

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **JAMES LESSON 3 (Chapter 3)**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. This is the third lesson in our study of the Book of James. In this lesson we will be learning about something very practical—controlling our tongue, our speech, and the things we say. Self-control is something that a lot of people are unfortunately lacking and have always lacked. People are not willing to control their emotions or to control their tongues and speech. In doing so, the tongue has done a lot of damage. There are a lot of terrible things that have come from the things we have said and the speech that we have used. A lot of harm has resulted, and a lot of people have been hurt because of that. In this lesson, then, we are going to learn how the Bible teaches us to control our tongue, our speech, and our language. At the same time, not only can a lot of bad be done, but a lot of good can be done if we know how to control our tongues.

In James 3:10 James says, “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.” What was James saying? James says that there are some in the world today who are blessing and cursing God with their mouths, and many blessings are coming from their mouths. Yet with the same mouths there also are cursings that are proceeding from their mouths. James says that these things are not right, and ought not to be. I want to emphasize the words that we use. What does the Bible have to say about words that we call “cuss words” or “curse words”? Or what about euphemisms that we substitute for cuss words, yet are still bad words in and of themselves? What is the definition of a cuss word or curse worse? Cursing comes from the exact opposite of when we bless people. If you are not blessing somebody, what are you doing? You are cursing them. We know of curse words or cuss words. These may be different words where we take God’s name in vain or say things that we ought not to. What does the Bible have to say about that? I heard somebody say one time, “I use cuss words because the Bible never says that it’s wrong to cuss.” That person could not be any farther from the truth. The Bible does say that it is wrong to cuss, or to use words that profane God or other people. In Ephesians 4:29 Paul had something to say about the things that come out of our mouths. “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” Paul did not say, “Do not let a corrupt word proceed out of your mouth if you are around someone who might be offended.” I’ve talked to some people who say, “When I’m at church or around my Christian friends, I won’t cuss because some people might be offended. But when I get around people at school or at work, I don’t mind using a curse word here or there when I’m with the guys and joking because it doesn’t offend them.” The Bible does not say that we can cuss at some times but not cuss at other times. The Bible says that we should never allow corrupt language to come from our mouths. It is not a situational type thing. We should never allow something that is considered to be bad to come out of our mouths. Paul went on to say that we should “impart grace to the hearers.” What does that imply? That implies that if we say something that does not impart grace to the hearers, then it is something that is wrong or sinful. Paul is not talking about offending people when you teach them what the

Bible has to say. He's talking about the words we use—like when we cuss or curse people. We should not do things like that. That is wrong. We need to always impart grace to the people who hear us. In 1 Peter 3:10 we are told to refrain from evil and evil speaking. We do not need to be involved in those things. In James 3:9, notice what James has to say about how powerful the tongue is.

“With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?”

James asks if people have ever seen a spring that sends forth both sweet water and bitter water from the same opening. Of course not! That is impossible. James then goes on to say, “Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh” (vs. 12). If we are living a godly life, and if we are faithful in Christ Jesus our Lord, things will not come out of our mouths that are both good and bad. In fact, the Bible highly condemns hypocrisy—where we are trying to live both lives so that we can please all people rather than pleasing God. We cannot have blessings and cursings proceeding out of the same mouth. That should not happen. Why do things proceed out of our mouths? Where do things come from that come out of our mouths? Luke 6:45 tells us that those things originate in our hearts. We are not going to say something out of our mouths unless it is first in our hearts and minds. In Matthew 15:18-19 here is what the Bible has to say about those things that are in our hearts: “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” Jesus says that the things that come out of our mouths come from our hearts. If something is not in our hearts and minds to begin with, it will not come out of our mouths

People sometimes ask, “What if I'm driving down the road, and I get really mad and end up saying a cuss word or taking God's name in vain? Am I in sin?” Of course that person is in sin—because he has done something that is contrary to the Word of God. People say, “Well, I just can't help it.” But if it is not in a person's heart to begin with, Jesus assures us that it will not come out of a person's mouth. In Matthew 7:16-18,20 we see that we can know false teachers by the things they say. We can know them by their fruits. Paul also wrote in Colossians 4:6 that our speech must be “seasoned with salt.” As Christians, we do not need to be saying things that are sinful or wrong. Sometimes people talk about sexual things or make sexual jokes, which they should not be doing. In Ephesians 5:3-4 Paul said, “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.” Paul said that such things should not even be discussed among us in any type of forum or situation. We must not do those things or talk about them. People often listen to songs or watch movies, and then say, “Such things do not affect me. There's no big deal about that.” Paul said that we should not be a part of such things. We should not even allow such things to be named among us. Any sins that are associated with cussing or such euphemisms are contrary to the Word of God. Such words are sinful. When we cuss, use God's name in vain, or use euphemisms, that is contrary to the Word of God.

