

Salt Church

James 3:1-12

“The Fruit of the Tongue”

August 23, 2026

The Fruit of Salvation

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It is very fitting that we transition from our old place to our new place through the senior center.

- The origins of this church reach back to September 13, 2015
- That 1st Sunday was in the Gulf Shores Adult Activity Center.
 - I am grateful for the journey
 - I trust the sovereign God who has guided our steps the whole way.

Recap

James 2:14-26

What did we learn last week?

- We are saved unto works
- We are not saved through our works
- The fruit of our salvation will be our good works which are motivated by the **unmerited grace of God** given to us on the day of our salvation.
 - Our faith is perfected within the good works that are the fruit of our salvation.
 - In other words, our faith will produce some kind of work.
 - No faith produces no work

- Great faith produces great work

I asked you this very important question:

Are we willing to admit that although a person has gone forward:

- Said the prayer of salvation
- Had a very emotional moment
- Gotten baptized
- ***Are we willing to admit that if*** that person does not have a pattern of consistent Godly works, that they do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- In other words:
 - If there has been **no change in that person's life** we can safely judge correctly (**according to the word of God**) that person is not a child of God.
 - Keep in mind they may know who Jesus is
 - His virgin birth
 - His sinless life
 - Death on the cross
 - His resurrection
 - His ascension to Heaven
 - They may know all of that but that does not make you a Christian for “the Demons know that and shudder.”

It all goes back to the little word “pisteuó” found in John 3:16.

- “Whosoever believes (pisteuó) “believes with trust”

- This becomes the difference between knowledge and wisdom.
 - For knowledge is known information acquired
 - Wisdom is the application of that knowledge.
 - Therefore, it is possible to know those things about Jesus but not place your trust in Him.
 - It is possible to know those things about Him and not place your faith, hope, and trust in Him therefore making yourself like the demons (unwise).
- This is why James through the power of the Holy Spirit said in chapter one that we need wisdom.
 - Knowledge is useless unless it is applied to our lives therefore making it wisdom.

We closed last week with this verse from James 2

James 2:26

²⁶For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

- This summed up everything that we learned last week
 - No Godly works, no Godly faith
 - No Godly fruit, no Godly faith

I want to set the stage for today with Jesus' words:

Matthew 12:33-37 (NLT)

³³“A tree is identified by its fruit. If a tree is good, its fruit will be good. If a tree is bad, its fruit will be bad. ³⁴You brood of snakes! How could evil men like you speak what is good and right? For

whatever is in your heart determines what you say. ³⁵ A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. ³⁶ And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. ³⁷ The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.”

- Wow!!!!

Now to todays text:

James 3:1-12

¹ Do not, many of you, become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment.

Amen James!

- You need to know that “we” your elders take this very seriously.
- This verse guides and motivates everything that we teach you.
 - I can tell you that eldership is a calling
 - Preaching, teaching, leading, and Pastoring are callings
 - And the Bible has much to say about this calling

James expresses a truth about becoming a teacher of God’s Word.

- There will be a stricter judgement for those who teach.
- This is why teachers and elders cannot be new converts.
- It is also why there is such a high standard placed on the man of God who teaches the word of God.
- **For his life is the loudest proclamation of what he really believes.**

The writer of Hebrews agrees with James and has this to say **to the church about its leaders:**

Hebrews 13:17 (LSB)

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them—for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account—so that they will do this with joy and not with groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Hebrews 13:17 (NLT)

¹⁷ Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

- This verse changed how I saw myself as a pastor.
 - Before this verse became a reality to me, I simply saw myself as a teacher of God's word.
 - This verse forced me to become a shepherd of souls.
 - Before, I felt like you could take it or leave it and it didn't matter to me because that was on you.
 - The problem with that way of thinking was this:
 - Some sheep come into the fold wounded.
 - Some are young and new to the faith, eager, and full of energy.
 - Others are tired and carry the scars of past decisions
 - Some are sick both physically and spiritually

- God has called me and the rest of your elders to love and care for all of your souls.

Why do I say all of this?

- **It matters** to God the Father how His shepherds lead.
- **It matters** **what** we teach and **how** we teach it.
- **It matters** how we live our lives in and outside of this place.
- **It matters** how we love and shepherd those that are under our care.

