

Sunday, December 6, 2020

Text: James 3:1-5a

Preacher: Isaiah Mackler

Title: The Power of the Tongue

Big Idea: Don't underestimate your speech when diagnosing your spiritual health.

Proposition: Two ways the tongue's power (or greatness) is revealed so that you will examine your tongue when evaluating your spiritual health.

Outline:

1. The Tongue's Power (or Greatness) Revealed in Judgment (3:1-2)
2. The Tongue's Power (or Greatness) Revealed in Action (3:2-5a)

*(If I could do it over, I would substitute the word greatness for power -IM)*

Study Guide Questions

*There are more questions for personal meditation but probably too many for group discussion. Please pick and choose according to the needs of your group.*

- Why do you think that James transitioned between his discussion of works as a necessary evidence of faith in Chapter 2 to a discussion of the tongue in Chapter 3?
- James says that the tongue "boasts of great things" though a "small part of the body" (3:5). James' focus is not the boasting the tongue does but the greatness of the tongue in comparison to its size. In what ways is the tongue great?
- How do you balance James' warning in 3:1 with other instruction about teaching (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Timothy 3:1; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 12:7)? Why would James give this warning?
- Review Mark 12:38-40; Matthew 23:23-27 and Luke 12:47-48. What is at the center of this idea of "stricter judgment" in James 3:1? Why does knowing more, and especially teaching, lead to stricter judgment? What does this reveal about God's heart?
- How can those who've been justified by faith in Jesus Christ take seriously this warning about stricter judgment? (You may need to return to the end of Chapter 2 and the discussion regarding justification by works at judgment as compared to the justification that happens at the time of salvation.)
- Matthew 16:24-27; 25:14-30; 25:31-36; Romans 14:12; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; and 2 Corinthians 5:10 all speak of a future judgment. How should you respond to judgment as someone who is confident of their salvation? How should someone respond who is not confident?

- How are you processing your own readiness to teach at this time? Clearly, a teacher does not need to be sinless (3:2a)!
- Since we are called to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20), are there discrepancies between the way you are following Christ and the way you would disciple a new believer to follow Christ? What are they and what are you going to do about them?
- How does James 3:2b describe a mature (or perfect) Christian?
- What surprising connection is there between our speech and our body as claimed in 3:2b and illustrated in 3:3-4? (See also Matthew 12:34-35 and 15:18-19.)
- Can you illustrate from your life ways in which speech leads to action? How does a general Gospel-centered, grace-filled, hopeful, thankful, humble speech through your day lead to different actions when alone? With your family? With the saints? With the lost?
- How does someone become mature in their speech, both internal and external? What would be some good ways to become more aware of your speech, both internal and external?
- What importance might media play in your ability to control your body given what James has said in 3:1-5a? What importance would Scripture play?
- What are some patterns of your internal dialogue (your self-speech) that you've been working on changing? Are there any patterns you need to repent of?
- As a general encouragement, try spending time with Jesus in one of the Gospels each day. How could what you read about Jesus affect your internal speech today?