What are some other sins that might arise from using bad language? Sometimes certain sins are associated with other sins. Sins connect. Rarely is just one sin committed. That is not to say that if a person is involved in “only one sin,” then he is OK. But many times if a person sins, it leads to another sin. So what are some sins that are associated with cursing or using similar euphemisms? One of them is anger. Sometimes people get angry

and start cussing. There is nothing wrong, in and of itself, with being angry—as long as it is a righteous anger. In Ephesians 4:26 we are told that there is nothing wrong with being angry so long as we are angry at the right things. We need to be angry at sin. When we see people murdering, when we see abortions being committed, or when we see terrible moral sins occurring, that needs to anger us. When we see people teaching things contrary to the Bible, that should anger us. But we should not be angry just because a car pulls out in front of us or when the waiter or waitress at the restaurant doesn't bring us our food on time. Perhaps if we were to get angry, we would begin to cuss. That is condemned in the Bible. We cannot do that. There are a lot of things that we say out of anger, and when we do we end up saying a cuss word. Maybe we hit our thumb with a hammer and we end up taking God's name in vain. If such things are not in our hearts to begin with, they will not happen. People sometimes think that if they say a cuss word, it makes them strong or tough, and that it will really get to somebody. But cussing makes a person weak—a lesser person. A lot times the sin of anger is associated with cussing or taking God's name in vain.

Another sin associated with the tongue is lying. In 1 Timothy 1:10 we see lying condemned. Revelation 21:8 says that liar will be lost in Hell for eternity if he does not repent. Lying is a very serious sin in which we must not be involved. Sometimes we sin with our tongues by lying or by saying things that are contrary to the Bible. We live in a community today where we often try to “brush things off.” When we lie, cuss, or say something that we regret because it is wrong, instead of owning up to our sin, admitting the sin, and repenting of it (which Luke 17:3-4 teaches us to do), what do we end up doing? Let's read Proverbs 26:18-19 and see a path that we sometimes take as we try to justify what we've said. “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, ‘I was only joking!’” Today when people get in trouble, they say, “I was only joking.” When someone says a cuss word, he might say, “I was only joking.” Maybe someone was telling a dirty joke. If he gets caught, how does he respond? “Well, you know, I was just joking.” A lot of times children do this. I've seen a lot of kids do this. Perhaps they got in trouble because they yelled at their parents, and their parents are going to punish them, so they say, “Mom, Dad, I was just joking!” The Proverbs writer said, “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, ‘I was only joking!’” That is not a way to justify our sin. It is not now, and it will not be on the Day of Judgment.

Another sin that frequently is associated with the tongue is idle talk—gossip. Sometimes we go around gossiping to one another, which is condemned in 1 Timothy 5:13. There is a difference between going to someone to try to help him with a problem, as opposed to just spreading lies by saying, “Well, I heard this, so I'll tell someone else who can say that they heard it.” Then people continue gossiping about it. There are times when we may hear true things from good sources, just as Paul had heard certain things from Chloe's household and was able to act upon them. That is not gossip. Gossip is when you are slandering someone. You want to spread rumors about them just to hurt them. People sometimes say, “I really care about that person, which is why I'm doing this.” That is not true, because if that was the case, the person doing the talking would have gone to talk to the person instead of talking to everyone else in town to tell them what was “heard” instead of what is “known to be true.” As Christians, we are to be the lights of the world. In Matthew 5:16 we are told, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” People are to see Christians and know that we are different. There must be a distinction between Christians and people in the world. It is sad today that sometimes there is not much of a distinction. The way that a Christian talks is sometimes just like the way a person in the world would talk—with cuss words that are

sinful. Where is the distinction? In John 3:19-21 we are told that when Jesus came into the world, He was the light. But men hated that light because they were in darkness. Jesus came to save the world, yet there are many people who will be condemned. Why? Because Jesus said that they hated the light. Why did they hate the light? Was Jesus the One Who would try to fit in with people by going out and getting drunk with them, using cuss words, or telling dirty jokes? Absolutely not! But how many times do we fall into that category? Instead of being the light of the world, we are in darkness just like everyone else. We must be different.

