

James 3:1–12 (ESV) *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 4 Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.*

The average person spends one-fifth of their life talking. If all of our words were put into print, this would be the result: A single-day's words would fill a 50-page book. In a year's time, the average person's words would fill 132 books of 200 pages each. That's average.

Vs 1 *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.*

What judgment looks like to teachers - whether self-appointed or God appointed.

- 1) for the unbelieving false teacher, at the second coming (Jude 14, 15); and
- 2) for the believer, when he is rewarded before Christ (1 Cor. 4:3–5).

The teachers' greater knowledge brings with it a greater responsibility to live according to that knowledge.

- 3) judgment, not only from God, but from others.

This is not meant to discourage true teachers, but to warn the prospective teacher of the role's seriousness

Vs 2 *For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.*

It's always a bad day when we stumble.

Vs 3 *If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.*

Vs 4 *Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.*

the tongue is very small, but in the scheme of things, its impact is very big.

Both examples illustrate the power of speech. If it is controlled well, it is effective and pleasing, but if not controlled or controlled poorly, the disaster can be massive. The tongue is a small thing with big power.

Vs 5-6 *So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.*

If we love someone, we present them on their best day. If we hate someone, we present them on their worst day.

The truth is that we've all got our best day, we've all got our worst day, and it really reveals your heart how you present them.

Some of you would say, "I'm not going to hell," but you could unleash hell on someone else.

Vs 7-8 *For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

There is a reason it can't be tamed. It can't be tamed until the heart is changed.

Luke 6:45 (ESV) *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

The tongue is a tattletale that tells on the heart and discloses the real person.

The tongue tattles on the condition of the heart.

Vs 9 *With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.*

Two options: Yield to God or yield to sin. Either turn from sin or turn to God. One of these should stop - the temptation is to say "my tongue is so untamed that I just don't need to praise God." That's a lie from the pit of hell.

The truth is that, He who did not stumble in any way goes to the cross to suffer and die for we who have stumbled in many ways. And while untamed tongues of those who murdered Jesus hurled shameful, horrible things about Jesus, Jesus gets the last word. As he's atoning for the sins of the world, the Lord Jesus says this, "Father, forgive them." Jesus unleashed heaven on those who were unleashing hell.

That should free you up today that though your tongue unleashes hell on others, our great king and savior unleashed heaven on you - Father forgive them. If you are in Christ today, praise Him with your mouth and repent of burning up others with your mouth.

However, there are times and places for hard words.

Proverbs 27:6 (ESV) *Faithful are the wounds of a friend;*

Galatians 6:1 (ESV) *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*

Vs 10-12 *From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.*

You may not know where your heart is and its issues, but your words are telling you - your tongue is tattling on your heart.

1. The issue of the heart is Bitterness - The self-made identify is "I am right" - they were wrong. Not only am I right, I am righteous. I know how to captain my own ship - Jesus and I - we never stumble. My identity is rooted in the fact that I am right, and if I have to forgive them, my identity would be at stake.

You're not righteous without Christ. That is not your self-made identity. Outside of Jesus you are unrighteous and your tongue is telling everyone that. You are setting your brothers and sisters on fire from the flames of hell. You are dousing poison on people made in the image and likeness of God.

Colossians 3:13–14 (ESV) *bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

It is not about them and their wrongness, it's about you and your misplaced identify being at stake. Your true identity in Christ is, "forgiven." The water drop size of sin committed against

you is nothing compared to the ocean size treason you committed against God. Yet He forgave you. Not only forgave you, but He made you new with a new identity - one that is a forgiver not one that is bitter.

You've been set free to forgive and love others.

2. The issue of the heart is covetousness and jealousy- the self-made identify is "I am deserving." "They didn't deserve that. "They shouldn't have that. You know how they got that?" You can't rejoice with those who rejoice. You can't celebrate God's grace. You're angry at it. You're jealous of it. So, you are going to take it from them or make it not enjoyable for them. Why? Because your identity is at stake. You deserve what they have - not them.

My friends, each of us deserve one thing - eternal punishment apart from the glorious presence of God forever. That's what we deserve. But instead, the goodness of God the Father sent His perfect Son to take your place and take your hell. Trusting in Him as Lord and Savior removes the curse of the worst thing that could ever happen to you - eternal damnation- and exchanges it with the best thing that could ever happen to you - eternity in Heaven with Him.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (ESV) *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*

Realizing that you got way more than you deserve in Christ, frees you up to rejoice in others' wins and let's you celebrate them rather than spewing poison and fire on them because your misplaced identity is at stake.

3. The issue of the heart is Self-justification - The self-made identity is "I am a good person" or "I am good at what I do." I am a good Mom, I am a good dad, I am a good employee - I am moral with high standards... But if anyone threatens my goodness by pointing out my flaws, my self-made identity is a stake and in order to protect it, I must burn up anyone who attempts to takes it away. I do that by being critical about everyone and everything. I'm critical toward my wife/husband, my children, my co-workers, and my church. Nothing is ever good enough because I am the epitome of good and if it doesn't meet my standards it is wrong.

Some have a poisonous critical spirit and spewed it in person right to their face. For others, who aren't as courageous, it's the suffocating hell-smoke of gossip that smothers another's integrity - hating them by displaying their worst day so that all your days will look good in the sight of those you are gossiping with.

Here is the truth. You are not good in and of yourself. Romans 3:10 *None is righteous, no, not one; You have a wicked heart (Jeremiah 17:9) The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*

The good news is that God gives you a new heart, Ezekiel 36:26 (ESV) *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh*

and give you a heart of flesh. With a new heart come a new identity. You don't have to be a good person by burning up the competition, suffocating others with the smoke of gossip, or making others feel lower than you with your critiques. You can be freed up to rejoice with others, you can freely follow the command of Philippians 2:3 *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*

Conclusion is to Love God and let the gospel invade the spaces of your heart to praise Him with your tongue and edify others created in His image and likeness with your tongue.