- ***All of this matters!***

- **This thing called church is so much more than a building where people meet twice a week.**
- **This is a family** who actually love each other and care for each other.
- A family that can find:
 - Godly counsel
 - Prayer
 - Accountability
 - Love (sometimes tough love)
 - Peace
 - Patience
 - Encouragement
 - Compassion
 - Truth
 - Discipleship
 - And Service

- ***All of this matters!***

With all of that in mind allow me to express this:

- We have **no desire** to be the most entertaining church.
- **We do desire** excellence in everything that we do.
 - Finding the correct balance between those two desires is our goal.
 - Be patient with us because we will be patient with you.

Our mission remains the same no matter where we call home:

- Love God
- Love People
- Grow Deeper
- Make Disciples

Growing deeper and making disciples requires teachers.

Back to our text

James 3:1-12

¹ Do not, many of you, become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive 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 entire body as well.

- ***Thank you, James,***
- Thank you, Holy Spirit, for saying that!
 - All of our elders and teachers are striving to teach nothing but the truth.

- I pray this prayer before I teach ***“Father, your words and not my own, may they hear your voice and not my voice.”***

James, through the power of the Holy Spirit says ***“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 entire body as well.”***

- There has been only one perfect man on this earth and His name is Jesus.
 - Therefore we conclude that all of our teachers and elders will stumble from time to time.
 - The key for us mortals is that we are quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.
 - I would also add that we are quick to correct our mistakes when they happen.
 - Quick to confession and repentance is the mark of a mature Christian
 - Be patient with us as we are patient with you.

As we move into verse 3, I want to remind you of the words of Jesus:

Luke 6:45

⁴⁵ The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil. For his mouth speaks from the abundance of his heart.

- Jesus’ point is very simple to understand

- The mouth (tongue) is the single greatest indicator of what is going on within the heart.
 - **If the mouth is to be tamed, we need a new heart.**

James continues:

³Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.

- What a wonderful example!
 - These huge animals that have incredible strength are controlled by their mouths!
 - The bridle goes into the mouth and applies pressure on the tongue and therefore causes the horse to do what its rider desires.
 - This is the opposite of how it works with humans.
 - In a horse the pressure on the tongue controls the brain which tells the body to go in the direction of the rider.
 - In humans, the mouth is the single greatest indicator of what is going on in the heart of a person.
 - “The heart” or the mind controls not only the words but the actions of a person.
 - This is why Jesus focused on the heart.
 - The heart and the mind are the origin of all things good and evil.
 - Therefore Jesus said things like:
 - If you hate someone you are already guilty of murder

- If you lust after someone who is not your spouse, you are guilty of adultery
 - Why?
 - Murder begins in the heart with hate
 - Adultery begins in the heart as lust

In the end, the heart and mind are the origin of all thought and action

- The overflow of the heart spills out of the mouth
- The overflow of the heart controls the tongue

James continues:

⁴Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot wills. ⁵So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things.

- Amen James!
 - The tongue is such a double edge sword.
 - Perhaps we should say a “double-edge knife”
 - It doesn’t take a big knife to kill someone
 - And yet the surgeon’s knife (which is very small) has the power to save lives
 - The tongue is like that
- Again, the tongue is small in comparison to the rest of the body but...
 - Often it is the small rudder that determines the direction of our lives.

We continue:

Behold how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, the very world of unrighteousness; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our existence, and is set on fire by hell.

- Out of all of the analogies presented so far, **I understand this one the most.**
- About a decade ago, a charcoal camp fire was left unattended in the Gulf State Park
 - The wind blew and that charcoal fire and started a brush fire that burned for seven straight days.
 - Over twenty departments responded including forestry.
 - We kept crews onsite 24 hours a day until we were able to contain it.
 - I remember the fire and smoke being so bad that we could not see each other
 - I remember getting a two-hour nap on a picnic table on the edge of a campsite in the middle of the woods.
 - After the fire was contained, I remember being assigned to sit in a pickup truck all night long on the side of the road so that the public could rest assured that we were keeping an eye on things.
 - I understand this analogy

Fire is an interesting thing:

- It is like the mouth, it can be used for so many good things
- But, like the mouth it can be very destructive

- Fire and gossip destroy
 - They jump from one location to the next with ease
 - They spread at a very rapid rate
 - I read once that a lie can spread around the world before the truth has a chance to get out of the bed.

James through the power of the Holy Spirit reminds us that the tongue can defile a person in the same way that fire destroys a forest.

