

Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde

Speech Therapy for Saints-Part Three

James 3:9-12

Last Sunday, I played a video clip of a cat trying to escape from its leash, and I played it because it perfectly illustrated the word James used in chapter three to speak of the tongue being a restless animal, looking for ways to escape its leash.

I got a number of emails and comments mostly from people who don't think I've been fair. One comment implied that I haven't been upfront with the fact that cats are actually very smart and dogs are—or can be—rather dumb animals.

One of my staff members even put this on my desk, so that I saw it on Monday. It's called "Excerpts from a Dogs Diary and Excerpts from a Cat's Diary" that really says it all:

Excerpts from a dog's diary:

8:00 am—dog food- my favorite thing!

9:30 am—a car ride with the window down- my favorite thing!

1:00pm—played in the yard- my favorite thing!

3:00pm —milk bones- my favorite thing!

8:00pm—watched TV with people- my favorite thing!

Excerpts from a cat's diary:

It begins, Day 983 of my captivity. My captors continue to taunt me with little dangling objects. The only thing that keeps me going is my dream of escape.

Speaking of dreams, someone sent me a video clip that cat owners are happy to know was caught on tape, because it shows dogs in a less sophisticated state of mind.

It's a dog who's obviously dreaming of being chased; he's sleeping on his side, literally running in his sleep. Just about the time that whatever it is that is chasing the dog catches up to

it, the dog wakes up, still running, and runs into a wall.

Would you like to see it? How many cat owners would like to see it? In the spirit of fairness . . . here it is— <http://goo.gl/pRHaz>

Some of you are saying, "That's why I have a cat."

Have you ever had one of those dreams where you're being chased, and you can only run in slow motion? We're evidently different from Mighty Dog there . . . which is good news! You'd wake up still and run into a wall. How can I make this fit into my sermon...?

I found it interesting that the Scottish author, Robert Louis Stevenson, literally dreamed the plot of one of his novels.

In fact, in his dream, he ended up crying out so loudly that his wife woke him up. He got onto her for doing so because as he explained, he had been dreaming that he was actually transforming into an evil man.

I'm sure Mrs. Stevenson didn't sleep too well after that.

Within six days of writing, Robert Louis Stevenson's unconscious thoughts between good and evil took the form of a short novel he entitled, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

The story is told through the eyes of an attorney and friend of Dr. Jekyll; a friend who becomes increasingly worried about the strange behavior and long periods of isolation of his friend.

Unknown to him and the rest of society, Dr. Jekyll had created a potion that allowed him to transform into Mr. Hyde. He was able to prowl

around town pursuing any kind of evil he desires—even murder.

He's referred to as a man without a conscience; He's able to live a life of sin without ruining the reputation and character of Dr. Jekyll.

Trouble is the character of this evil man grows stronger and stronger until Dr. Jekyll transforms into Mr. Hyde without even drinking the potion. Jekyll becomes terrified and unable to control Mr. Hyde from taking over at will. The evil side of Dr. Jekyll is gaining more and more power over the moral side of the good doctor.

Dr. Jekyll writes a letter explaining the battle, and then takes his own life in order to end the life of Mr. Hyde.

In his dying moments, he transforms into Mr. Hyde, who can do nothing to save himself. When the authorities arrived they found Mr. Hyde dead—wearing the clothing of Dr. Jekyll.

The mystery is solved by the letter which explains that Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are one and the same man.ⁱⁱ

The book became a best seller, because it played out in flesh and blood the battle within.

One man is upright and responsible; the other is wicked, evil, and murderous.

To this day, more than 125 years later Jekyll and Hyde has become a term many will use for someone who is completely different in one situation than he is in another.

The Apostle James is about to effectively describe us in the same way; only he isn't writing fiction.

In this letter from James, the Spirit of God—from whom no secrets can be kept—reveals the danger of our tongue and the power of our speech.

By the Spirit's guiding, James, the half-brother of our Lord, describes the tongue as a bit in a horse's mouth and a ship's rudder—something small yet powerfully directive.

James goes on to write that our tongues are like forest fires, like a creature that can't be tamed—always looking to escape—which carries around with it a venom that can destroy so much of life.

Now in the next few verses in chapter 3, James will tell us that we have living in our mouths, our very beings—in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson—a Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde.

In our last session, we covered eight different descriptions given to us by James. I gave

them to you in words all beginning with the letter “d”. The tongue is destructive, depraved, defiling, determinative, diabolical, disobedient, dangerous and deadly.

We could keep that going with a 9th point—the tongue is duplicitous. Although I'm not sure it's a good idea to give points with words nobody knows how to spell. You could say the tongue is dichotomous, although that's not much better, but that is the point here.

The Indian chief got the point across simply enough in that told western movie when he said, “White man speak with forked tongue”.

