

Breaking Point: Faith Under Pressure
Week 4: Louder Than Words
August 1-2, 2020

Introduction:

As a kid, you were probably taught the famous adage, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.” As we get older, I think we find the opposite to be true. Broken bones mend over time and actually become stronger than before whereas wounds caused by words can fester for decades and still inflict pain long after those words were spoken.

How is it that something so small and seemingly insignificant as the tongue can tear families apart, estrange loved ones, and even divide nations? As we continue through the book of James we’ll discover what the Bible has to say about the power of the tongue and a love *Louder than Words*.

[Section 1]

I’m standing in the remains of what was once a place of rehabilitation, but due to a fire has been reduced to ruins.

The wall-to-wall graffiti almost serve as a visual reminder of what could become of our lives if we don’t get a tight rein on our words.

In James chapter 3 he talks about how a tiny bit can control a horse or a small rudder can steer a ship. In verse 5 he writes,

“⁵ Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark,” (James 3:5).

He’s saying, don’t let its size fool you! In the same way you can turn a horse to the left or right with a tiny bit or steer an entire ship with a small rudder, this tiny 3-inch muscle has the ability to completely alter the course of your life! Don’t underestimate its power! He goes on in v. 6,

“⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the 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).

He’s saying this tiny, seemingly insignificant muscle has the power to corrupt everything, set the course of your life on fire and reduce everything to ruin! Not only that but it is itself set on fire by hell! Meaning Satan himself would love nothing more than to use your tongue — use your words for destruction. Remember what Jesus said to Peter when Peter rebuked Him? He said, “Get behind me Satan!” You are a stumbling block to me. You’re looking at things from a human point of view, not from God’s.” Listen, when we get caught up in human arguments and we react to what we see in the news or in our world from a human viewpoint, and we’re not seeking out God’s perspective, the Bible says that’s demonic. I’m sure Peter thought, “I’m just expressing my views, I’m just exercising my freedom of speech,” but Jesus said, “Get behind me Satan. You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

This is why James addresses this from the beginning in James 1 where he writes, “¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires,” (James 1:19-20). Sadly, I see a lot of people (many in the Church) who are slow to listen but quick to speak and quick to become angry. Can we be real? Some of us get triggered just after reading the headline. A person hasn’t even finished speaking and we’re already formulating our comeback. “Yea but Mark this is a *righteous* anger.” If that’s the case, pause.

Pray. Ask God if this is really Him stirring you to respond and not just you reacting. Then ask Him to give you His Words in His love and in His timing. This is what it means to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

To drive his point home James writes, “²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless,”
(James 1:26).

Did you catch that? James is saying if we miss this, we miss everything. Why are our words such a big deal to James? The answer is because, **in the Bible, our words are a clear indicator of what’s in our heart.**

[Section 2]

When you visit your doctor, one of the first things they tell you to do is stick out your tongue. Your tongue can tell a lot about your physical condition. Your tongue gives your Doctor clues as to what’s going on with your overall health and can even indicate deeper issues. You know the tongue can also tell us a lot about our spiritual condition as well.

Try to imagine how horrifying it would be if you had a tv screen on your forehead that projected everything you were thinking about! Many of us would probably never leave our homes or we’d walk around with a towel wrapped around our heads because we’d be so afraid people would see us for who we really are. But the Bible says our words are just like that tv screen — they reveal what’s really going on in our heart. Jesus Himself said,

“...For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. ³⁶ I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Jesus is saying that one day we are going to give an account for our words because our words reveal what’s in our heart. There’s an old saying that goes, “What’s down in the well comes up in the bucket.” Sometimes we’ll say something and think, “Where in the world did that come from? That wasn’t me!” The truth is that it came from right here. Maybe it came from something hurtful that was said to you long ago, maybe it came from something you heard or read, perhaps it was something you watched. Whatever it is we are filling ourselves with and holding onto is what is going to come up.

Some people harbor unforgiveness or offense in their hearts so when they’re around certain people or certain situations trigger them they can’t help but speak negatively about that person. A lot of people are harboring fear, anxiety, and insecurity about what’s happening in our world and it’s clear in their reactions, comments, and posts that it’s not coming from a place of faith or peace but of fear and frustration.