- James says that the tongue sets on fire the course of our very existence
- We know this to be true
 - For the scripture says that “if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth (tongue) that Jesus is Lord you shall be saved”
 - The scripture also says that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is the only unforgivable sin
 - What is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?
 - It is the rejection of the message of the Holy Spirit
 - What is the message of the Holy Spirit?
 - “if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth (tongue) that Jesus is Lord you shall be saved”
 - So, you see why it is unforgivable, for rejecting that message is to reject the only way to be forgiven.

So, when James says the tongue “***sets on fire the course of our existence,***” we understand what he is saying:

- The tongue is a great indicator of what is really happen in the heart of a person.

Okay Pastor but what about this part?

- The tongue ***is set on fire by hell.***
 - The Greek word used for “hell” is Gehenna.
 - It is used 12 times in the Bible
 - 11 by Jesus and 1 by James
 - Gehenna was a place in the Valley of Ben Hinnom

In Jesus’ day it was a trash dump

- It was always on fire so that the trash would be broken down
- It was also the place where the bodies of criminals were thrown
- In the Old Testament the nation of Israel rebelled against God and followed a false god named Molech.
 - As part of their worship to Molech they would take their children to the Valley of Hinnom and burn them alive as a sacrifice to Molech.
 - This brought judgement upon them and ultimately God installed King Josiah who desecrated the place by making it a dumpsite for trash so that no one would ever offer children as a sacrifice there again.
 - The point in all of this is this:
 - It is a horrible place
 - With a horrible history and future

- It looks horrible
- Smells horrible
 - And Jesus said that if you want to know what Hell is like imagine Gehenna with all of its gore
 - Only remember that it will destroy no one but will torment them forever.

Now with that in our minds how much stronger is our understanding of the destructive tongue for the Holy Spirit has said through James that the tongue “***is set on fire by hell.***”

- The destructive tongue is like Hell
 - It reeks of filth
 - It brings destruction

We continue:

⁷For every kind of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

- We know this to be true for we all have been to the zoo, the circus, and sea world.

⁸But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

- Words are powerful
- Gossip is destructive
- The tongue can be a restless evil, 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.

- James, filled with the Holy Spirit has the word of God in his hand like a giant hammer
 - And if you are like me, we are the nails that feel the full weight of this Holy Hammer
 - Why?
 - Because its true!
 - We do bless and curse with the same mouth
 - ***“You kiss your mother with that mouth?”***

¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a fountain pour forth from the same opening fresh and bitter water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brothers, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can saltwater produce fresh.

- What would our brother James say to us today in our social media post?
 - ***One thing is for sure, we would be getting a letter from him and Paul.***

One of the most difficult things to do is to be honest with ourselves.

- **What if** we listened to what we say?
- **What if** we asked our most trusted friend to give us an honest evaluation of the overflow of our heart?

- **What if** we constantly asked the Holy Spirit to convict us of our speech?
- **What if** we constantly asked the Holy Spirit to change our heart?
- **What if** we asked Him to make us more like Jesus?
- **What if** the fruit of our tongue was blessings and not curses?

I'm thinking God would do all of those things because He said that anything that we ask of Him that is according to His will He would do.

- **Imagine a church** filled with people who did that and God blessed them with the answer to those request.
- **Imagine a church** whose hearts are overflowing with the submission to the Holy Spirit
 - People who are overflowing with:
 - Love,
 - Joy,
 - Peace,
 - Patience,
 - Kindness,
 - Goodness,
 - Faithfulness,
 - Gentleness
 - and Self-control.
 - That's the kind of Church that I would want to be apart of, wouldn't you?

We close today with these final thoughts about the tongue:

"A slip of the foot you may soon recover, but a slip of the tongue you may never get over." – Benjamin Franklin

"Fire and swords are slow engines of destruction, compared to the tongue of a Gossip." Richard Steele

Proverbs 10:19

"Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues."

Proverbs 12:18

**¹⁸ The words of the reckless pierce like swords,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.**

Proverbs 18:21

**²¹ The tongue can bring death or life;
those who love to talk will reap the consequences.**

Proverbs 15:1

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Proverbs 15:4

"The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit."

Proverbs 17:28

"Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning, if they hold their tongues."

Proverbs 18:21

"The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

Proverbs 21:23

"Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity."

AMEN!