Doesn't start with “d”, but it works. It's the truth, no matter who you are. The tongue is not a problem of nationality—it's a problem of human nature.

We have living within us as fallen, though redeemed individuals, a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. It is a struggle for life, because Mr. Hyde always wants to take over.

That battle that goes back-and-forth is exactly what James confesses to in *verse 9* where we left off last time. Now James begins with an...

1. Honest Confession

James writes, *With it*—that is our tongue—*we bless our Lord and Father and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing.*

Again, James shifts to the first person plural pronoun—we.

He doesn't write, “All of *you* bless the Lord and curse each other.” No, he says, “We all do this!”

Whether you are a mature disciple of Christ or a new born believer, we are fighting this battle within.

One Greek scholar illustrated this verse in very practical terms when he wrote, “We all have two dogs inside us—a good dog and a bad dog—and they both want to bark through the same mouth.”ⁱⁱⁱ

They both want to bark through the same mouth! Which one are you letting loose? Neither one of these dogs by the way are sleeping! This is not a dream.

Let's take a closer look at this battle. James writes in *verse 9*, “*with the same tongue we can*

bless our Lord and Father”—which happens to be the highest and most noble employment of the human tongue.^{iv}

- When we sang together To God be the glory, great things He hath done;
- When we sang, I Stand In Awe of You—Holy God to whom all praise is due;
- Then, Jesus Paid it all—all to Him I owe;
- And when we sang, In Christ alone my hope is found, he is my light, my strength my song.

We could not have directed our speech, our mouths, and our tongues into anything more holy and honorable and glorious than that.

In fact, that’s one of the blessings of the assembly, where we, together as a church family, raise our collective voices. We forget about ourselves; we focus on the glory and the sufficiency and the honor of our Lord and Father whom we bless.

James says, “Yes, we use our tongues to bless the Lord.”

The word “bless” is the word *eulogoumen* (εὐλογούμεν). It’s a compound word—*eu* (eu) meaning good or well and *logos* meaning “word”—*eulogoumen*, which means good words or to speak well of someone.^v

Eulogoumen gives us our transliterated English word, eulogy.

We’ve contained the context of that word to a funeral where the deceased is eulogized. He is spoken well of—good things are said about him.

In fact, no matter how badly the person lived somebody will find something good to say about him, right?

According to James, a eulogy isn’t reserved for funerals.

The dispersed Jewish believers to whom James was writing would have immediately understood the concept of eulogizing God—blessing God.

Whenever the name of God was mentioned, a Jew would have responded, “Blessed be He . . . blessed is He.”

Three times a day the devout Jews repeated prayers called “Eulogies”, and every one of them began with the words, “Blessed be thou, O God.”^{vi}

James is saying to them and us—here in **verse 9**—how easy it is to bless God and praise God three times a day or in church on Sunday and then with that same tongue begin to curse one another.

The word translated “**curse**” isn’t a reference to profanity or vulgarity, by the way.

It’s a word that carries the idea of demeaning, cutting, unkind words.

To call down curses, which is a literal translation of the verb, is a reference to slander, gossip, and accusation, which in this context would actually refer to those within the faith doing this—those inside the church.

There’s another nuance to this verb as well. The Christian does this kind of cursing only when they consider themselves above another.

In other words, the one calling down curses or unkind words is actually viewing himself higher than the one he is demeaning.

“Calling down” means you are higher up. You are, in your own mind, placing yourself on a pedestal above your fellow man.^{vii} You are speaking down to them.

When the believer has that attitude, everyone below him is open season.

People might say, “That’s not so bad, at least we’re not saying bad things about God. Okay, so we’re saying bad things about people, but at least we’re singing hymns in church. We’re saying good things about God.”

And James says, “I thought you’d say that!” He ties off that loophole by adding the phrase—***and with our tongue we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing.***

We are blessing God and at the same time cursing others with the same mouth.

James writes, “Might I remind you that these others you are cursing have been made in the likeness of their Creator.”

Even though mankind has fallen, sin has defiled but not destroyed the image of God in mankind.^{viii}

The perfect tense of the verb in **verse 9** “***who have been made***” means that the image of God—seen in mankind’s unique qualities of conscience and moral reasoning and objective will—these qualities were not totally obliterated from human nature by the fall of Adam.^{ix}

Conscience uniquely binds man to the right and condemns the wrong.^x

Mankind is not just some slightly more evolved animal, free to act like an animal. No, we are the crowning act of God’s creation, uniquely crafted after His image with morality and

spirituality, among many other attributes—like a conscience.

An animal doesn't struggle with a guilty conscience; my dog Pixie is proof of that.

Pixie is a mutt. She is the last offspring of our dog, Patches. Patches was a beagle mixed with a Bassett Hound, and she got mixed up with our neighbor's dog which is a mixture of Schnauzer and Grey Terrier. What that means is Pixie is one ugly dog. Her fur sticks out everywhere. Pixie looks like her paw got stuck in an outlet.

