

THE POWER OF WORDS

- The **category of sin** mentioned **second most often** in the Bible is that of the **tongue** (number one is sexual sin)
 - “*The **tongue** is a fire, a world of **iniquity**. The tongue is so set among our members that it **defiles the whole body**, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is **set on fire by hell**.*” (James 3:6)
 - “*He who has a **perverse tongue** falls into evil.*” (Proverbs 17:20)
- Our **words** have the **power** to **bless** or to **curse** – to speak **life or death**
 - “*I have set before you **life and death, blessing and cursing**.*” (Deuteronomy 30:19)
 - “***Death and life** are in the power of the tongue,”* (Proverbs 18:21)
- The LORD further encourages us to **speak blessings, not curses** because He will retaliate for us **against those who speak curses**
 - “*I will **bless** those who bless you, and I will **curse** him who curses you.*” (Genesis 12:3)
- The **Bible** states quite clearly what it thinks about those who use their words to **hurt or slander others**
 - “*The mouth of the **righteous** brings forth **wisdom**, but the **perverse tongue will be cut out**. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the **mouth of the wicked what is perverse**.*” (Proverbs 10:31-32)
 - “*LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and **speaks the truth** in his heart; he who **does not backbite** with his tongue.*” (Psalm 15:1-3)

GUARD YOUR TONGUE

- It is **extremely important** to keep **close control** over our tongue
 - “*Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.*” (Psalm 34:13)
 - “*Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.*” (Proverbs 21:23)

- Even when we **see evil**, we still must **wait on the Lord** to tell us **what and when** to say something
 - “*I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me.*” (Psalm 39:1)
 - “*... speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*” (Ephesians 4:15-16)
 - “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.*” (Gal. 6:1)

- This is not only true for **speaking directly** to someone, but also when we speak of others **behind their backs**
 - “*Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool. In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.*” (Proverbs 10:18)
 - “*Their tongue is an arrow shot out; It speaks deceit; One speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, But in his heart he lies in wait. Shall I not punish them for these things?*” says the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9:8-9)

- We must also **guard our thoughts** because **God looks on the heart**:
 - *“For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”* (1Sam. 16:7)
 - *“Do not curse the king, even in your thought; Do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom; For a bird of the air may carry your voice, and a bird in flight may tell the matter.”* (Eccl. 10:20)
- We must avoid having a **mocking or scornful attitude** because this just brings a **heap of trouble** onto ourselves and causes us to **miss out on God’s blessings**
 - *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.”* (Psalm 1:1)
 - *“Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble.”* (Proverbs 3:34)
- What leads us to **speak curses**?
 - *“...laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking...”* (1Peter 2:1)
 - *“But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.”* (James 4:14)
- In addition, to **refraining from speaking curses**, we should also seek to **speak blessings**
 - *“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.”* (Proverbs 15:1-2)
 - *“The tongue of the wise promotes health.”* (Proverbs 12:18)
 - *“A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.”* (Proverbs 15:4)

Read James 3:3-12

vv3-4: James uses **two analogies** to show the **power** that our **tiny little tongue** has over our **whole body, mind and soul**

- Just as **bits in horses** and **rudders on ships**, the tongue **steers** our **interactions with others**

vv5-6: James then **compares** the **effect of the tongue** to a **spark of fire** in the dry **forest**

- He then points out that *“the tongue... defiles the whole body... and is set on fire by hell”*
 - This refers to **our sinful nature** – we must be careful to **speak only “in the Spirit”** not *“in the flesh”*
 - Because, *“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”* (Matthew 12:34)

vv7-8 James next states that we can **tame all creatures** on the earth, but we **cannot tame the tongue** – i.e. **without God’s help**

- Otherwise, it is *“an unruly evil, full of deadly poison”*

vv9-12 But we have to be **careful** not to allow **both blessings and curses** to come out of our mouth

- When we do, we **pollute and corrupt the source**
- All the **good** we attempt to do or speak becomes **contaminated with the residue of corruption**