

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 43 (October 18-24, 2015)

James, the earthly brother of Jesus, had much to say about the proper use of the tongue. We will look at his epistle this week.

Sunday, October 18 (read James 1:19-22)

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry . . . (James 1:19)

We have previously learned from Ephesians that sins of the tongue are closely related to anger. In today's text, James also ties the two of them together (v. 19-20). The mouth speaks only what is stored up in the heart (Matthew 12:34), but we are more prone to blurt out painful words when anger resides within us. This never brings glory to our loving God (v. 20). I was taught as a child to think before I speak, but I'm still not very good at it. The Word (Jesus) lives in all believers, so God commands us to "get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent" (v. 21). If you struggle with profanity or vulgarity, ask Jesus to help you overcome this habit.

Monday, October 19 (read James 1:22-25)

Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (James 1:22)

I have recently been teaching a book entitled AHA by Kyle Idleman. "AHA" is an acronym for 1) awakening, 2) honest look at yourself, and 3) action. James also teaches us that an awakening from God's Word does no good unless we take action (v. 22). It doesn't help to take a painful look at our own faults unless we also act on this new knowledge. Otherwise, we soon **forget** the awakening and the honest inward look (v. 23-24). God gives a wonderful promise to those who will constantly look at our own habits and actions and react to what is seen: Those people will be blessed in what they do (v. 25). All of us seek God's blessings, so let's examine our lives in light of the Word of God and adjust to His teachings. Then His blessings will flow freely through us!

Tuesday, October 20 (read James 1:26-27)

If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. (James 1:26)

The verse printed above should bring instant conviction to all of us. I don't use the word "religious" very often because it is inclusive of all religions and cults. Instead, I prefer the word "Christian" because it is far more definitive. No matter how we express ourselves, the truth remains that the words we use must line up with the faith we profess (v. 26). Not only are we commanded to control our tongues, but also our ministries should include an outreach to widows and orphans as well as others who are in need (see Ephesians 4:1). We are caught in a struggle between the politically correct worldview and the Biblically correct worldview. Determine today that you will not allow yourself to be polluted by the teachings of the world (v. 27).

Wednesday, October 21 (read James 3:1-2)

We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. (James 3:2)

Jesus says, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). James makes the same point when he says, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (v. 1). (I don't think I would have ever understood this warning from the KJV that says, "Be not many masters." I am thankful that God has allowed his Words to be translated into a language that speaks to me.) The warning is clear: **Because I have been called to teach, I also have to make sure that my tongue is used to glorify Him.** These two verses alone are enough to cause me to spend several weeks writing devotions on the sins of the tongue. I hope you are being convicted as to how you use yours.

Thursday, October 22 (read James 3:3-6)

The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. (James 3:6)

James illustrates his point by talking about how we can control a horse using a small bit in its mouth and how we can steer a large ship with a tiny rudder (v. 3-4). He also states that a tiny spark can ignite a huge forest fire (v. 5). Having placed these word pictures in our minds, he declares that the tongue, likewise, is a small part of the entire body, but it makes great boasts (v. 5). If you haven't gotten the seriousness of his point yet, he nails it with the verse printed above (v. 6). Could he possibly have used stronger language to describe the dangers of the tongue? Satan uses our tongues to destroy friendships, families, churches and communities. How are you doing in this area? Don't forget that the mouth speaks only what is stored up in the heart (Matthew 12:34).

Friday, October 23 (read James 3:7-12)

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. (James 3:9)

In our community in Brunswick County, Va., we have a precious little fawn named Clover who was orphaned when she was not even weaned. A concerned young couple fed her from a bottle and now is weaning her onto natural deer food so that she can live in the wild. When someone leaves a church door open, she walks into and out of our buildings, seeking human companionship. Compared to taming the tongue, this baby deer is a piece of cake (v. 7-8). Humans use the same mouth to praise God and gossip about His children. This is not an option for a Spirit-filled believer. Using several illustrations from nature, James teaches us that the tongue either has to be good or evil. It cannot be both (see Matthew 12:33-37)! I pray that you will join me in making an effort to tame the tongue. You'll be glad you did when you stand before Jesus at the Bema judgment (see 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Saturday, October 24 (read James 3:13-18)

Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. (James 3:18)

The bottom line in learning to control our tongue is the **peace** it brings to us as well as to others (v. 18). In v. 14-16, James uses many words and phrases to describe the person who is **not** at peace with God or himself (bitter envy, selfish ambition, earthly, unspiritual, of the devil, disorder and evil practice). The man at peace with God and himself is described by far better words (humility, wisdom, pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere). Which list do you want used to describe you at your funeral? Begin now to build your final resume.