

TUESDAY 23 August 2022 "Power of Words" (James 1:19-22)

Hello, my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

I wonder if you struggle when a person's mouth does not match with your expectations of that person? It could be the words they speak or their tone of voice or even the body language that accompanies their words. The Bible is filled with wisdom advice regarding cautions for what comes out of our mouths, especially if we claim a relationship with Holy God through Jesus Christ.

These days we're with James as he is writing his letter to Jewish Christians scattered around the Roman Empire during the first century. These people are accustomed to hearing foul language aimed at them but listen to what James writes: ***"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen and slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteous life God desires."*** (James 1:19,20) Oh my that is clear and very strong, very practical wisdom, isn't it?

But may I ask, do you find it a challenge to actually live this in a world where there is so much about which you have an opinion that you'd like to voice, and also so much that stirs up your emotions and awakens many different reactions in your mind and heart? Are you someone who struggles to keep your opinions to yourself and keep your emotions under control? Have you paid the high price of foolish talk or words spoken in anger which you cannot retrieve and they've damaged relationships you valued?

Have you discovered the gold mine of wisdom in the Bible book of Proverbs? I imagine James spent lots of time in Proverbs! Some of these gems of wisdom may have been in his mind when he wrote James 1:19,20...

**** "The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked."*** (Prov. 10:11)

**** "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise."*** (Prov. 10:19)

**** "A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret."*** (Prov. 11:13)

**** "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."*** (Prov. 12:18)

**** "The LORD detests lying lips, but He delights in those who are truthful."*** (Prov. 12:22)

*** "The person who guards their lips guards their life, but the one who speaks rashly will come to ruin." (Prov. 13:3)**

*** "A patient person has great understanding, but a quick-tempered person displays folly." (Prov. 14:29)**

*** "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Prov. 15:1)**

As I'm sure you see my friends, I began in Proverbs chapter 10 and only pulled out a few wonderful truth nuggets over the next 5 chapters. Did you notice there are 31 chapters in Proverbs? *Would you receive a challenge from me today?* For the next month, beginning today, would you read ONE chapter of Proverbs each day? I suggest you read the chapter which corresponds to the date, so today would be chapter 23 of Proverbs. I also urge you to keep your journal handy and make some notes of wisdom thoughts the Holy Spirit places in your mind as you read Proverbs! *You will likely be very surprised at what you learn from the Holy Spirit through the wisdom in Proverbs.*

Now did you notice James wrote: **"...human anger does not produce the righteous life God desires."** *If you were to make a list of what happens inside of you when you become really angry, I wonder what words or phrases would be on your list?*

How about 'distorted thinking'? Have you noticed that when you get really angry, you can't think clearly? Or how about 'selfishness'? Have you noticed the more angry you get the more your emotions and thoughts find no fault in YOU? Or how about 'retaliation'? As you get angry are you amazed how easily ideas come to your mind of how you could retaliate against the person who has offended you? *But can you see how ALL of these emotions and attitudes actually draw you further and further away from your closeness with God and distort the reputation of God you have been trying to portray as you seek to live a God honoring life?*

Of course, for many of these Jewish Christians to whom James is writing, they found themselves so often maligned, slandered, mocked, humiliated by the words of people who thought they'd gone mad by trusting in and following Jesus. As a result, anger and retaliation was something all too often welling up in their hearts and minds. So, James continued: **"Therefore get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you."** (James 1:21) What is this word that is planted in us, you might ask? *Oh, the lifesaving word of God!* For these Jewish Christians they immediately would have thought of the Commandments of God which they memorized and recited regularly since the time of their childhood. But also, other laws of God which the Rabbi's had taught them each Sabbath when they attended Synagogue services.

I imagine this powerful truth from Isaiah came to both James and the hearts of those who heard James' letter read to them: **"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways, declares the LORD.**

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts. As the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth, and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is My word that goes out from My mouth. It will not return to Me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:8-11) Oh my that is powerful truth my friends, do you agree?

*God expects His people, both then and now, to fill the reservoir of our minds and hearts REGULARLY with God's Word, His Truth, so that when we are out there in our world and we don't have a Bible in our hands, the Holy Spirit of God can stir up in our minds and hearts the powerful word of God to help us think clearly, guard our hearts and our emotions from getting caught up in the fray, and if God leads us to speak, we will then speak God's truth in power. Is that your experience my friends? Oh Psalm 119:105 comes to my mind right now... **"Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against You, O God."***

James had put down his stylus and was pacing, looking out his window often at the busyness in the streets, listening to the buzz of people doing business in the market, catching up on the news of life and occasionally, getting all riled up in discussion which too often turned to conflict with raised voices and harsh words that once spoken could not be taken back. James quickly sat down and grabbed his stylus; the Holy Spirit had just put this powerful thought into his mind which he had to write quickly: **"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says!"** (James 1:22)

I wonder if James put an exclamation point there, laid down his stylus, leaned back in his chair, rubbed his chin and perhaps even said out loud... 'now *THAT is a powerful thought. Oh my, how different our world would be if every Jesus following person, everywhere in the world, would take hold of all these words and personalize them, integrating them deeply into their souls... and then what if we all actually made them our practice, everyday?* Oh God, I can only imagine what You would do all across the Roman empire and for centuries to come, everywhere in this world, if these verses that You've given me today, would become our guiding beacon, penetrating the fog of our world that so easily engulfs us."

So let me ask us to pause right here and ponder with James. What would happen in your life and mine, your family and mine, your church and mine, your city and mine... *if EVERY authentic follower of Jesus LIVED every day, these verses James wrote which we've looked at today?* How would your life change? And yes, I'm deeply contemplating how my life would change. Let's spend some time talking with Jesus about this, and here's a song to help you ponder and worship our heavenly Father, who wants your life and mine to honor Him at all times as His Word penetrates deeply into our lives!

Today's Scripture is James 1:19-22