“How To Manage Your Mouth”, Developing a Faith That Works, Part 8 of 15 – February 24, 2013 at SBC

 James 3:1-12

Today, we're going to look, at what James, has to say about, . . . "How to Manage, Your Mouth." We love, to talk. There are, talk shows, everywhere. Everybody, seems to have something, to say. The average American, has 30 conversations a day, . . . and, you'll spend 1/5 of your life, talking. In one year, your conversations, . . . will fill 66 books, of 800 pages, a book.

Uh-Oh! Listen to this: If you're a man, you speak an average, of 20,000 words a day. If you're a woman, you speak 30,000 words, a day. (Like the guy, who was asked, "Do you resent, that your wife, . . has the last word?" He replied, "No, I'm just glad, . . when she finally, gets to it!" Or, the wife, . . . who broke, her jaw. When they took an X-ray, . . . it turned out to be, . . . a motion picture.)

Some of us, are born, with a silver “foot”, in our mouths. We have this natural ability, to say the wrong thing,

 . . . at the wrong time. Nothing, is opened more wrongly, . . . at the wrong time, . . . than, our mouths.

(Like the stock boy, . . at the grocery store. Lady asked him, "Can I buy, . . half a head, of lettuce?" He walked back, to the manager to ask, not realizing she was walking, right behind him. He said, "You're not going to believe this, there's an old bag out there, who wants to buy half a head of lettuce." He turned around, and, saw her standing there, . . . and said, "And, this fine lady, . . . would like to buy, the other half.")

Our mouths, get us into, . . . a lot of trouble. (Your Pastor, and my boys know this, stays in trouble, all the time, . . . especially, at home.) James talks, more about the tongue, than anybody else, in the New Testament. Every chapter, in the book of James, says something, . . . about, managing your mouth.

James 3:2 – *"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 says, if you can, control your mouth, . . . you're perfect.

He's not talking, about sinless. The word "perfection", in Greek, literally means, "mature, healthy". When you go to the doctor, and say, “I'm not, feeling well,” the first thing, he says, is "Stick out, . . . your tongue."

Your tongue reveals, . . . what's going on, inside of you, . . not, just physically, but, spiritually. James says, that, you've got to learn, to manage your mouth. You've got to learn, to tame your tongue. You've got to, get your tongue, under control. It was tempting, to title this sermon, . . "Don't Let Your Tongue, Lick You."

**I. WHY MUST I WATCH WHAT I SAY?** Why must, I do that? It's only words; I'm just kidding. Words, are significant, says James. **Three reasons**, . . . we have to learn, to manage, our mouth.

 James was a great communicator, . . . because, he knows how, to illustrate.

**1. MY TONGUE DIRECTS WHERE I GO**. It has tremendous influence, and control, over my life. Where are you, . . . headed in life? Where are you, going to be, . . . ten years, from now? Look at, your conversation. What do you, like to, talk about? What do you, talk about, . . . the most? We shape our words, . . . and, then, our words, . . . shape us.

James says, “The tongue, is small, it's tiny”. And, because, it's tiny, . . . we think, . . . it's insignificant. But, it has, . . . tremendous power. James 3:3 – “Consider a bit, . . . in a horse's mouth.”

You've got, a huge stallion, 2,000-3,000 pounds, and a 95 pound jockey, on his back. The jockey, can control, the tremendous, mighty horse, by a little piece of metal, stuck strategically, over his tongue. Likewise, your tongue, . . . controls the direction, of your life, wherever you want to go, and a little bit of a word, or, a phrase, . . . can influence, the total direction, . . . of your life.

Then he says, “Consider a ship”. The Queen Mary, has 3 acres, of recreational space. The anchor, is equal, to the weight, of ten cars. Yet, a relatively small rudder, directs the huge ocean liner, out in the middle, of the waves, and winds, and seas. A little rudder, . . . keeps it, on course.

Our tongue, is like that. Our tongue, is like a rudder, that steers us. **Ships**: James 3:4 – *". . . they are steered, by a very small rudder, wherever, the pilot, wants to go."* My tongue, directs, where I go. Your tongue, is the steering wheel, of your life. It is the, guidance system. If you don't like, the way you're headed, right now, . . . change, the way you talk.

Many people think, if the tongue, has such influence, maybe, it's best, to say nothing. Not talk, at all, be silent.

 (A guy joined, the Trappist monastery. For three years, he was given a probation period, where he was not to speak at all, . . . but, at the end of each year, he could say two words. The first year, at the end, he said, "Bed hard." At the end, of the second year, he said, "Food cold." At the end, of the third year, he's about had it. He comes in, and says, "I quit". The head priest says, "That doesn't, . . . surprise me. All you've done, is complain, . . . since, you got here.")

