

Where are you going?

There is an old saying that goes, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” The one who came up with that was never hit with a dictionary.

In his Letter, James reminds us of one small organ of our bodies that we don’t think about too much, but it does have a great influence; not just in our lives, but in others’ lives as well: the tongue. James likens our tongue to the rudder of a ship. Just as a massive ship is steered through the water by a seemingly small and insignificant piece of the ship, so we are steered and defined by our tongues. How’s that for an image?

How much time and effort do we put into being defined by our jobs, our brains, our bodies, our images? We diet, we exercise, we lift weights, we study, we pour over our income vs. expense ratios, we clean and up-date our homes, our cars, our wardrobe, get make-overs, and hair-cuts, and spend money on make-up and farm equipment, and campers, and four-wheelers, and motorcycles, and on and on and on; how much time do you spend on your tongue? James reminds us that our tongues direct and lead us, so it begs the question: Where are you going?

Words can hurt. Words contain much power, and we often don’t think of the power that they truly do carry. Words have the power to tear down, and sometimes it doesn’t take much. Think of politics, something that everyone has an opinion about. Look at politicians. Words are thrown back and forth like arrows and bombs, trying to cut the other own down so far that one can win just a few more votes. It is there that we see what James is talking about when he says, “*No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison,*” (James 3:8).

But if no human being can tame the tongue, we cannot just stop at analysing our politicians. We too have troubles with this piece of our human anatomy. Our tongues are full of poison that spews out towards our enemies; those who would do use harm, but what about our family? Do we use this poison against our families? We are not supposed to even use it against our enemies, that is sinful in and of itself. But our restless poison cannot be contained; we turn the venom of hurtful words against those we love the most.

We call curses upon them, we call upon God to damn them to hell, and we cut down and hurt them until what? Until we somehow have won a particular argument? At what cost? Is winning an argument over the dishes or garbage or some bill or anything in our day-to-day lives worth tearing down another person, another person who was made in the image and likeness of God? When you talk with others, it is not like the conversations in my house, where I am a saint and my wife is the sinner. It’s ok. She knows that. Right? No, we are both sinners, and we are both forgiven children of God.

Words have power. Through the power of the Word all of creation was called into existence. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made,*” (John 1:1-3). This Word you know “*became flesh and dwelt among us,*” (John 1:14). This Word in the flesh was God and Man, Jesus Christ. In our inability to control our tongues, He came and did it for us. As our poison leaves us deserving of going to one place, hell itself, Jesus became flesh, and died. This most powerful Word spoke from the cross, “*It is finished.*” One Word in Greek. Why should you care? Because this one word shows up again in James! James writes, “*If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man,*” (James 3:2). The word for perfect is the same as finished, or completed, or whole.

Through Jesus' death on the cross, the antidote for your poisonous thoughts, words, and deeds, the tonic for your venomous tongue was completed, finished, perfected, made whole. Because of the Word made flesh, that suffered and died for you, your sins are forgiven. You are made whole. You are washed in His powerful Word joined with water. His Words fill your ears and your mouths. His Words are yours!

For your tongue of fire, here it is quenched. As you drink the blood of your Lord Jesus Christ, that fire is put out. The spring flowing forth from the Mount of Calvary flows into your mouth, your body. His blood here cleanses you, perfects you, and makes you whole. Where is your tongue leading you? Here! To His altar. It is His Word, His blood that will steer you right through this life. With Him at the helm, you have nowhere to go but to eternal life with Him.

As He has made you whole and complete, you drink the very blood of life. The Word joined with these earthly elements of bread and wine. Here feeding you the very life of Jesus. Where are you going? Our tongues are led to the great altar of God where we proclaim together, Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!