words you speak or do not speak. A well-timed word of encouragement or compliment can inspire someone for the rest of their lives. Just so, when we hold our tongues from speaking rashly, we can give grace to the hearer

Proverbs 15:1-2 ¹ A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. ² The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly.

Proverbs 12:22 ²² Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal faithfully are His delight.

Proverbs 10:19 ¹⁹ When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, But he who restrains his lips is wise.

Yes, the tongue is like a bit and a rudder: It has the power to direct. How important it is that our tongues direct people in the right way! Toward the Lord, His Word, His mercies, this should be the direction that our tongues as believers should be constantly taking.

5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set afire by such a small fire!

Sin is always found in the boasting, bragging, gossiping, lying – the tongue boasts great things with its words.

Psalms 12:3-4 ³ May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, The **tongue** that speaks great things; ⁴ Who have said, "With our **tongue** we will prevail; Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"

Psalms 73:8-9 ⁸ They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; They speak from on high. ⁹ They have set their *mouth against the heavens*, And their **tongue** parades through the earth.

The forest can be set on fire by a spark, an ember, a small flame, even lightening. Fires start small and grow, they create heat, and they defile and damage everything around them from scorching and smoke. Even so our words can start the fire of strife among those around us. As fire burns and hurts, our words can also burn and hurt.

➤ Therefore, we are wise to remember that God says in His Word:

Proverbs 26:20-21 ²⁰ For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down. ²¹ Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.

Proverbs 17:27 ²⁷ He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

Proverbs 14:29 ²⁹ He who is slow to anger has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.

6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

Fire spreads, and the more fuel you give it, the faster and farther it will spread. James suggested that all of life is connected like a wheel – the world of iniquity, and therefore we cannot keep things from spreading. A person's entire life and the lives of others can be injured or destroyed by the tongue. We would do well to remember that time does not correct the sins of the tongue. We may confess our sins of speech, but the fire keeps on spreading.

Psalms 120:2 ² Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, From a deceitful tongue.

It corrupts the whole body

Proverbs 16:27 ²⁷ A worthless man digs up evil, While his words are like scorching fire.

Matthew 15:11 ¹¹ It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.

It inflames the whole life

Matthew 15:18 ¹⁸ But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.

It has a source and a destination – hell

Matthew 12:36-37 ⁶ But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. ³⁷ For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Matthew 5:22 ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell

❖ “Your words can be a great blessing or a great weapon” RLB

As it spreads, fire destroys, and the words we speak have the power to destroy. For every word in Hitler's book Mein Kampf, 125 lives were lost in World War II. Our own words may not have caused wars or wrecked cities, but they can break hearts and ruin reputations. They can also destroy souls by sending them into eternity without Christ. How important it is for us to let our speech “be always full of grace, seasoned with salt” (**Col. 4:6 NIV**). Wiersby BE Commentary

Proverbs 26:20 ²⁰ For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down. When you hear gossip, pray silently in the Spirit to keep your tongue busy lest you join in the hellish discussion. If I listen to gossip, to put-downs, I am actually an accomplice in that fire ignited by hell. But if I refuse to listen and pray instead, the water of the Spirit douses the fire of hell, and the conversation dies. Courson's Application Commentary

7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

The tongue is the only member of the body that is uncontrolled and cannot be tamed by man. It is unruly and restless - full of deadly poison

Some animals are poisonous, and we know that some tongues spread poison just as deadly as any animal. The deceptive thing about poison is that it works secretly and slowly, and then kills. How many times has some malicious person injected a bit of poison into the conversation, hoping it would spread and finally get to the person he or she wanted to hurt? Poisonous tongues do great damage to individuals, families, classes, and entire churches. We have all seen this type of behavior, these deadly words that hurt and kill.

James reminds us that animals can be tamed, and even fire can be tamed. When you tame an animal, you find that you can get a worker instead of a destroyer. When you control fire, you can generate power.

The tongue cannot be tamed by man, but it **can be tamed** by God. Your tongue need not be **set on fire by hell**. Like the apostles at Pentecost, it can be set on fire from heaven! If God lights the fire and controls it, then the tongue can be a mighty tool for the winning of the lost and the building up of the church. The important thing, of course, is the heart. If the heart is filled with hatred, Satan will light the fire. But if the heart is filled with love, God will light the fire.

Matthew 12:34-36 ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. ³⁵ The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. ³⁶ But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.

The tongue is a restless evil

Psalms 140:3 ³ They sharpen their **tongues** as a serpent; Poison of a viper is under their lips.

Ecclesiastes 10:11 ¹ If the serpent bites before being charmed, there is no profit for the charmer.