James says, that my tongue, directs, where I go, . . . so, I've got to learn, . . . to control it.

**2. MY TONGUE CAN DESTROY WHAT I HAVE**. In James 3:5, James gives, . . . another illustration. Imagine, a beautiful forest -- tall beautiful trees, everywhere. Now imagine it, in one minute, up in smoke, . . . completely destroyed, instantly, with a little, tiny match. It only, takes a spark, . . . to get a fire going.

In 1983 in Australia, one fire, overnight, . . . destroyed 600 miles, of land, villages, livestock. All from a single match. James says, that your tongue, . . . can destroy, like that. You can, lose it all. A careless camper, can destroy, an entire national forest, overnight. A careless word, can destroy, a life, overnight. Thousands of lives.

Gossip is, like fire. It spreads quickly, and it wreaks havoc. I wonder, how many people, because of a careless word, . . . have destroyed their marriage, or their career, or their reputation, or the reputation of another, or, their church, or a friendship. The tongue, not only, has the power to direct, . . . where you go, . . but, also, to destroy, what you have, . . . if you don't learn, . . . to control it. It's like, . . . a fire.

Have you ever met, . . . a verbal arsonist? Their words, are always, inflammatory. (Senator Joseph McCarthy, was a verbal arsonist. He spoke, and he destroyed lives, everywhere he went.) James says, that words, like a fire, can burn people. Why do you think, they call it, "Dean Martin's, Celebrity Roast"? Because, you can burn people, . . . with, what you say.

"Sticks and stones, may break my bones, . . but names, will never hurt me." It does hurt. Fire and words, under control, can give tremendous warmth, and light, but, fire and words, out of control, can be devastating. It can destroy, miles and miles, of homes, and lands, and peoples. Proverbs 18:20 – *"You have to live, with the consequences, . . . of everything, you say."*

James 3:6 – *". . . it sets the whole course, of his life on fire, and is itself, set on fire, . . . by hell."* The "whole course". He's saying here, that words, . . . can create, a chain reaction. You can say something, that you didn't mean, to have any harm, but, it can have devastating effects, that are beyond your control. Just a few inflammatory statements, set off a chain of events, that we now look back on, and call World War 2.

On a more personal level, you come home from work, and you're tired, and grumpy, and cranky. The husband walks in, and yells, at the wife. The wife yells, at the oldest kid. The oldest kid yells, at the baby sister. The baby sister goes out, and kicks the dog. The dog goes, and bites the cat. The cat comes in, and scratches the baby. The baby bites the head off, the Barbie doll. Wouldn't it be, a whole lot simpler, if the husband, . . . just, bit off the head off, the Barbie doll, . . . himself? It’s a, . . . chain reaction.

*"Set on fire, . . by hell",* itself. A couple comes in, for marriage counseling. "I said this, and then, she said that, then I said this, . . ." Then, . . . it all just erupts. James says you've got to learn to manage your mouth, . . . not only, because it can direct, where you go, . . . but, it can destroy, what you have. You can lose, your family, your kids, your career, . . . simply, by what you say. It's like, a fire.

 Proverbs 21:23 – *"If you want to, stay out of trouble, . . . be careful, what you say!"*

James uses, . . . another illustration. He talks about, a zoo. James 3:7-8 – *"All kinds of animals, . . . have been tamed by man, but no man, can tame the tongue.* [It's humanly, impossible. Only God, can do it.] *It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."*

Of all the animals, we've tamed, . . . no man, can tame the tongue, humanly speaking. He says, . . . it's restless. That means, it's always, liable to break out, at any moment. Lion Country Safari, has a big sign, as you drive in -- "Do not, get out, of your car. Do not, roll down, the window." Why? Those animals, that look so, tame and peaceful, . . . could rip your head off, in a second. Restless, always liable, . . . to break out. You never know, . . . what your mouth, is going to say.

It's like, . . . poison. The word, in Greek, is literally, . . . "snake venom". Just a few drops, can kill. You can assassinate somebody, . . . with your words. Assassinate, their character. The tongue, . . . is a deadly weapon.

**3. MY TONGUE DISPLAYS WHO I AM**

It **reveals, . . . my real character**. It tells, what's really, inside of me. First, James points out, how inconsistent, we are, in our speech. James 3:9 – *"With the tongue, we praise our Lord, and Father, and with the same tongue, . . we curse men, who've been made, in God's likeness. From the same mouth, come praise, and cursings. My brothers, . . . this should not be."*

We say these things, . . out of the same mouth. We come to church, on Sunday. The highest use of your mouth, . . . is to use it, . . . praising God. We sing praises, to the Lord. Then we walk out, get into the car, . . . and, on the way home, . . . we argue about where, we're going to eat lunch.

