

# A Restless Evil-Outline

Monday, June 17, 2013  
8:48 AM

Key Words: Sins of the tongue, conflict, anger, corrupting talk, careless words

Scripture: James 3:2-12; Matt. 12:36-37, Pro. 6:12-15, various

Sermon Audio Blurb: James says we all stumble in many ways and one way we stumble that is common to man is by sinning with our tongues. The application of the gospel to our tongues provides the solution to the besetting sins of the tongue. God takes the issue seriously and so should we.

## Introduction

### I. My Personal Experience

#### A. My First Ministry

1. Where there is conflict, there is usually anger, wrath, bitter words, than harm and do not build up
2. I needed to extract my own logs first!

#### B. "Respectable Sins

1. If we believe we are victims it is easy to justify all corrupting talk.
2. Tolerable Sins
  - a. We minimize
  - b. We rationalize
  - c. We justify
  - d. We deny (the who me attitude)

#### C. What about you?

1. Have you ever been the victim of sins of the tongue?
2. Have you ever victimized someone else with sins of the tongue?
3. What is your response when and if someone confronts you with your sins of the tongue?
  - a. Defensive? Denying?
  - b. Minimizing
  - c. Rationalizing?

- d. Justifying self?
- e. Repentance?

## II. The Bigger Picture of Scripture

### A. Careless words

1. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:36-37 ESV)
  - a. In this context "justified" means "shown to be righteous."
  - b. "Careless" or "idle" words means words spoken rashly, carelessly, without thought as to the effect on the listener or whether the speech glorifies God. They may be spoken in...
    - 1) Exasperation/frustration
    - 2) Anger/wrath
    - 3) Under pressure (I was stressed.)
    - 4) Ignorance (or just out of bad habit)
  - c. By your words you will be justified means our words will be outward evidence of our inward character.
    - 1) We are known by the words we speak...
    - 2) The attitudes we convey...
    - 3) The way we speak (tone, flattery, agenda implied, etc.)
    - 4) And context (who are we speaking to and about what)
2. Consider Proverbs (at least 60)
  - a. A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech,...(Proverbs 6:12 ESV)
    - 1) The designation "worthless" means that the person in question lacks any desire to act in accord with righteousness and so is "wicked."
    - 2) This is the character issue, the heart issue, what is going on, on the inside that motivates speech.
  - b. The passage continues:..winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger, with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord;

therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly;  
in a moment he will be broken beyond healing. (Proverbs 6:13-15  
ESV)

- 1) In a preview of James 3:2-12 the passage connects crooked speech with body actions and attitudes of the heart (v13)
  - 2) All flowing from a perverted heart, given to some idol, something wanted, demanded...
  - 3) That results is a desire to stir up conflict, exploit situations and gain personal advantage.
  - 4) "sowing discord" is the result of this person's communication pattern. Their talk creates suspicion and creates distrust.
- c. The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. (Proverbs 8:13 ESV)
- 1) Perverted speech in the most general sense means unedifying. Perverted speech is corrupt in some way and the Lord hates it.
  - 2) The major theme in Proverbs is fear of the Lord and that means to love what the Lord loves and to hate what the Lord hates
  - 3) A "careless" speaker does not guard their heart and therefore, their speech is not guarded.
- d. The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer,  
but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. (Proverbs 15:28 ESV)
- 1) A contrast Proverb that illustrates that the "God-fearer" thinks before he or she gives an answer.
  - 2) This in contrast to the loose cannon that blurts out evil things or is thoughtless in speech.
- e. A worthless man plots evil,  
and his speech is like a scorching fire. (Proverbs 16:27 ESV)
- f. As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire,  
so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. (Proverbs 26:21 ESV)
- g. For lack of wood the fire goes out,  
and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases. (Proverbs 26:20 ESV)
- 1) Pro. 16:27, 26:20-21 work in nicely with James 3:2-12 the tongue is compared to out of control fire and destructive.
  - 2) The whisperer is a gossip.
3. Sins of the tongue emerge from the heart.

