



What is in Your Mouth?

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Introduction:

In order to uncover the processes that destroy unions, marital researchers study couples over the course of years, and even decades, and retrace the star-crossed steps of those who have split up back to their wedding day. What they are discovering is unsettling. None of the factors one would guess might predict a couple's durability actually does: not how in love a newlywed couple say they are; how much affection they exchange; how much they fight or what they fight about. In fact, couples who will endure and those who won't look remarkably similar in the early days.

Yet when psychologists Cliff Notarius of Catholic University and Howard Markman of the University of Denver studied newlyweds over the first decade of marriage, they found a very subtle but telling difference at the beginning of the relationships. Among couples who would ultimately stay together, 5 out of every 100 comments made about each other were putdowns. Among couples who would later split, 10 of every 100 comments were insults. That gap magnified over the following decade, until couples heading downhill were flinging five times as many cruel and invalidating comments at each other as happy couples. "Hostile putdowns act as cancerous cells that, if unchecked, erode the relationship over time," says Notarius, who with Markman co-authored the new book [We Can Work It Out](#). "In the end, relentless unremitting negativity takes control and the couple can't get through a week without major blowups."

U.S. News & World Report, February 21, 1994, Page 67

The last two weeks we looked at the question that God asked Moses. What is in your hand? This morning I would like us to ponder this question what is in your mouth?

There are some powerful things that happen with our speech. When we speak, we hear what we are saying. The words that are spoken reinforce what we think or believe. Not only do we hear what is said, but other people hear what we say. Our speech does not simply affect us, but it impacts others as well. Finally there is an unseen realm that also witnesses what we say and that is the unseen spiritual realm.

Our text this morning is taken from **James 3:8-12** – **“but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”**

I. No man can tame the tongue

Has anyone here ever been able to completely tame your tongue? People have been able to tame all sorts of wild animals. They have tamed lions, tigers, gorillas, bears, reptiles, dogs, cats, birds, but no one has been able to tame the tongue.

Taming an animal takes someone lots of time and great effort. The trainer has to have the ability to understand the nature of the beast and be able to bring that beast to a place of submission. To tame the wild part of an animal has to do with that animal surrendering the wild part to the control of the trainer.

The only being that I know that has the ability to bring the wild, destructive part of our speech under control and to tame it is the Holy Spirit.

The words that we speak are powerful. Even though the tongue is small and the words we utter may be small still they are a great force in determining direction and destruction and death, or life and construction and peace. In the verses preceding our text, James indicates this about the tongue. We put bits in the mouths of horses and can turn that whole animal around by something that is very small. James also uses the illustration of a ship. The ship is large and driven by strong winds, yet the captain of that ship can steer it by a very small rudder and the ship will go wherever the captain directs it.

The tongue even though it is a small part of the body still makes great boasts. Consider what a big fire is started by one small spark. It doesn't take much at all to get something going that is too large to contain, and does significant damage.

We have seen some wildfires that got started this summer out west. With one small spark and without warning, thousands of acres of land are burned and everything that is on that land. Once it starts, it is extremely difficult to contain and stop. Verse 5 of James 3 says – consider what a big fire is started by one small spark.

II. The tongue is like a fire

What happens with fire? It is instant. It consumes whatever it touches. Whatever gets in its way will be affected. Fire can be good or bad. It can comfort, it can bring light, it can cook food, it can melt hardness.

It can also devastate, destroy, and bring death to a relationship, a dream, or someone's esteem.

Our tongue is like a force that is cannot be restrained and is full of evil. James says it is full of venom or deadly rust and poison.

When I think of poison, I think of something that is toxic. You can die from poison. We see the symbol of poison on bottles and know that if you ingest what is in that bottle, it could cost you your health and possibly your life. Venom has the ability to cause death. We know that one drop of venom from certain snakes and spiders will bring certain death quite quickly. For many spiders and snakes there is no anti-venom.

The original word for venom also conveys the idea of rust. Rust will eat away metal. If not inhibited in some way, it will cause the metal to deteriorate. It is any of various powdery or scaly reddish-brown or reddish-yellow hydrated ferric oxides formed on iron and iron-containing materials by low-temperature oxidation in the presence of water.

There is no way to escape it. The tongue is a world of evil among the parts of the body. It can set the whole body on fire. What that means is that the tongue can spot or defile the entire body.

III. The expression of fruit indicates the kind of vine

The fruit of peppers does not grow on tomato vines. Neither do grapes grow on thistles. The fruit that grows on a plant is reproduced after the characteristics of the plant.

So it is with our words. The type of words we speak should not be mixed. James talks about having words that bless God and curse men who are made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing. This should not happen.

You can not have fresh and salt water flow from the same spring. It would be most unusual for that to happen. The same should be true with our words. We should not be blessing God with our tongue and turning around to curse someone that God made in His image. Yet that does happen.

Have any of you ever taken a drink from some place and the water was bitter? There is no way you could

go back there for another drink and find that water sweet, unless some changes had taken place.

You and I have met people in life whose words are caustic. They are like acid and they sting and burn. Sometimes people say, that is just my personality. You have to live with it. Hear me beloved. Don't ever use personality as an excuse to hurt or say things that damage relationships. Some people use that as an excuse to justify their bitter words that burn like fire and destroy everything that is within hearing range of them.

IV. What is in your mouth? Blessing or cursing?

Blessing will affirm. It lifts up. It attempts to comfort, to encourage, bringing grace to the hearer. When I look at Jesus and His ministry, it is apparent that He blessed many people with the words that He uttered. He blessed God through what He said. He blessed His followers by His teaching. He affirmed people not by condemning them, but by speaking words of healing, blessing and comfort into their lives. He did rebuke his disciples for their lack of faith. He also rebuked the religious leaders of His day for their laws and rules and regulations that bound people and caused them to try to live their lives by a formula instead of a relationship.

There was only one time that Jesus cursed anything and that was the fig tree. It was not the time for figs and so he cursed that tree and it dried up from the roots and died.

Conclusion:

What is in your mouth? I trust it is a tongue that is under the taming power of the Holy Spirit. I trust it is a tongue that blesses God and uplifts other people. I trust it is a tongue that expresses the kind of vine you are connected to. I trust that you are overcoming the enemy of your soul by speaking out loud the written word of God.

There is great power in our words. The people who see you and know you at home, on your job, in your school, hear you talk. Use the words you utter to bring blessing, and comfort and healing, and lift them up.

Often prayer is spoken and it as well can be a very powerful tool when combined with faith to be a means of blessing for God and His kingdom.

V. Overcoming by our words

In Jesus' temptation with Satan in the wilderness after His baptism, He used the power and authority of written words to back up His spoken words. It was in this way Jesus was successful in overcoming the tempter and his tactics. The enemy did not want to give up and came at Jesus at His most vulnerable points, but Jesus resisted Him and after a time, Satan left Him alone.

We also need to be aware that we can resist the enemy of our soul with our words. We have been given the power of the written word of God and we need to stand with that weapon of the Spirit's sword coming from our mouth.

We read in **Rev. 12:11**

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

We have the same ability to overcome today.