Isn't it amazing, how quickly, . . . your attitude, can change? In one minute you're saying, "Praise the Lord", the next, you're saying, "Shut up!" The tongue, is a strange contradiction. It's so, inconsistent. It's amazing, how quickly, it can change, . . . like Dr. Jekyll, and Mr. Hyde.

One minute, . . . we're praising God, and the next, we're cursing, other people. Cursing here, doesn't necessarily mean, . . . profanity. It means, any kind of put down, label. ["You good for nothing, . . . You'll never, amount to nothing.”] Any kind, of put down, is a curse. He says, “Why curse men? They're made, . . in God's image.”

This should bother us, . . . immensely. How is it possible, that we can be loving, to people, we love – our kids, wives, husbands – and, the next moment, . . . be harsh, cold, mean to them? How is it, possible? How is it possible, in one minute, to be talking, to my kids in gentle, loving tones, . . . and, the next minute, I'm being mean, to them? I hurt them. I am saying things, that damage, their self- esteem. How is that?

We should grieve, over that. We should find ourselves, asking forgiveness, a lot, in our families, . . . especially, to our kids. Do you struggle, . . . with an inconsistent, tongue? James says, we all have it. We speak lovingly, in one breath, and then, lash out, in the next. What gives? What's the problem? Why do we do that? Why can we, genuinely mean something, in love and kindness, one minute, . . and, then genuinely, mean something, . . . in hate, the next minute?

James gives the answer, in James 3:11-12. He says, consider the source. *"Can both fresh water, and salt water, flow, from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither, can a salt spring, produce fresh water."*

The point is, whatever is in the well, . . . comes out, in the water. Whatever is in the tree, comes out, in the fruit. What is the likelihood, of an apple tree, producing cherries? Zip! My problem, is not really, my tongue. My problem, . . . is my heart. What's inside, is what comes out. My mouth, eventually betrays, what is really, on the inside of me. I can fool you, and pretend, but, eventually, my tongue, is going to catch me. It's going to let you know, . . . what's really inside.

Have you heard, this excuse? Someone says, something really mean, or hurtful, . . . and, they say, "I don't know what, got into me. It's not like me, to say that. I don't know why, I said that. It's totally, . . . out of character. I didn't really, . . . mean it."

James would say, “Yes, it is. It's just, like you. You meant it. Quit, kidding yourself. What's inside, is going to come out. You don't have a spring, that one minute, gives salt water, and the next, gives fresh water. That's, inconsistent. It's a natural law: what comes out of the well, . . . is what is inside of it.”

Jesus said, in Matthew 12:34 – *"For out of, the overflow, of the heart, the mouth, speaks."* Jesus explained, the Freudian slip, . . . years before Freud, . . . even existed. He said, what's inside of you, is what's going to come out. My tongue, just displays, . . . what I am. It directs, where I go. It can destroy, what I have. But, most of all, . . . it simply, displays, what I am. It reveals, . . . my character.

If you've got a problem, . . . with your tongue, . . . it's much more serious, than you think. You have, . . . a heart problem. A person, with a harsh tongue, . . . has an angry heart. A person, with a negative tongue, . . . has a fearful heart. A person, with an overactive tongue, . . . has an unsettled heart. A person, with a boasting tongue, . . . has an insecure heart. A person, with a filthy tongue, . . . has an impure heart. A person, who is critical, . . . all the time, . . . has a bitter heart.

On the other hand, . . . a person, who is always encouraging, . . . has a happy heart. A person, . . . who speaks gently, . . . has a loving heart. A person, who speaks truthfully, . . . has an honest heart.

**II. WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?**

**1. Get a new heart**. You've got to, . . . get a new heart, . . . that's, the problem. Ezekiel 18:31 – *"Rid yourself, of all the offenses, you have committed, and get a new heart, and a new spirit!"* Painting the outside of the pump, . . . doesn't make any difference, . . . if there is poison, in the well.

I can change the outside, . . . I can turn over a new leaf, . . . but, what I really need, . . . is a new life. What I need, . . . is a fresh start. I need to let go, of all the past, . . . and, be born again, . . . and, start over. I need to get, . . . a new heart.

How do I get, a new heart? 2 Corinthians 5:17 – *"Therefore, if any man, be in Christ, he is a new person. The old, has passed away. Behold, all things, have become new."* New life, . . . new heart, . . . new spirit. When you come, to Jesus Christ, . . . He wipes out everything, you've done, in the past. He says, you're starting over. It's like, being, . . . born again. You need, . . . a new heart.