- a. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45 ESV)
- b. Word problems reveal heart problems.
- c. Our speech reveals who we are.
  - 1) Primary way to get to know someone is to talk to them and listen to them.
  - 2) Communications makes and breaks relationships. Communication can form bonds of friendship or give a person an idea of who to steer clear of.
  - 3) How and what we communicate is a character issue and speech is the primary way we communicate with one another.
    - 1) And like it or not others judge us on our speech.
- d. Understand that we get something from using slander, gossip, lying and corrupting talk.
  - 1) Making ourselves look better (ego building)
  - 2) Tearing another down out of revenge
  - 3) Looking for affirmation or sympathy (self-pity)
  - 4) Avoiding personal responsibility and blame shifting
  - 5) Manipulation to get something we want

3. Ruling desires are idolatry and at the root of our speech problems (Lk. 6:43-45)

## B. Definitions

- 1. Gossip
  - a. "Gossip is the spreading of unfavorable information about someone even if true. (Respectable Sins, Jerry Bridges)
- 2. Slander
  - a. Slander is ascribing wrong motives to a person and a form of lying.
  - b. Do not ascribe motives because you do not know a person's heart.
- 3. Lying
  - a. Exaggeration, failure to tell the whole truth, intent is to deceive in some way
- 4. Critical speech
  - a. Critical speech is negative talk about a person that may be actually true but

does not need to be said. (Bob watches too much TV.) This is a remarkably easy way to stumble because it seems so harmless.

- b. Critical speech is corrupting talk, unwholesome speech
  - 1) Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29 ESV)
  - 2) Corrupting talk: Paul is not just talking about cursing, swearing, or vulgar four-letter words. In fact, to think of this passage in this way minimizes its intent. Paul has something in mind much more redemptively revolutionary in mind. For Paul, unwholesome talk is me-centered talk that has no higher purpose than my own wants, desires, dreams and demands. (Paul David Tripp, War of Words)

### C. James 3:2-12

- 1. Immediate context follows the responsibility of teachers (Ja. 3:1)
  - a. James is talking about the huge responsibility that those who would teach have. It's designed to make teachers and those that want to teach take notice-it's not to be taken lightly or carelessly or inaccurately.
- 2. James moves from the narrow category of teachers to the broad category of all.
  - a. For we all stumble in many ways.
  - b. We all stumble in some area(s) of our life.
- 3. And then there is a common, specific way of stumbling
  - a. "and if anyone does not stumble in what he says"
  - b. James begins to teach us about our tongue.
- 4. two aspects regarding the tongue
  - a. The power of the controlled tongue
  - b. The damage due to an uncontrolled tongue

### III. The power of a controlled tongue.

- A. There is great power with the tongue. It is the root of our many problems and through controlling it we can bring our entire body under control.
- B. There are two qualities associated with a tongue under control.
  - 1. If you control your tongue you are a mature Christian (Ja. 3:2).
    - a. "Perfect" does not mean without sin

- a. "Perfect" refers to being complete, achieving a goal.
  - a. James says we all stumble and stumble in many and a variety of ways, yet if we are able to not stumble with our speech then we are mature.
  - b. Therefore, the reverse is also true. Habitual stumbling in speech (not a speech disability) is a sign of immaturity in the Christian.
2. The 2nd quality is that we are able to bring the entire body under control (Ja. 3:3).
- a. A bridle is steering mechanism for a horse. It's how the rider controls the horse.
  - b. The word picture is of a man bringing under control his entire body.
  - c. The mechanism is the tongue a key part of the body.
  - d. We do not become sinless, but if we learn to control the tongue we have also learned to restrain the body from sin and redirect it to acts of godliness or godly speech.
3. Remember, out of the heart, the mouth speaks (Lk. 6:45) James is saying that if the tongue is dealt with everything else follows.
- a. The tongue is small thing of tremendous power
  - b. The implication is that if we cannot bridle our tongues we'll not bridle anything else!
  - c. This should be sufficient reason to carefully consider our speech, to be wise in what we say, when we say it, and why we say it.
  - d. My dad used to say, "make sure brain is engaged before mouth is in motion." That is good counsel because too often we do not think before we speak.
  - e. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29 ESV)
    - 1) Note that to apply Eph. 4:29, one must think! First you have to put a sock in your mouth and then after you pull the sock out you must speak something that is good for building up and that it gives grace.
    - 2) Put off-put on principle: Eph. 4:22-24
- C. To help us understand this James uses two powerful illustrations from life, the horse and the ship (verse 3-4).
- 1. A bridle is a piece of equipment used to direct a horse. As defined in the Oxford English Dictionary, the "bridle" includes both the headstall that holds a bit that goes in the mouth of a horse, and the reins that are attached to the bit. Bit: The bit goes into the horse's mouth, resting on the sensitive interdental space between the horse's teeth known as the "bars."

