

WEDNESDAY 31 August 2022 "Tongue Power" (James 3:1-6)

Good morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

*When we think about these wonderful, complex, sophisticated human bodies God has designed for us, which part most amazes you? Maybe the EYE or the EAR or the HEART or LUNGS or BRAIN? But would you consider the **TONGUE** and its remarkable ability and how it functions in so many aspects of our life? May I ask this really important question about your tongue... *is it always under your control?**

Join me again with the apostle James, in about the year 48ad, in the room where he is writing the first letter going out from the apostles to the first generation of Christians all across the Roman Empire. He's been writing some powerful words of encouragement and instruction about living as authentic followers of Jesus Christ.

The tongue is his topic today. As James picks up his stylus to write, I think he probably spoke out loud every word as he wrote it, in part so any who were present in the room with him could hear, but also to be sure he was hearing the Holy Spirit correctly who was guiding him in writing this letter. **"Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."** (James 3:1)

Oh, my that's a powerful warning. To whom do you think it applies? Well certainly every Pastor, Rabbi, Priest, Imam, religion professor, or any other spiritual teacher/mentor should see this as aimed directly at them, for when we explain or proclaim or preach or teach spiritual information God will absolutely hold us accountable for the words we say and how those words are understood by our listeners! *God's truth is the ultimate truth standard and whenever anyone, including me, writes or speaks anything spiritual, it is vital God's truth is not violated or distorted or even manipulated.* I shudder to think what it will be like for any spiritual teacher who stands before God and is found by God to have spoken words that have turned those listening AWAY from God's holy truth!

Jesus spoke a great deal about God's truth, didn't He? I don't know if James was present when Jesus said **"I am the light [truth] of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life... He [God the Father] who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from Him I tell the world... If you hold to My teachings... you will know the truth and the truth will set you free..."** (John 8:12,26,31,32) That's clear isn't it my friends? *Jesus speaks God's truth and God's truth is powerful enough to set us free from everything and anything of the darkness.*

Jesus then went on to explain that Satan lives in total opposition to God's truth, and he leads his dark kingdom to distort or deny or destroy God's truth whenever and wherever possible. Jesus said **"God sent Me and My language is not clear to you, you are**

unable to understand what I am saying because you belong to your father the devil... He was a murder from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies..." (John 8:42-44) Well it could not be clearer could it my friends?

*The Jewish people held very strongly to the importance of God's truth being the standard by which all conversation, all information, all opinion was measured. Their great prophet Isaiah had written that God spoke these words: **'I am the LORD and there is no other; apart from Me there is no God.... This is what the LORD says: It is I who created the earth and created mankind upon it... I am the LORD... I speak the TRUTH and I declare what is RIGHT... before Me every knee will bow.'** (Is. 45:5, 11, 12, 19, 23)*

The Creator defines what is TRUE and RIGHT for that which He created! The definition of truth and right and how things are designed to function properly is the full right of the Creator & Designer! Now ponder that a moment friends.

When you can create something... I don't mean fabricate or develop, I mean CREATE something from nothing, as God spoke the universe into existence, *then you can define what is RIGHT and TRUE for that which you create.* You will have that right since you are the creator of that new thing. So that's why it's so important we pursue knowing God and understanding what HE says is RIGHT and TRUE for us who He created in His image!

All spiritual teachers will stand before God for accountability for EVERYTHING they have taught, and they will be judged by the ultimate authority, God, for the accuracy of what they have said as it is compared to what GOD the Creator has said is TRUE and RIGHT! Now that couldn't be any clearer, could it? So, can you imagine what that day of accountability will be like for all the spiritual teachers who have ever taught, anywhere in the world?

But it's not only teachers of spiritual truth that James was talking about, is it my friends? It's ALL teachers... science teachers, math teachers, social studies teachers, ALL teachers. But it's not just schoolteachers, it's employers who teach their employees how to do their business and how ethics fit; it's accountants who teach others how to reconcile the numbers accurately and according to the laws of their land; it's doctors and dentists instructing their patients; it's lawyers and police and judges instructing their clients according to law and truth; it's funeral directors and financial planners and counselors instructing their clients.

In fact, would you agree it's PARENTS and GRANDPARENTS who will be held accountable by God for how they have taught, coached, mentored, disciplined their children and grandchildren.

Hear it again my friends: **"We who teach will be judged more strictly."** Now think back... what percentage of your words have been giving people information or advice or

opinion? When you stand accountable before God for the TRUTHFULNESS and the moral RIGHTness of all that you have said... **what can you imagine God will say to you?**

James didn't just blast this singular powerful statement and then move on to other things, oh no, he continued on in chapter 3 using several very practical things as examples of the power of such a very little muscle in our complex bodies... our tongues! James spoke of bit & bridle guiding a big horse or a rudder guiding a ship or even a forest fire begun by a spark! I wonder what examples you can think of my friends, as you contemplate the huge potential of our tongues, both for good and for harm!?

I imagine James standing by his window again looking out at a busy street and listening to all the noise of merchants and customers haggling over price and value, or parents shouting at their children, or Roman soldiers shouting at people, or even Pharisees or other religious leaders standing off to the side speaking with people who've asked a deep life question or asked for counsel.

Everyone uses their tongues and all of us will stand accountable before God for every word that has come out of our mouths! Now think about that!

Then James picked up his stylus again and he spoke as he wrote: ***"The tongue is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of our body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell."*** (James 3:6) Oh my that's so powerful! But it's true, isn't it? Our tongue is unique among the parts of our body. Nothing else is quite like it in its capacity, capability, its potential, its power for helping or harming other people, for speaking truth or lies into our world and so much more!

Our tongue, more than any other part of our body, absolutely sets the course of our life, doesn't it? It also shapes our reputation and our legacy. And that little phrase ***"is itself set on fire by hell"*** means the evil of Satan's dark kingdom is always trying to influence or even control our tongue to contribute to the damaging effects of evil in our world.

In fact, let's pause right here and simply ponder the power of the tongue.

How have you learned to protect yourself from a hateful, spiteful, angry tongue that someone is using to wound you? How have you learned to guard your tongue from saying the hurtful things you are thinking, realizing once you speak the words you won't be able to take them back? How have you learned to reject the devil's influence and invite the Holy Spirit to influence every use of your tongue?

And how have you taught your kids and grandkids the God honoring answers to those questions?

So, let's just sit and talk with Jesus for a moment about this... and I urge you to use this powerful verse as a focus of reflection:

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer." (Ps. 19:14)

Let's invite Fernando Ortega to lead us in a prayer song about this...

Today's Scripture is James 3:1-6.