We need to pray, like David prayed, in Psalm 51 – *"Create in me, a clean heart, O God",* . . . because, what's in my heart, . . . is going to come out, . . . in my mouth.

**2. Ask God for help every day**. You need, supernatural power, . . . to control, your tongue. You can't do it, on your own. Your life, is a living proof, of that. We cannot control it, . . . on our own. We need supernatural power, . . . so, we ask God, to help us.

Psalm 141:3 – *"Set a guard, over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch, over the door, of my lips."* Great verse, . . . to memorize, and quote, every morning. "God, put a muzzle, on my mouth. Guard, my lips. Don't let me, . . . be critical, today. Don't let me, be judgmental. Don't let me, say things, off the cuff, . . . that, I then regret." You need, to ask God, for help, daily, . . . because, you need His power, in your life.

Sidlow Baxter: "The proof, that God's Spirit, is in your life, is not, that you speak, in an unknown tongue, but, you control the tongue, you do know." You watch, your words, . . . and, God gives you, the power, to not slander, . . . not lie, . . . not exaggerate.

Getting into God's Word, . . . is a big part, of asking God, for help. As you ask Him for help, . . . you need to, read His word. Computer statement: Garbage in, garbage out. What goes into your mind, . . . goes into your heart, . . . and, what goes into your heart, comes out of your mouth. Fill your mind, with the Word of God -- with positive things, “whatsoever things, that are true, etc. -- think on these things.”

**3. Think, . . . before you speak**

Engage, your mind, . . . before, you put your mouth, in gear. James 1:19 – *"Everyone, should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."* There's a designation, here. They go, . . . in order. First, be quick to listen, . . . and, then, slow to speak. If you're quick to listen, . . . you will be slow, to speak. If you're slow to speak, . . . then, you will be slow, to become angry. If you have a problem, with anger, . . you need to work on, being quick to listen, and slow to speak. The result, will be, . . . you'll be slow, to anger.

What does your tongue, . . . say about you? What does it reveal, about you? If we were to, play back a tape, of every conversation, you've had, in this past week, . . what would we learn, about you? God hears, it all.

Our tongues, . . . display, who we are. What direction, is your tongue, leading you? Some people say, "I'm just sick, all the time", . . . or, "I can never, do anything", . . . "Things are just, getting tougher, and tougher", what direction, are they headed? Our tongues, control the direction, . . . of our lives, like a rudder, a bit.

A bit, and a rudder, must be under the hand, of a strong arm. James is saying, that the only way, to get control of your tongue, . . is let Jesus Christ, have control, of your heart. What's in your heart, is going to come out, in your mouth. You let Christ's hand, be on your bit, your rudder, and let Him, . . . direct your life.

Maybe you need, to ask forgiveness. Maybe, you need, to go to your kids, and say, "I'm sorry. I'm inconsistent, . . . the way, I talk to you. Sometimes, I'm loving, . . . sometimes, I'm harsh. That shows, . . . I'm like everybody else. I'm, human."

We all stumble, in many ways -- all of us. Maybe, you need to apologize, to your wife, or your husband. "I'm not as loving to you, in my speech, . . . as I ought to be. I tend, to be apathetic, cold, indifferent. I talk to you, . . . harshly. I boss everybody, around. I'm inconsistent, . . . and, inconsiderate."

Ezekiel 18:31 says, *"Get rid of all your offenses, you've committed, and get a new heart, and a new spirit."*

“How To Manage Your Mouth”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 8 of 15

James 3:1-12

James 3:2 – “*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.”*

I. WHY MUST I WATCH WHAT I SAY?

1. MY TONGUE DIRECTS \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . (vs. 3-4)

*"When we put bits in the mouths of horses ... we can turn the whole animal."* (vs. 3)

*"Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go."* (vs. 4)

2. MY TONGUE CAN DESTROY \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . (vs. 5-8)

*"Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue is also a fire..."* (vs. 5)

*"... it sets the whole course of his life on fire,and is itself set on fire by hell."* (vs. 6b)

Proverbs 21:23 – *"If you want to stay out of trouble be careful what you say!"*

*"All kinds of animals ... have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."* (vs. 7-8)

3. MY TONGUE DISPLAYS \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . (vs. 9-12)

It's inconsistent: vs. 9

*"Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be."* (vs. 10)

*"Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ... can a fig tree bear olives or a grapevine bear figs?"* (vs. 11)

THE PROBLEM: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 12:34 – “*For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”*

 Also Matt. 15:18-19

II. WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Ezekiel 18:31 – “*Rid yourself of all the offenses you have committed and get a new heart and a new spirit!”*

 2 Cor. 5:17

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 141:3 – “*Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.”*

 Also Palms 19:14

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

James 1:19 – “*Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.”*