- a. "Now if we put the bits...(Ja. 3:3) present tense)
  - 1) Important: Habit, like going through your routine when you get in your car.
  - 2) To control the horse we do not once in while put the bridle and bit on the horse.
  - 3) The horse is trained through the consistent habit of putting the bit into its mouth
- b. The bit does not only control the horse, but the horse also obeys and thus the horse is directed.
  - 1) The entire horse is submitted by the bit. That's a lot of horse!  
(800-1200lbs of horse)
  - 2) The application of control at the proper point means we can be effective with our control.

2. Ships (Ja. 3:4, and the importance of a rudder)

- a. James says look at the ships (behold-NASB)
  - 1) Look at the tremendous size of a ship
    - a) Nimitz Class Aircraft Carrier is 1100 ft long (almost 4 foot ball fields)
    - b) Ocean-going cruise ships are massive
    - c) Even in Paul's day ships were massive.
      - i. Trireme was a small(er) warship with a crew of about 200. A Quinquereme had five rows and a crew of 420.
      - ii. A large trade ship like the one Paul was on carried 276 passengers plus a full hold of wheat!
  - 2) Consider the winds that drive such ships.
    - a) Sailing is an art and science imho.
    - b) Sailors use the wind with rigging configurations but only in combination with a very small thing called a rudder.
    - c) Although the wind may be fierce and pound the ship, the ship may still be safely directed through the skillful use of the rudder.
  - 3) In the same way, although we may have tremendous pressures in our life, through the controlling of our tongue we can stay safe.

3. Note: "Likewise" (vs 5a).

- a. In the same way, the tongue is a very small part of the body, yet it has tremendous potential
  - 1) Either for harm
  - 2) Or for good
  - 3) The tongue makes great boasts
- b. Therefore it is critical for all us to bring it under control
  - 1) Like the skillful equestrian directing the horse we are direct our tongues and therefore our whole body.
  - 2) Like a skillful pilot of a sailing ship holding fast to our tongue we may direct the course of our lives

D. What awesome power resides in such a small thing.

- 1. If we can control the tongue we are mature says James
- 2. If we cannot control our tongues there is a great potential for danger.

IV. The damage due to an uncontrolled tongue (Ja. 3:6-12).

A. James uses two more illustrations that help describe the great potential for destruction.

- 1. James continues picturing the ability of something small to do something big.
- 2. Forest fire
  - a. In the early fall of 1871 NW Wisconsin and Upper Michigan suffered under high temperatures and a prolonged drought. In early October a cyclone type storm with frequent lightning strikes caused a massive forest fire around the town of Peshtigo, WI. The loss in life was between 1,200 and 2,400 people and millions of acres of timber were destroyed. By way of comparison the Great Chicago Fire that occurred on the same day accounted for 250 deaths.
  - b. Smokey the Bear is no joke!
- 3. In the same way as a spark sets off a raging inferno, the tongue is capable of great destruction as well (verse 6).
  - a. This passage is very hard to translate.
  - b. But the point of the passage is very powerful.
    - 1) The word "course" is better translated "wheel"
    - 2) If you are aware of how wagons worked you would know that hub of the wheel had to be consistently greased. If you forgot the hub could catch fire and the flames would spread outward to the rest of the wheel and