She will bark and bark through the backyard fence at every kid who runs through our cul-de-sac and every adult who thought they were going to have a nice peaceful walk through our neighborhood. She'll howl loud and long to let them know they are actually in her neighborhood. Pixie gives absolutely no evidence of genuine conversion.

Listen, after barking up one side and down the other at the little boy who lives two houses down, she *will* not go back and lie down and say to herself, "You know, I probably shouldn't have done that . . . I think I might have hurt that boy's feelings."

No, we don't expect Pixie to think that way. We should think that way.

James is saying that we, of all creatures, should think not only of what we are saying, but to whom we are saying it.

What does that have to do with offending God? Is James exaggerating the connection between insulting mankind and insulting God?

Think of it this way . . . imagine being a dinner guest in a home, and you walk past a painting hanging on a wall. You whisper to your wife, "I hope he didn't pay a lot for that painting; it's horrible!" Then you discover the artist is your host, and he overheard you. Would you say to him, "Look, don't take it so hard . . . I wasn't criticizing you; I was only criticizing your work."

You can't separate the two, can you?

James is effectively saying, "Anyone who insults another human being with unfair, unkind, demeaning, condescending, gossiping, criticizing speech has just insulted the Artist who created that human being."

Here's the point James is making, **God is as interested in what we say to each other out there as He is in what we say to Him in here.**

You can't bless God in here and belittle someone out there without God taking it personally.

James says, this is exactly what we're doing with our speech. This is our battle!

Now, after this honest confession James delivers an . . .

2. Earnest Confrontation

Notice *verse 10*, where he says, point blank, ***My brethren***—he's talking to believers—***my brethren, these things ought not to be this way.***

"This ought not to be." This is a strong negative, used only here in the entire New Testament.^{xi}

Earlier in the letter James has effectively said, "This is how it ***will*** be if you are a believer." Here he says, "This is how it ***shouldn't*** be if you are a believer."^{xii}

James is not saying a believer will never speak out of both sides of his mouth. He's saying a believer should not, and there's no excuse if he does.

These things ought not to be this way.

There's no loophole in that . . . that's it . . . there it is! You battle it, and you can't excuse it.

Is this convicting or what? I can't wait to finish the Book of James. Can we take a break; you know, deal with something easier to handle like election and free will.

Those are easier doctrines to study than this text is to apply.

According to James' imperatives, when God redeemed our spirit He gave us the capacity for renovating our speech as we surrender to His Spirit.

Just be aware that the renovation project is going to last longer than it took for you to renovate your kitchen or that walk in attic.

It'll last your lifetime . . . and it will be worth every step of the way.

Now, if you're like most people involved in a renovation project then pictures help out a lot as you get a chance to see what you're pursuing.

James does just that: he gives us three outdoor pictures to describe the product of sanctified speech.

He shows us pictures of a fountain, a fig tree, and fresh water—all three are self-explanatory.

Verse 11. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?

James is referring to a gushing fountain from a mountain crevice. The strata of earth under the mountain may hold both sweet and bitter water,

but out of that same opening there will come water of one kind or another not both.^{xiii}

So what kind of fountain are we? What's gushing out of the opening?

One author said, "Within the mountain of self there is a great struggle for there are two streams within, but only one opening. If God had meant it otherwise He would have created us with two mouths—one for blessing God and another for cursing our fellow man."^{xiv}

So the more practical question is what kind of fountain will we be *today*—one that delivers bitter water or sweet water?

Verse 12. Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a grape vine produce figs?

In other words, here's how to check the spiritual temperature of your heart—check out the fruit of your lips.

You've found it to be true, haven't you . . .

- when your heart is right, your words are right;
- when your heart is pure, your words are pure;
- when your heart is surrendered, your words are sweet.

Again in **verse 12, the last phrase, Nor can salt water produce fresh water.**

Literally, a salt spring will not produce sweet or fresh water.

James' point is that one kind of water can't transform itself into another kind of water by itself. In the same way, our tongues, which have been natural conduits of evil ever since the fall, cannot produce good things on their own.^{xv}

Only the believer who is controlled by the Spirit of God can bear the **fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control (Galatians 5:22-23)**

How does that fruit appear? Most of it makes an appearance in our speech. James has shown us that our speech has the power to direct, to destroy, and to delight.^{xvi}

There's nothing like cold, clear water when you're thirsty, or fruit when you're hungry.

Solomon wrote that **the tongue of the wise person brings health (Proverbs 12:18)**

Paul wrote to the church in Rome that when he came, he was praying that his words might **refresh the believers there (Romans 15:32).**

Paul wrote to the Colossians and said, **"Let your speech always be accompanied by grace (Colossians 4:6)**

The home, marriage, church, and relationships of the believer should be marked by these qualities.

