

KEEPING IT REAL! – James 3

“Keeping it real” is an expression people use to *unapologetically* say whatever is on their mind, often giving voice to carnal emotions under the *guise* of being honest! **The apostle James reminds us, *for the believer*, in order to *truly* “keep it real” we must first keep our tongues under God’s control! (James 1:26) If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.** An “unkept” tongue produces an ineffective witness!

In chapter three of the Book of James he starts his dissertation regarding the tongue with a stern warning to teachers of the word! (v.1-5) God’s word is nothing to play with! Teachers of the word should never present to the people “untempered mortar!” ***Teachings not consistent with the whole counsel of God’s word!***

Unproven truths, man-made theories, philosophies, and assumptions, when presented as divine truth, dilute the message of the Gospel and create “another gospel,” which Paul said (Gal. 1:8, 9) is “accursed!” Ezekiel warned in (Ezekiel 13 and 22): **(Ezekiel 22:28) “Her prophets plastered them with untempered mortar, seeing false visions, and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord God,' when the Lord had not spoken.”** There are severe consequence associated with false teachers. **(Jude 12-13) These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves.**

They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

(v.2) To control one's tongue is to be "a perfect man" – *not fleshly perfection, but a "mature person!"* Perfect – *teleios* (tel-lee-os) – a **mature person of integrity and virtue**. To control the tongue is to *control* one's body (life). Paul uses **two** examples to make his point – the horse and ships (v.3-5a). Your tongue, *small as it is*, is capable of charting your destiny! If you say you are a loser the "rudder" ("bit") of your confession will keep you on that path!

But on the other hand, *despite* the "fierce winds" of this life, *if you believe you are more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus, if your rudder (or bit) of your heart is set on Jesus, nothing* will be impossible for you! "**What we utter becomes a rudder, toward good or the gutter!**"

(v.5) The tongue *boasts* many things, but let your *tongue's* "boast" be in the Lord! Don't coast; boast in the manifested truth of His word working in your life!

In (v.5b, 6) James addresses the destructive and rebellious nature of the tongue. Destructive nature: *It has the power to defile one's body and the body of Christ!* (Hebrews 12:15) "...looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness

springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”

Bitter words produce *bitter, infectious* people!

A poem entitled “Only a Word” reads: “Only a word of anger, But it wounded one sensitive heart; Only a word of sharp reproach, But it made the teardrops start; Only a hasty, thoughtless word, Sarcastic and unkind. But it darkened the day before so bright, And left a sting behind. Only a word of kindness, But it lightened one heart of its grief; Only a word of sympathy, But it brought one soul relief; Only a word of gentle cheer. But it flooded with radiant light The pathway that seemed so dark before, And it made the day more bright.”

With only a word we can either promote death or life! (Proverbs 18:21) Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit. Notice: hell itself is the source governing the carnal, *negative* tongue! 2012 - *Waldo Canyon Fire* - caused the evacuation of over 32,000 residents of Colorado Springs, alone, and partial evacuation of the United States Air Force Academy. 346 homes were destroyed by the fire. Two lives were also lost. Investigators believe the cause of the fires was “human cause.” (Scar on the mountain).

As Smokey the Bear used to say, “Only you can prevent forest fires!” “Human cause” is the reason for “fires” starting in the church. Tongues given to gossip, contention, evil accusations and assumptions! **But the scars Jesus bore on Mt. Calvary produce healing in our relationships, rather than harm!**

Rebellious nature: (v.7-12). Sweet and sour is great when you are talking about Chinese food; but it can be deadly when it comes to the tongue! (v.10) “...these things ought not to be

so.” Jesus said: (John 7:37b-38) "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." If sewage is flowing out, there's a problem!

Not too long-ago Prospect Lake was shut down for three months due to high levels of a toxic bacteria known as “blue-green algae.” When there is cursing and blessing coming from our mouths it's a good sign that we are walking in *hypocrisy* and have become “toxic saints!”

True discipleship calls us to authenticity. (Luke 6:45) A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth **speaks**. The tongue and the heart are intrinsically connected! *Repentance is the only cure to our carnal toxicity!* Thus David prayed: (Psalm 51:10) Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

(v.13, 14) “Good conduct” – let your actions speak louder than your words! (Proverbs 18:1-2) A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment. A fool has no delight in understanding, But in expressing his own heart. A fool never seeks to understand; they love the sound of their voice raging *against* the truth! (Proverbs 18:6-7) A fool's lips enter into contention, And his mouth calls for

blows. A fool's mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul. Less talk and more walk, will change your home and the church! Silence can be golden!

It's been said: *It is a great art in the Christian life to learn to be silent. Under oppositions, rebukes, injuries, still be silent. It is better to say nothing than to speak in an excited manner, even if the occasion should seem to justify a degree of anger. By remaining silent the mind is enabled to collect itself and call upon God in secret prayer. And thus you will speak to the honor of your holy profession, as well as to the good of those who have injured you when you speak from God.*

The English poet Mary Ann Evans, whose pen name was George Elliot, once said: *"Blessed is the man who having nothing to say abstains from giving wordy evidence of it."* (Mary Ann Evans/George Eliot) Scripture says it best: (Proverbs 17:28) **Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.**

(v.14) reveals two "contaminating agents" of the heart. (1st) envy. How can we tell whether we've been contaminated by envy? If you find it hard to rejoice with those who rejoice, you're contaminated! (2nd) *contaminate* is "self-seeking." **Philippians 2:3-4** Live an others-centered life! Jesus said: **(Luke 9:24) For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.** Self-seeking can lead to "self-destruction," and envy is "rottenness to the bones," (Proverbs 14:30).

Wherever we have placed our boast is the thing we will speak of the most! **(v.14b) “Do not boast and lie against the truth” – admit your sins!** In **(v.15, 16)** Paul reveals a godless trinity behind the language of this world; it is “earthly,” “sensual,” and “demonic!” When we operate in this wisdom, we open ourselves up to demonic influence! **The tongue, our conversation, can quickly descend to the bowels of hell, whereby we utter ungodly things with our tongues! (v.16).**

However, in **(v.17)** we find the *opposite* – a tongue (life) governed by “wisdom from above!” This is what ought to be! **Notice: (v.17a) – purity must be first, not second or third!** Purity is a heart issue; and God always starts at the heart in order to change the language of the heart! The Greek word for **Pure – hagnos: pure from carnality, chaste, modest, reverent.** “Keeping it real” means first keeping it real with God!

(v.18) How we “sow” is essential. *Sow in peace!* We cannot sow what we don’t know! **A disciple of purity is able to make peace because he/she is at peace with God!**

CONCLUSION: What have we learned today? “Keeping it real” means four things: **(1) Integrity in word. (2) Maturity. (3) Good conduct. (4) Purity.** By these four attributes the tongue will speak with wisdom from above and not below! **David prayed**:

(Psalm 141:3) Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.