

# “no one can tame the tongue.”

James 4:11-5:11

26<sup>th</sup> of September

Introduction:

Have you ever experienced anyone speaking evil of you? If you have, it must have been terrible. Do I dare ask the question, have you or I ever been guilty of speaking ill of someone? No wonder the letter of James has that very famous verse:

***For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, <sup>8</sup> but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison (3:7-8)***

***no one can tame the tongue***

Let us pray:

O' LORD, my the words of my lips, and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing to you O LORD, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

When we read any Epistle, like James, we may quickly think it is about many do's and don'ts. There is so much more, as it is the inspired word of God. It is God's revelation to us.

Today's text is chapter four, beginning as verse eleven, finishing chapter five, verse eleven. If you have your Bible open at home, that will prove helpful. James 4:11-5:11.

I started this morning with what can be described as a hard-hitting question. I like to remind you that the letter of James is written to the people of God, the Church. Knowing that this letter is written to the Church makes my opening question even more unpalatable. The assumption is that speaking ill of or speaking evil of another person may send shivers up our spine. Yet speaking ill of or speaking evil of another is a real temptation for the followers of Christ

Why do Christians face that temptation? The actual sin of speaking ill or evil of someone, putting down, maligning their character flows from something much more profound.

***Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another (11b)***

Through the tongue, words are being expressed that are judging someone else. Matthew recalls Jesus words on judging:

***“Do not judge so that you may not be judged.  
For with the judgment you make you will be judged,  
and the measure you give will be the measure you get. (Matthew 7:13)***

After James speaks on a warning against judging – he turns to remind us all, not we are all mortal. ***For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes (14c)***

Not only we are all mortal, and we are all equal. When James wrote his letter, there was a view that has plagued the people of God since the time of Moses. Simply, if we have possession, nicer home etc., we are blessed by God; hence we must be in better standing with God.

What we have is no indication of our relationship with God. We all indeed thank God for how he has blessed us, yet the abundance or lack of possession and position doesn't correlate with a person's relationship with the living God. Sinful attitudes are being displayed if, at any time, if we believe or convey that we are superior to anyone else. We are all saved by grace.

***For by grace, you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2***

Boasting in our own abilities is a form of idolatry. This temptation seeks not to follow Jesus as the sovereign of our lives. Like all sin, the temptation is subtle.

To stand against such temptation is to continue to cultivate a thankful heart. The importance of including prayers of thankfulness in both our private devotional life and corporate worship can further develop a grateful heart.

Why do Christians have this battle in serving God? This battle/struggle is to take away the effective witness of the Christians. When Christians speak ill or evil of anyone in the eyes of the world, Christians are hypocrites. This action brings disdain to the body of Christ.

We all know we are saved by grace. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians stating:

***that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures***

***1 Cor. 15:3b***

Jesus atoning sacrifice is all-sufficient, and all who have placed their faith in him are part of the glorious Redeemed.

All this we know, yet we still have the temptation to sin. The tongue seems untamable.

Hence the great importance of cultivating the fruit of the Holy Spirit that is each one of us:

**the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control.**

**Galatians 5:22-23**

To cultivate the fruit of the Holy Spirit is to allow these fruit to find expression

To enable these fruits to find expression, we humbly come before the LORD and spend time confessing the temptation we may have yielded to.

The passage of James reveals that the people of God can:

- Speaking evil against one another
- Judging one another
- Boasting in own abilities
- Lack of acknowledging the Lordship of God
- Forget we are mortal

The above is a challenging list of the temptation of the followers of Christ being revealed by the James passage this morning.

That is contrasted by the list of the fruit of the Spirit.

- **love,**
- **joy,**
- **peace,**
- **patience,**
- **kindness,**
- **generosity, (goodness)**
- **faithfulness,**

- **gentleness,**
- **and self-control.**

To enable these fruits to find expression, we humbly come before the LORD and spend time confessing the temptation we may have yielded to.

As already stated, we are saved by the grace of God, which is an expression of God's love.

God does not abandon his people - he sent Christ as the atoning sacrifice. He calls us to repent, yey the decision is always up to the individual.

How do we tame the tongue? By calling out to the LORD in prayer, asking for His help, if we lapse.

Resources:

Douglas J. Moo: James; Tyndale New Testament Commentary

Norman Ericson: James – studies from the New Living Translation