Romans 3:13 ¹³ “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR **TONGUES** THEY KEEP DECEIVING,” “THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”

⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰ from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

The tongue blesses God and curses man

Bless [g2127 *eulogeō*] to speak well of, to bless, thank or invoke a benediction upon. Bless means to praise, celebrate with praises, to invoke blessings, to consecrate a thing with solemn prayers, to ask God's blessing on a thing, pray God to bless it to one's use

Curse [g2672 *kataromaī*] to doom, imprecate evil upon. Imprecate means to pray for or invoke evil or a curse. Cursing implies **any** words that bring hurt to someone.

Proverbs 18:4 ⁴ The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; The fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.

Proverbs 10:11 ¹¹ The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, But the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

these things ought not to be this way. We should be constantly glorifying God with our speech. As a child of God, our words and vocabulary should be the same no matter our location or circumstance or our company.

Proverbs 13:14 ¹⁴ The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, To turn aside from the snares of death.

Proverbs 18:21 ²¹ Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.

Our tongues must be controlled by Jesus

John 15:4 ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

Just as our words can teach God's precious word, they can help to shelter and encourage a weary traveler, or help to feed a hungry soul. Jesus said, “**The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life**” (**John 6:63**). As we share His Word with others, we feed them and encourage them along the way.

James knew that one reason his Lord was able to say the right words at the right times was because Jesus communed with His Father and heard from heaven each day. James surely watched his older

brother as all youngers do to this day. He was a witness to Jesus spending time with God, and seeing and hearing Jesus witness every day.

Isaiah 50:4 ⁴ The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

Mark 1:35 ³⁵ In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.

If we are going to have tongues that delight, then we must meet with the Lord each day and learn from Him. We must get our “spiritual roots” deep into His Word. We must pray and meditate and permit the Spirit of God to fill our hearts with God’s love and truth.

¹¹ Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

Behavior is inconsistent fountains w/fresh & bitter water

Water refreshes, helps our bodies stay healthy, and it also cleanses. There was a laver in the Old Testament tabernacle and temple that provided for the cleansing of the priests’ hands and feet. Washing was important to the Lord and His Word is the spiritual water that cleanses us. Our words ought to be like the river described in **Ezekiel 47.1-12** that brought life to everything it touched.

But James issued a warning: A fountain cannot give forth two kinds of water, and a tree cannot bear two different kinds of fruit. We expect the fountain to flow with sweet water at all times, and we expect the fig tree to bear figs and the olive tree to bear olives. Nature reproduces after its kind.

Matthew 7:16-20 ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits.

If our tongues are inconsistent, if our words are not Godly, there is something wrong with our heart. If you curse or swear or use the ‘OMG’ at work or with friends or even at church then it is time for evaluation of your heart! An evaluation of your heart will show you the words that you are using and how to remedy the situation.

A wise man once said, “It had to be in you, or it couldn’t have come out of you.” When Peter was out of fellowship with Christ, he uttered some oaths, but he went out and wept bitterly and confessed his sins.

Matthew 15:18 ¹⁸ But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.

Proverbs 4:23 ²³ Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

"We live in a pleasant area," said the men of Jericho to the newly anointed prophet. "But our crops are dying because our water is poisoned." So what did Elisha do? He poured salt into the water, and the water became sweet once again (**2 Kings 2:21**).

Salt was to be poured into polluted water? Yes, because Paul tells us our speech is always to be seasoned with salt, that is grace (**Colossians 4:6**). What does this mean? It means that in any given moment I can bring healing to an otherwise poisonous situation by speaking grace. If I keep talking about how gracious God has been to me, and how gracious He'll be toward others, the polluted puddles of put-downs and pettiness will become pools of purity and praise.

I want this in my life so badly I can taste it. Oh, I'm far from what I should be—but I see the wisdom of James, for I've known people who have refused to listen to gossip and who have, instead, learned to speak graciously. There is a beauty about their lives and refreshment from their lives I so desire. If you want to be the man or woman God uses, join me in praying that we will be those who add the salt of grace to everything we say. Courson's Application Commentary

Yes, the smallest but largest troublemaker in all the world is the tongue. But it does not have to be a troublemaker! God can use our tongues to direct others into the way of life, and to delight them in the trials of life. The tongue is a little member, but it has great power.

Give God your tongue and your heart each day and ask Him to use you to be a blessing to others. In order to impress on us the importance of controlled speech and the great consequences of our words, James gave us six pictures of the tongue: the bit, the rudder, fire, a poisonous animal, a fountain, and a fig tree. You can see that these six pictures form three classifications that reveal the three powers of the tongue.

- α The Power to Direct – the bit and rudder
- α The Power to Destroy – the fire and animal
- α The Power to Delight – the fountain and tree