then the wagon itself

- 3) In the same way picture yourself as that wheel. The hub is your tongue. If it is left unattended it will catch on fire and eventually spread to your entire person.
  - 4) We need to see that we need to take great care in our speech.
  - 5) The tongue is even described as a tool used by Satan, fit for hell itself (6b).
  - 6) This is why the Bible places sins of the tongue on par with many others that we all would agree are “horrible” or “big” sins.
    - a) 1 Timothy 1:8-10,
    - b) Romans 1:28-30
4. James then reminds us of our ability to tame and train the animal kingdom (vs. 7).
5. “But” then, in verse 8, is a very powerful word. We are so proud of our ability to control things.
- a. Science can be a marvelous thing. With it, we can to some extent, control things.
    - 1) Think of computers and data control
    - 2) Think of controlled flight
    - 3) Or the ability to travel under water in a submarine
    - 4) We can control, to some extent, some things, but ultimately not tame them..
    - 5) Like the weather or an earthquake or the tongue.
  - c. The tongue is untamable. This means that it can be controlled but not tamed.
    - 1) When you tame something you don’t need to constantly watch over it.
    - 2) That is not the way of the tongue.
      - a) It must always be keep under strict control.
      - b) You can’t let up on it ever.
- B. James gives us two descriptions of the tongue that tell us why.

1. "Restless evil" refers to a unstable nature of the tongue.
  - a. It will not stay in place.
  - b. But it is also evil so you don't want to ever turn your back on it either.
  - c. It needs to have a tight reign and a watchful eye.
    - 1) It also is full of "deadly poison."
      - a) Literally it is "death bringing."
      - b) This tells us that the tongue does not merely hurt, but it destroys.
      - c) You need to be very aware of it.
      - d) That is the attitude we are to have with the tongue.

C. Now James is ready for the grand finale (verses 9-12)

1. We "bless" and "curse."
  - a. Present tense, showing that this is a common situation.
2. Verse 10, "this ought not to be"
  - a. Shows James' grief and concern over this.
  - b. This may be a normal practice among non-believers, but not for the "brethren."
3. I might add that this most specifically deals with the teacher again.
  - a. The word for curse means to call down curses upon someone.
  - b. It pictures the teacher, who is teaching all the right things about God, yet in his dealings with God's people he speaks arrogantly, cursing them.
  - c. This is not proper for a true teacher (or a Christian).
4. He illustrates this with water and fruit (vss 11-12).
  - a. These illustrations are obvious, not needing any comment.
  - b. The key point is that spring and the plants act in accordance to their nature.
  - c. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45 ESV)

- 1) The question for us, then, is that if our mouth says that we are religious, yet from that same mouth comes filth and gossip, and slander, lies and corrupting talk. Are you truly religious?
- 2) "if anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless." Ja. 1:26

D. Putting on Edifying Speech (Eph. 4:29)

1. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29 ESV)
  - a. Be committed to edifying speech (let no)
    - 1) Remember that corrupting talk is me-centered in some way in that it has no higher purpose.
    - 2) Talk that builds up is other-oriented in a positive way, illustrating grace, mercy, love and Christ oriented. Wholesome speech does not have selfish motives. (Be gospel oriented in your speech)
2. Consider to whom you are talking (being helpful, building up)
  - a. Gender, age, long-time friend, acquaintance, stranger, relative, neighbor, believer or seeker?
  - b. Think before you speak. Develop the habit of slow response until you can respond rightfully without giving it too much thought.
    - a. What is the problem or issue?
    - a. What is the need of the moment?
      - a. Peacemaking
      - b. Sin that needs to be confronted
      - c. Spiritual blindness
      - d. Fear, anxiety, dread
      - e. Anger, malice, bitterness
3. What is your agenda in the conversation.

Questions for CGs:

1. Consider how you have been guilty of sins of the tongues. What were the results? Consider how you may have been the victim of sins of the tongue. What were the results?

2. Were you ever confronted for your speech? What was your response? Were you in denial, defensive or argumentative? Did you minimize, rationalize or seek to justify self?
3. What does the humble response to confrontation for sins of the tongue look like?
4. Think of ways you can be committed to avoiding sins of the tongue.