

Faith that Works: Taming the Tongue*James 3:1-12*

Proverbs 18:21 makes a sobering statement, “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue.*” That’s a lot of power in this little part of our bodies! And yet it is true. We’ve all experienced it. And so how important it is that we have a faith that works regarding our tongues. James has already addressed issues of speech in 1:19 and 1:26, but now he takes a deep dive into this topic of the tongue.

Opening Question: How have you personally experienced the truth of Proverbs 18:21?

Read James 3:1-12

1. What does James teach about the tongue? What are principles and truths that he teaches?
2. What is James’ warning to teachers? How do you think verses 2-12 inform this warning?
3. What does James mean when he says that if anyone does not stumble in what he or she is perfect?

Brian said:

And then he says that the tongue is *set on fire by hell*. He is using *hell* as a personification of our enemy. And so behind all of this destructive potential of the tongue is the enemy of our soul. . . . Now, I don’t think James is saying that we can blame Satan for every hurtful word that we say. But we should be sobered by this truth that our enemy does seek to use of our tongues as a tool to cause damage. And so we simply must not take it lightly when we say a hurtful word, or a lie, or sin in any other way with our tongues, because behind it may be a scheme of the enemy who is seeking to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10).

4. How would it affect you if you lived with a conscious awareness that the enemy is seeking to use your tongue for evil?
5. James says that the tongue is full of deadly poison. How have you been the recipient of the deadly force of the tongue? How have you personally used your tongue in this way?

6. What is the logic of what James is saying in 9-12?

7. Read Matthew 12:33-35. According to Jesus, what does it reveal if we do not control our tongue?

8. Read Romans 12:1. Practically, what might it look like to apply this verse to your tongue?

9. Brian suggested several ways to develop control over your tongue: (1) Daily decide to give God control over your tongue; (2) Daily reflect on your words and confess your sin; (3) Invite feedback on your words; and (4) Practice the discipline of silence. Have you been trying any of these? Any that you want to try?

Practicing the Rhythms of Rooted



Daily Devotion: Spend time this coming week reading and reflecting on James 3:13-18



Freedom from strongholds: James 3:6 says that the tongue is set on fire by hell. In other words, much of our struggle to control our speech is because of the enemy's influence. It may even be possible that sin in this area has led to a stronghold. As the Rooted guide describes, Satan "has twisted a weakness we have into a binding knot where he is holding the ropes. It is not something we can overcome on our own by trying really hard or being really 'good'" (p. 100). If such is the case one thing we can do is pray a prayer of repentance, renouncing strongholds and claiming our freedom in Christ. Here is a prayer adapted from the Rooted guide:

Father, I come before you in the name of Jesus. I recognize the power You have given me by the shed blood of Jesus to demolish spiritual strongholds in my life. I confess that I have given a foothold to sin with my tongue and I renounce the stronghold of _____ (lying, slander, gossip, etc.) by the authority of Jesus Christ. I claim the truth that through the Spirit of Christ I have self-control in my words (Gal. 5:23). And by Jesus' authority and power, I now take back the ground that I have surrendered to the enemy. I pray that You will enable me to trust and obey Your Holy Spirit so that in all ways my speech would conform to the image of Christ. Amen.