

## Prayer

Bless those we love this day, Lord Jesus. Keep them in Your care and protect them from all evil. If there are problems between us, may we be humble enough to let you heal us; and when we are at peace together, may we give You the glory, for You have given us each other. Praise be to You, Lord Jesus, AMEN

## Prayer Suggestions

### Prayer ideas

*Seek the Lord's perspective on whether your life reflects the priorities of His Kingdom.*

### On-going prayers

- **Pray this week** about witness. Pray for all those who witness to the faith despite difficulty or persecution in the home, the locality or country
- Pray against the evils of pornography and its affect on the young
- Praise God for beauty; for art and music and all that thrills the soul

## Meditation

Lord Jesus, lead me on the path I have not known:  
Take away from me those treasured habits of life  
I once used to feed my self-centred style of life,  
Attempting to excuse my denial of Your call.

Take away from me the 'time' I think I have;  
Time I spend on pandering to this ego,  
Thinking I know better, even, I know best!  
Eliminate my selfish heart and slay my will!

Lord Jesus, fill me with a spiritual joy reborn;  
Open up my squandered life to live again,  
To chase love's dreams in bold resolve,  
And be at peace with self, and unashamed of You.

Occupy me now, however, fill me anew, forever;  
Place in me a need to grasp salvation's truths;  
So, when that pearl of precious price is touched,  
In truth, the Word holds me and will not let me go!

---

## Bible Study - James 3:6-12

<sup>6</sup>The tongue is a fire, a world of evil amongst all our bodily parts. It pollutes the whole body and ignites its natural workings, and is itself set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>Every manner of beast, bird, reptile and sea creature, have been or are being tamed by people, <sup>8</sup>but no one can tame the tongue; a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. <sup>10</sup>Blessing and cursing comes from the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, this should not be so. <sup>11</sup>Does a spring pour out both fresh and foul water from the same opening? <sup>12</sup>Can a fig tree yield olives, my brothers and sisters, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water be fresh.

## Review

These words from scripture are extraordinary, and seem almost 'over the top', because James has written several times in the previous chapters about speech. In the first chapter, he challenged God's people to be 'quick to listen and slow to speak' (1:19), in the second chapter he chastised the words of those who showed favouritism (2:1-7), and then in the previous reading he described the tongue as 'a small part of the body ... which makes great boasts' (3:5). Here, James unleashes an amazing attack upon 'the tongue', using an array of words that are stunningly blunt, even in the original Greek. For the second time in the letter, he calls the tongue 'a fire' (see 3:5), but now rails against its devastating power to 'pollute the whole body' and is

consequently ignited 'by hell' (3:6). James castigates people in general for their apparent inability to 'control the tongue', despite its many other impressive achievements (such as taming animals! – 3:8).

Before we become too carried away with what James says, we should remember that for those who are aware that their language is bad, this passage can sound utterly condemning. So it is important to qualify what is said here by the same observation made at the end of yesterday's study, which is that at the end of his letter James offers a means of dealing with personal sin through the healing of the soul and spirit (5:13f.). James' target is the untamed tongue that is not under the control of God and has not been surrendered to God. It would be wrong to suggest that this scripture supports the notion that if you have trouble with gossip or swearing, for example, then there is no way of dealing with it at all and you are condemned for life. That would be to misinterpret James and to fly in the face of the rest of scripture and even the message of God's salvation. Neither should preachers use this passage to condemn those who have persistent difficulty with their use of words and already feel under condemnation because of it.

Then what purpose does this passage have in scripture? James speaks in this way to expose hypocrisy in the church, and we are led to this conclusion because of the general themes of his letter. He has just said that those who claim they have faith but do not show this by their actions have questionable faith (2:14-26). He now goes further and identifies the source of hypocrisy in the church as amongst those who say they have faith and yet 'curse' others; 'blessing and cursing comes from the same mouth ... this should not be so' (3:10). The message is clear; those in the church who speak against it and yet appear to all 'sweetness and light', as we might say, demonstrate an appalling hypocrisy that damages both themselves and God's people. It is not hard to apply this passage properly! In his letter, James was concerned about those who spoke politely to the rich and yet were derogatory to the poor (2:1-7), but his message is that those who are unwilling or unable to discern their own hypocrisy and double standards are not living a life true to the Faith of Jesus Christ.

This message is still important for us, and the fact that James said this so strongly should remind us to deal with evil speech, double standards and hypocrisy wherever they occur. However, this should not make us condemn people unnecessarily. Most will confess that from time to time they have had trouble 'taming their tongues', yet this discernment is a sign of their desire to change, and if this is submitted to the Father, then He will help. This passage can and should challenge God's people about the seriousness of the problem of 'the tongue', and how words can affect people and relationships; but we should also let this passage guide us to the source of all healing, which is Jesus Christ. If we confess regularly (as often as necessary) and also ask others to pray for us and support us (see James 5:13ff), then the cycle of despair about this problem can be broken, and the enemy defeated.

---

## Questions (for use in groups)

1. Which parts of this text do you find most difficult to read or understand? Discuss this within your group and try to help each other.
2. In what ways do people bless God yet curse others (see 3:9,10)? Try to give examples from real life.
3. Is there a Gospel answer to the problem raised in verse 8, and what is it?

## Discipleship

### Discipleship issue in this text

- *Discernment and the use of the tongue*
- *Blessing and cursing*

### Personal comment:

*I have come across many people who have sought counsel about their use of language. Within the life of the church, I would suggest that such people have rarely been the source of real problems within the church. Those who do most damage are those who persist in saying different things to different people, so dividing God's people and creating great problems.*

### Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *If you genuinely feel that you have been somewhat hypocritical in the things you have said; confess this to the Lord and ask Him to cleanse you by His Spirit.*

- *Reflect on how you can be more judicious in your use of words in the future, and if necessary talk to a friend about this.*

## **Final Prayer**

Praise You, Lord God, for the wisdom of Your Word. May it lead our steps, govern our behaviour, enlighten our lives and teach us the truth. Then, enriched by Your engaging Word, may we demonstrably show evidence of the truth of our salvation, found through Jesus Christ our Lord: AMEN

---