

Text: James 3:8-12
 Sermon: Speaking For The King
 Speaker: Jonathan Matias, Pastor, Grace Church of Alexandria
 www.graceofalexandria.org
 Date: May 3, 2009

Introduction

Please turn in your Bibles to James chapter 3, verse 8. That's page 1,012 in the hardcover Bibles on the seats next to you. Today's sermon, *Speaking For the King*, is another in our series called *The Gospel Driven Life* and is from James 3:8-12.

Your words are quite possibly the most important tools that you have to serve God. Every day you and I use words. We talk on the phone. We chat with our co-workers. We write letters. We type emails, chat by instant message, and we tweet on Twitter. Every time we communicate, we have a chance by the way we talk and what we talk about to communicate life-giving truth about God.

Recently, my friend Stephen showed me by his example how to use a simple and quick email pour out grace from God on others. For his upcoming trip to Alexandria, he emailed me and asked what hotels might be good to stay at in town. At the end, he included, as is his custom, a prayer of blessing on Christy, me, and all of you who have helped to start Grace Church. He prayed:

Father in Heaven,

Thank you for calling Jonathan and Christy to Alexandria. Thank you for those who have gathered round them to plant another witness to Jesus in a needy place.

You know what an exhausting work that can be. Would you give refreshment of body, mind and soul to them. May the Holy Spirit show His power to change lives by bringing conviction to those who have received the Gospel. Please give wisdom to all in their gathering who are making disciples.

Whether in daily house chores, preaching, face-to-face witness, work at the office, difficult decisions, may each one be taught to know You better.

Amen."

Stephen's email shows how we can take ordinary, necessary talk, like a brief email, and harness it for God's glory, if we are deliberate about it.

Last Sunday from James 3:1-8, we saw that when you are allowing Christ to rule in your heart, your words are going to spiritually refresh and serve others. But when you speak careless or hurtful words, you can know that the LORD isn't ruling your heart at that times. Today in verses 8 to 13, we're going to see how we can **take care that our talk doesn't undermine our King's rule but serves our King**. Let's examine the passage so

we turn from using destructive talk toward deliberately using our words to magnify God.

First, let us consider:

I. Talk that Undermines Our King's Rule.

We Are Two-Faced With Our Talk

In verses 9 and 10, James describes just how two-faced we are with our talk. In one breath we'll **ble**ss, or praise God; with the next, we **cur**se others. When James talks about cursing others, he's not so concerned with vulgar language or four-letter words. He's more concerned that we sing at church praise to God at church for all that he is and for giving us his undeserved favor...then with that same mouth, we so easily tear another believer down behind their back. Or when we interact with a non-Christian who frustrates us, in our hearts we often wish the worst on them, rather than feeling pity and praying for only thing that can change them—God's saving grace.

How Bad Is Our Talk?

James wants us to grasp just how broken and sinful our talk has become. So in verses 9 to 12, he shares three illustrations from everyday life in Bible times. They reveal just how incompatible is our sinful talk with the God's agenda for our talk. There's a severe disconnect between the encouraging spiritual talk the Spirit is ready to produce in your life and the harmful words you let escape from our own mouth.

1) The First illustration is in verse 11..

The importance of clean drinking water to life in James' day can't be overestimated. They lived in a dry and dusty land. Many towns and cities sprang up wherever a source of fresh water was found. When villagers got thirsty, they had to go to the town well or spring, draw water with a pitcher, and carry it back to their house. Imagine their frustration if this spring that flowed clean and clear for their neighbors suddenly flowed only for them with "**salty**" water, which means "**bitter**," "**brackish**," and "**dirty**."

It's as though, when we're talking to others, instead of serving them a refreshing glass of water, sometime we handing them a cup of dirty Potomac River water to drink! James is scolding us for talking as though we are not Christians, as though the Spirit's sanctifying power is entirely absent in our lives, and as though our circumstances spinning out of God's control.

You see, when your heart is believing God today and trusting Him, you will not produce broken and corrupted talk. But when hurtful words flow from your mouth, you know the source of your words, your mind & heart, is not pure. You are not letting Christ rule something in your heart completely. You have got to take time to do business with God and confess your heart's rebellion.

2) In verse 12, James gives a second illustration to show why we Christians must not let harmful talk escape from our lips.

Last week Christy started growing tomatoes, basil, mint, and cilantro on our back porch. We long for fresh vegetables and herbs, so I'm really looking forward to when they're ready to pick. For James original hearers' though, agriculture their way of life, and how they survived! The land of Israel grew and exported more grapes, olives, and figs than any other product. They knew that you can expect a plant to produce fruit according to its nature. If you own a vineyard, your grape vines will inevitably produces grapes, not figs. And it's absurd to think that your grove of olive trees would start producing figs, no matter how much you like Fig Newtons or Fig Newmans!

Plants produce fruit according to their nature. And you can tell when you're living according to old ways instead of for God's agenda when your words aren't full of grace but instead make people around you tense and on edge because you were so testy.

3) The third and final illustration at the end of verse 12 makes the same point as the first one, except more emphatically. When you let impatient, uncontrolled words fly out of your mouth towards your kids, or your spouse, your co-workers, or that sloppy driver on the beltway, you know God isn't the true ruler of your heart at that moment, something else is.

Jesus cautions us that one day, we'll give account to him for every word we will speak. He says in Matthew 12:36-37,

I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

James puts it another way in verse 10 – **"My brothers and sisters, "these things ought not be so."** We have got to reject sloppy, careless talk because it is incompatible with our mission to communicate the message of God's kingdom rule that has dawned and is changing everything, starting with us!

