

Personal Study

JAMES PART 6 BLESSING / CURSING

"OUR WORDS CAN BE EITHER A BLESSING OR A CURSE TO THOSE AROUND US. BELIEVERS MUST LEARN TO CONTROL THEIR TONGUES AND USE THEIR WORDS FOR GOOD, NOT EVIL."



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This week's text: James 3:1-12

Introduction:

Did you know that (according to Google) the average person will speak approximately 7,000 words per day? This is not someone who is extremely extraverted nor the very quiet person, but the average. That is a lot of words! That is 7,000 opportunities to either speak life or death over people. 7,000 opportunities to either build up or tear down.

Here is the idea: We are made in God's image and God is a God who communicates to us, through us and for us. Therefore, as His image bearers, our words have weight behind them.

From the beginning here **let's get something straight:** There are a lot of crazy theological viewpoints concerning our words and what they are capable of. These viewpoints take scripture out of context and misuse them. This is called "proof texting". This is damaging and divisive within the Lord's church. Taking scripture out of context to prove a point is never helpful and always harmful. Here are just two of these viewpoints:

"Speaking things into existence" – Have you heard of this before? If you have been around church for some time (especially within charismatic circles) you have probably encountered the idea that we can speak over a circumstance and our words have the power to create a new circumstance. Is this Biblical? Absolutely not. Here is why – Only God has the power to speak things into existence. This demonstrates the Lord's unique power as sovereign creator who rules and reigns over all things. We are not God; therefore we do not have the authority to speak and life appears.

"Name it and claim it" – Again, this is a form of prosperity theology that takes the supreme power that only Christ has and tells us that we can alter reality. This way of thinking tells us that we can "name" the outcome that we desire to see and then "claim" that this outcome will come to pass by the "power of Jesus". Ultimately, here is why this is so wrong: Jesus sees the beginning from the end. He is not bound by time as we are. So instead of trusting that Jesus is ultimately the one that provides, sustains, and leads us through hard seasons, this way of thinking deceives us into thinking that if we do not like the situation, we simply use our words to change it. This is contrary to the book of James, and the Bible as a whole. Sometimes Jesus does not change our situation. Sometimes he grows us through hard seasons. It takes real, genuine faith to believe that Jesus is good even when life is not.

Why are they so powerful? What are our words capable of?

Read and reflect on James 3:1-12

Blessing: According to James, first and foremost our words are capable of being a blessing to others. These are words that edify, build up, encourage, champion, cheer on, others. And here is the thing: These are words that are genuinely spoken with no alternate motives or agenda. They simply are spoken in order to truly bless, and build up one another.

When we realize that we are secure in Christ, we have nothing to prove, Jesus fully accepts me, Jesus loves me completely, then we can confidently build others up! In other words, the grace that works IN us flows THROUGH us! This includes our words.

Cursing: In the same way, our words can curse others. This doesn't mean "swear words", but rather words that tear down, degrade, demoralize, embarrass, or are simply false. Words are powerful because they will either help someone see who they truly are in Christ (words of life) or will deceive someone into thinking that they are "less than" (words of death).

In the same way, when we fail to realize that we are secure, accepted, and loved by Jesus, the overflow of our identity is our words to others. Often when we view ourselves falsely, we tear others down, are passive aggressive, fail to champion the successes of others, etc.

A caution for teachers: Teachers can really be painted with a broad brush here. Anyone who speaks on behalf of God really must carefully evaluate their motives, clarity, assurance that they are accurately communicating a truth that lines up with the scriptures.

This goes beyond just preaching a message on Sunday morning. Have you ever heard (or received) a "word" from someone who "heard from God" (and it turned out that this was not a word from the Lord)? When we use phrases like "the Lord spoke to me" or "the Lord told me to tell you" please please please use caution. Do we believe that the Lord speaks to us and through us? Yes! However, this can be extremely damaging when we did not hear from the Lord and we speak with the authority as though we did. This is damaging, can shipwreck someone's faith, and fails to point them to the majesty of Jesus. Therefore, James expresses here that "teachers will be judged more strictly".

Application: Here is the big idea: Our words reveal our hearts. Our identity overflows into the words we speak to others, and they can either build up or tear down. As followers of Jesus, we are compelled by the good news of the Gospel to speak life giving, edifying, encouraging words to all people. Why? Because the evidence of our inner faith is our outer works, this especially includes our words.

How have your words either helped or hurt those around you lately?

By God's grace, we will be a people that build up.