If they are not, then we need to hear James saying, "This ought not to be!"

Danny Akin, a friend of our church and president of Southeastern seminary had in his commentary on this passage a list of things we shouldn't say in marriage.

Dr. Akin preached on this text and before doing so, asked some friends to give him "what not to say to your spouse"; he also listed things we say to others: to children, to parents . . . some of them are especially for spouses . . . here they are. I'll say them quickly to help us get past them:

- You're just like your mother.
- You're just like your father.
- I told you so.
- I can talk to you until I'm blue in the face and it doesn't do any good.
- I can do whatever I want.
- You're always in a bad mood.
- I can't do anything to please you.
- You're such a baby.
- You deserve a taste of your own medicine.
- What were you thinking?
- What's your problem?
- You're impossible.
- You will never amount to anything.
- I don't know why I put up with you.
- Do you always have to be right?
- All you ever do is think about yourself.
- That was really stupid.
- Can't you see I'm busy?
- Can't you do anything right?
- You'd lose your head if it wasn't screwed on.
- Don't you ever listen?
- It's all your fault.
- Go away.
- You'll never change.

These are nothing less than calling down curses on others, and what does refreshing, healing, gracious speech sound like?

It would include words like:

- I love you
- Thank you

- I appreciate you
- I'm sorry, will you forgive me?
- I forgive you
- I'm glad God gave you to me.
- I really appreciate your help.
- Let me do that for you.
- I can't wait to see what God's going to do with you.
- I'm here for you.
- I'm praying for you.
- I'm proud of you.

What sweet, refreshing, cool water. Like apples of gold in pitchers of silver.

Danny Akin told the story of a father who took his little girl out for a "daddy date." She was around five years old, and they had chosen a restaurant where they could get pancakes. After getting their food and praying, this dad decided it would be a good time to give her the speech that he had worked on. He began, "Jenny, I want you to know how much I love you, and how special you are to Mom and me. We prayed for you for years, and now that you're here and growing up to be such a wonderful little girl, well, we couldn't be prouder of you." Once he had said all this, he stopped talking and reached over for his fork to begin eating. But he never got the fork to his mouth. His daughter reached out her little hand and laid it on her father's. Their eyes met, and in a soft voice she simply said, "Longer, Daddy, longer." He put down his fork and gave her words seasoned with grace.

Every one of us can easily take this and say "I'm that little girl". It's true! We all are in a way. None of us dislike encouraging words.

We would like to hear more, right? Well, that isn't the challenge of this text.

James is saying that **we must choose to be the fountain from which sweet water comes; we must choose to be the tree from which ripe fruit grows; we are the ones who must speak.**

It is our speech that matters. James is not telling us in this paragraph how to listen; he's telling us how to speak.

This is speech therapy for the saints. Don't ever forget, he writes, to whom you are speaking, especially in the context of the faith. **You are speaking to the sons and daughters of Creator God.**

C.S. Lewis wrote these powerful words along this line, "*Remember that the dullest and most uninteresting [believer] you talk to [will] one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship (speaking of the glorified body in heaven). It is in light of [this] that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.*"^{xvii}

The best place to start is to join in with James in his honest confession. If this is James' battle, can we not confess it is ours as well?

Confess that we have within us a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. This is an **honest confession**.

Accept his **earnest confrontation**—these things ought not to be. There are no loopholes in that . . . there are no escape clauses there either.

Then pursue with all surrender to Christ this **daily renovation**.

We are in need of it, and God is worthy of it. Amen?

We are in need of it and God is more than worthy of our every surrender for His glory and for His honor.

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- i John Ortberg, The Me I Want to Be (Zondervan, 2010), p.95
- ii Adapted from www.wikipedia.com The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
- iii Adapted from, Spiros Zodhiates, The Labor of Love: An Exposition of James 2:14-4:12 (AMG Publishers, 1981), p. 129
- iv D. Edmond Hiebert, James (BMH Books, 1992), p. 200
- v Zodhiates, p. 119
- vi William Barclay, The Letters of James and Peter (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 90
- vii Zodhiates, p. 120
- viii Phil Newton, Expository Sermons in James (South Woods Baptist Church, 2005), p. 71
- ix Hiebert, p. 201
- x R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James (Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), p. 611
- xi John MacArthur, James (Moody Press, 1998), p. 161
- xii MacArthur, p. 161
- xiii Zodhiates, p. 129
- xiv Ibid
- xv Craig L. Blomberg & Mariam J. Kamell, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: James (Zondervan, 2008), p. 162
- xvi Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Mature: James (Victor Books, 1979), p. 97
- xvii Adapted from C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses (Harper Collins, 2001), p. 45