Transition:

Now that we've looked at talk that undermines our King's rule, let's go back to verse 8 and identify practical ways that our talk can serve the King.

II. Talk That Serves Our King

Look carefully at verse 8 to find hope that God can help us get out of the rut of complaining, or gossiping, or criticizing other people. **"No human being can tame the tongue."** James seems to choose his wording carefully here, saying that among humanity, no one is able completely to tame and control their speech. But he also implies that hope can come from outside of humanity. He's pointing to one who is not just a human being but one who is also divine, **"The Word who became Flesh,"** Jesus Christ the Lord!

Remember from our Scripture reading today, 2 Corinthians 5, that verse 17 proclaimed: **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, the new has come!"** Christ tames our unruly tongue by planting the Spirit's presence in your life, influencing you to use clean, not vulgar words, and enabling you to

speak words of encouraging.

I'd like to share with you four ways that with the Spirit's influence, we deliberately speak this week to advance God's plan of renewing and restoring the world and the people in it?

A. First, Shamelessly Speak Words of Praise To God.

Don't be shy about expressing heart-felt words of worship to God, in public worship or in your person time of devotion to God! In verse 9, James is pleased that the people are **"blessing God our Lord and Father"** with their lips. Let's unpack the meaning of "blessing God." To bless someone means to praise them. [write it out]

So consider Psalm 103:1, **"Bless the Lord, O My soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."** David isn't blessing the Lord as though God lacked anything and needed a blessing. Instead, he's saying, **"Lord, you are praiseworthy. Let all that is within me shout your praise!"**

We gather on Sundays to sound out with resounding praise to our God. That's why we joyfully sing songs, old and new, to the Lord! But don't let the crescendo of praise in your heart fall silent after we leave this building. Pick up on the language of worship here in this room and let them spill over into your personal or family worship with God.

You can easily do that by sticking the order of worship in your Bible. Then on Monday when you do some Bible reading, read aloud one of the songs as a prayer to the Lord. I'm not always "in the Spirit" and brimming with excitement about God, so this is how I personally jump-start and fuel my prayer time with the Lord. Every few days this week, open to page 5 and pray aloud the words of *Jesus, Thank You* as a prayer of thanksgiving to God. Pray it meaningfully and with expression like we sing it!

Your blood has washed away my sin. Jesus, thank You.

The Father's wrath completely satisfied, Jesus, thank You.

Once Your enemy, now seated at Your table, Jesus, thank You.

Don't be shy about expressing heart-felt words of worship to God over lunch today. So in a little while, when you go to Chipotle or sit around the dinner table at home, share one truth about God from our public worship with those eating with you. You can say, "You know, today at Grace Church when we sang the song *Jesus, Thank You*, the last line stood out –'once your enemy, now seated at your table.' I realized that God is letting me, someone who didn't like him and rebelled against him, to sit at his banquet table. He had to take the initiative to draw me back to him and change my heart. I'm amazed God turned me from being his enemy to being one of his family members. It's so amazing!"

So, kids, you might need to really listen up today from here on out. You never know if your parents might ask you what you learned at Grace Church today!

This week, don't be shy about expressing praise to God.

(2) Secondly, Pray For People Wrong You

In verse 9, James warned us about our tendency to get upset at people who do us wrong. You and I are living in a broken city, and a broken world. We have got to resist the urge to contribute to our community's brokenness by thinking and uttering harsh words against unjust people. But there's a better way. Our words can actually help to reverse the brokenness around us by praying in grace and renewal from God!

Instead of cursing people in our mind who frustrate or hurt us, we can bless them. Now you don't have to pray that enemies of God will prosper, get even wealthier, and avoid justice for their wrongdoing. But you can ask God to change them from the inside out. For God to free your unjust and demanding boss from his sinful attitudes by leading him to Christ. That way he'll enjoy a life of peace inside, instead of the worry, self-righteousness, and control-problems raging in his soul that he takes out on his employees.

Every time you're frustrated or hurt, pray for the person who did it to you. Here's how you can pray.

“Lord, when Paul shared the Gospel to Lydia, a businesswoman from Thyatira, you rescued her from her sins and transformed her life! You tell us in Acts 16 that when Paul shared the Gospel with her, the Scripture says, **“The LORD opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.”** And she believed and was baptized! Oh, merciful Father, I am tired of my boss's constant abuse. But you've placed me here for a reason. Will you extend to him the same incredible grace you gave me that turned me from a rebel raging against you and hurting others into someone who has found peace with you and with others! Please rescue my boss from this behavior that is destroying those around him, for your glory!”

Thirdly,

(3) Pray Through the Grace Church Directory.

Since our church is in the middle of a busy, urban environment and we have fast-paced, hectic lives, it's hard to meet up together during the week. Some of us live so far away from others that meeting up is often impractical. Don't let the alienation from our urban environment stop you from serving others in our church.

I urge you to keep your members and attenders directory in your Bible. At least once a week, why don't you pray for each person in the directory. Even the Apostle Paul, the great missionary and church planter that he was, coveted prayers, for he says in Ephesians 6:19 –

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”

Remember the email that my friend Stephen sent me? I printed that out and keep it somewhere that I can pull out and remember God's grace when I'm struggling to see it. If you will put your mouth to work praying regularly for our church family, you'll be

praying down effective grace from God that will transform and strengthen your brothers and sisters! You'll be fulfilling God's agenda for your words.

Conclusion

God has a marvelous agenda for our talk. We have got to examine our words to make sure we're talking for the King of Kings, not for ourselves. Let us pray with David in Psalm 141:3 – **“Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.”** And let us be constant in prayer for each other, employing our speech to minister grace that will transform us to be like Christ and serve our King.