So our words tell the story of what’s taking place inside. James goes on to say,

⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water,” (James 3:9-12).

Church, this is our breaking point. We need to be on our knees in prayer asking God to break this stronghold off of His people and our Nation in Jesus' Name.

James has already said we are deceived if we think we have religion but can't control our words — our religion is worthless. Now he's saying, some of you praise God one moment but then curse another person who is made in God's likeness. One moment you're praising but the next you're cursing — you're condemning. "Yea but you don't know what they stand for! You don't know what they've said! I'm right!" How many of us know, a right word said out of love is still wrong? James says, brothers and sisters, this should not be. He says, fresh and salt water can't flow from the same spring. A fig tree can't bear olives. A grapevine can't bear figs. What is he saying? He's saying, there comes a point when you may think you have a fig tree, but if the only thing that's growing is olives, it may be time to ask yourself, is it really a fig tree? This is our breaking point Church. James is saying, **we may call ourselves a Christian and say we have Jesus in our hearts, but if the words — the fruit that comes out is curses, anger, bitterness, gossip, slander, or foul language eventually we may have to ask ourselves, "Am I a really a new creation? Is Jesus really in my heart? Or am I deceiving myself?"**

I know this isn't an easy Word but this is the breaking point we need to come to — especially with everything going on around us if we are going to effectively shine the light of Jesus.

[Section 3]

Proverbs 18 says that your words are so powerful that they will kill or give life. Your tongue has the power of life and death.

As a Christian and a Pastor my prayer is that God would use my words to give life. But you know for many years my words brought a lot of death. If someone insulted me I always had a comeback. If someone told a dirty joke, I told a worse one. I always had to have the last laugh. I used to cut people down, make them feel small; I was manipulative. Satan had control of my tongue. Just like that tiny spark that sets the forest ablaze. The ones who go it the worst were my family — especially my siblings.

Then one night I had a dream that I was surrounded by darkness. There were shadows all around and a shadowy figure in front of me. I pulled out a long curved sword and placed it on the neck of this figure in front of me — ready to deal the killing blow. But then the shadows lifted and I realized the person I was about to attack was my little brother Caleb. I'll never forget the look of helplessness in his eyes as he stared at me holding that sword.

It was through that dream that God began to speak to me about the destructive nature of my words. And each of us will face a choice — Will our words bring death or life? There is no middle ground. **Mother Theresa said, "Words that do not increase the light of Christ increase the darkness."** Do your words bring life or death? Do they increase the darkness or the light? By His Word, God spoke all life into being. He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." You and I are made in His image. Our words have creative power. Your words have healing power. Your words can increase the light in this dark world, they can point someone to the hope we have in Jesus, they can build someone up. But it doesn't start by changing our words. It starts by changing our heart. Remember, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. James writes,

"⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison," (James 3:7-8).

If you've ever been to Sea World or the circus, it's pretty mind-blowing how trainers can get these massive creatures like elephants or whales to perform complicated choreography on cue. The Bible says we can tame all kinds of animals yet none of us can tame our tongue. Church, when it comes to transforming our words and transforming our heart, that is something only Jesus can do. I pray God has been speaking to you today about the power of your words. I pray that you desire this kind of heart-change that only Jesus can give. If so, would you let us know by raising your hand on the screen and I'd like to pray for you as we close.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for speaking to us today through Your Word about the power of our words. Our words hold the power of life and of death. If we're honest, I'm sure many of us would say our words haven't always been the most life-giving. Especially in these times where it seems like everyone is so quick to react and to lash out. Lord we need this truth now more than ever before. In the midst of all the angst and turmoil would the Church shine brighter than ever by our loving response. Would we be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Would we always respond in Your timing and in Your love. We want to release anything in our hearts that are not of You. We lay down unforgiveness, bitterness, rejection, fear, in Jesus' Name. We pray that you would fill us to overflowing so that when the bumps of life come, it would be You that pours out! We thank you and we pray all these things in Jesus' Name. Amen!

Love you guys, and until next time, Aloha!