"WATCH YOUR MOUTH"
JAMES 3:1-12

INTRO: Solomon said: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" Prov. 18:21

The power of speech is one of the greatest powers God has given us. With the tongue, man can praise God, pray, preach, lead a soul to Christ, comfort, encourage.
But that same tongue can tell lies, ruin a man's reputation, split a church, or break a person's heart.

YOU NEED TO SERIOUSLY GUARD YOUR TONGUE.

I. THE POWER OF THE TONGUE (v. 1-6)

A. IT HAS THE POWER TO DIRECT (v. 1-4)

1. Power to direct others (therefore, its use is serious) (v. 1)
   All men (especially teachers) must recognize the eternal significance of what they say.
2. Power to direct your own life (even though its size is small) (v. 2-4)
   He is saying: We all stumble (into sin) in various manners (ex. thoughts [evil motives, evil intentions, evil desires], and actions . . . But the hardest area to control is your tongue.
   It is amazing that a 1 lb. bridle controls a 500 lb. animal.
   Steering column that went out on my V.W. --small but significant!
   What you say will determine the course of your life!

   Your words are especially important to the lost. Example -
   On April 21, 1855, Edward Kimbell went into a Boston shoe store and led young D. L. Moody to Christ. The result was phenomenal.

B. IT HAS THE POWER TO DESTROY (v. 5-6)
Sins of the tongue:
1) gossip [when you hear gossip, 1) stop the conversation; 2) ask the person to go to the one he/she is talking about to straighten it out]
2) foolish jesting
3) slang ["minced oaths" - ex.
4) cursing [remember when you hear it -- silence is consent.]
   Illus. Chicago's fire (8:30 p.m., Oct. 8, 1871) started from a cow kicking over a lantern, which started a barn on fire. Result = 100,000 people left homeless, 17,500 buildings destroyed, 300 people died, it cost the city $400,000,000.

   A fire defiles
   (The uncontrolled tongue stains the whole person)
   Ex. My home on Arch Street that was burned.

II. THE PROBLEM OF THE TONGUE (v. 7-12)

A. THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN CONTROL (V. 7-8)
"Beasts" - wild animals (ex. dogs, lions, tigers)
"Birds" (ex. parakeets, etc.)
"Serpents" _ex. boa constrictors; snake charmers, etc.)
"Sea creatures" (ex. dolphins, whales)
No man is able to tame the tongue (not you, nor others).
Appli: Give up trying to improve your speech and give in to surrendering to the Holy Spirit.
It is one miracle of grace that a man's vocabulary can be radically changed when he comes under the power of the saving Christ! (Colson, p. 51).
Illus. of E.R. Jordan (don't use his name) who was a cursing sailor until saved. Then became a preacher! Only God could do such a change!

B. THE PROBLEM OF SINFUL INCONSISTENCY (v. 9-12)
The unspiritual tongue is capable of going from one extreme to the other (ex. like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde)
Eph. 4:29-30 - "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

As a dad, if you were to curse my son or daughter you would offend me more than if you were to curse me. It's the same way with God . . . If you knew that God loves others as much as He loves you, you wouldn't curse them.

One fountain either has bitter water or sweet water, not both.
How easy it is to sing hymns at church, smile, greet each other, etc. - then after the service, get into the family car and argue and fight all the way home!

Wisdom from Proverbs 15 on how to use my tongue:
1. Speak soft (gentle) responses (v.1)
2. Speak well thought out answers (v.2)
3. Speak solutions that bring help & healing (v.4)
4. Speak with insight, perception & wisdom (v.7)
5. Speak by offering advice at the right time (v.23)
6. Speak with kindness & pleasantness (v.26)
7. Speak with restraint & self-control (v.28)
8. Speak with encouraging, positive body language & encouraging content (v.30)

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." (Ps. 19:14)