Sometimes we become seared to bad language. We are warned in 1 Timothy 4:2 about how our consciences can become seared. This applies to the movies we watch and the music to which we listen. If Jesus was with you when you watched television or went out to see your favorite movie, would you turn the channel because you were ashamed that He was there with you? Would you say, "I don't want to watch this because Jesus is going to be here tonight"? Well, Jesus is here all the time. Jesus knows the things you watch, the things you say, and the music to which you listen. We must not become seared to such things. I've heard people make the argument, "Well, I just ignore it." There may be times when we have to ignore such things because of where we work, or because we are walking through a mall when we hear someone say something bad. But it should bother us that people are taking God's name in vain or using cuss words. We shouldn't just say, "Well, I'm ignoring it. I'll pay \$8 to watch a movie that uses God's name in vain so that I can get some entertainment from that. I'll just ignore the part that uses God's name in vain." That means that we are becoming seared to bad language. In 2 Peter 2:7-8 we read about a man who was never seared by the bad things that he saw and heard, but instead was hurt every time he witnessed such things. We read that Lot "was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked, for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds." I want to ask a very serious question. Are we being entertained today by the things by which Lot would have been tormented? When we laugh at jokes, or see certain movie, would those be the types of things by which Lot would have been tormented? If it is sinful or has bad language, we should not be a part of that. We should not be entertained by, and pay money for, such things. As Christians, we are to be the light of the world.

We also judge with our tongues. There are different kinds of judgments that we make by our speech. One of those is a sinful type of judgment. Matthew 7:1-4 speaks of this sinful type of judgment, and calls it a hypocritical judgment. It is a judgment that is hypocritical because it is not based on truth. Many people misquote Matthew 7:1 ("Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you"). People do not continue reading to see what kind of judgment Jesus was discussing. People were judging others—when they were doing the same types of things (or worse). Romans 2:1-3 also speaks of hypocritical judging. Paul said,

"Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? "

Paul said that certain people were judging others because of the sinful acts they were committing, but that the people doing the judging were then doing exactly the same thing. As Jesus said in Matthew 7:1-4, we need to make sure that we get the plank out of our own eyes.

James 4:11-12 talks about how we can judge one another (in the context of speaking evil against someone by slandering a person without really trying to help that person). James said,

“Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?” (James 4:11-12).

This is not talking about judging someone's sin and trying to help a person in a correct way. It is talking about slandering someone, and carries the idea of just trying to go out, speak evil, hurt someone, and gossip. While there is incorrect judgment (as we have seen from these passages), there also are judgments that we are commanded to make if we are going to be faithful to God. John 7:24 commands that we judge. Many people do not realize that the Bible tells us that we must judge if we want to be faithful. If we want to be obedient to God, we must judge. But what kind of judgment? John 7:24 tells us that we are to judge with a “righteous judgment.” What does that mean? Have you ever read what the Bible has to say, and then made a judgment call—not on your own, but because the Bible said so? Of course you have. That is a righteous judgment call. How do we know that liars are going to be lost if they do not repent? We've already talked about that earlier. It's not because I said so, but because Jesus said so in Revelation 21:8. The Bible as the Word of God says so. We must back that judgment. We must go to the Bible and use it to make a righteous judgment because that is not us making a judgment call, but is God's Word making the judgment. That is a righteous judgment. When we see people in sin, and living lives that are contrary to the Word of God (by doing things that are immoral, worshipping in a wrong way, etc.), we are commanded to judge them based upon the Word of God. There is no way we could ever be unified and know what we are to do to go to Heaven unless we are willing to allow God to tell us through His Word. In John 12:48 Jesus said that we will be judged by His words. We will be judged by the Word of God, not our own opinions. Hebrews 11:7 speaks of Noah and how he condemned the world. “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” How did Noah condemn the world? He did it through his righteous preaching. He was a preacher of God's Word who was trying to warn people of the things that were going to happen during the Flood. He was trying to warn people so that they would not be caught up in those things. We need to make sure today that we are judging people—not according to our own standards, but according to the Word of God. We must preach and teach the Great Commission. Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-16 command us to do exactly that. We also must judge when we find it necessary to rebuke others, as 1 Timothy 5:20 and Galatians 2:11-14 explain. There may be times when we see others in sin, and we must judge them according to the Bible.

With our words, we also can hurt people. Once we have said something, we can never take it back. Perhaps you have heard the saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” If you have ever been called a nasty name, or if someone has ever said things to you that are contrary to the Bible, you know that that saying is not true. Words do hurt. In fact, sometimes words hurt a lot more than sticks and stones. Once we have said things, even though we can repent and change, we cannot take those things back. Ephesians 5:22-23 talks about the husband and wife relationship, and how we need to make sure that we never say things out of anger in order to hurt someone. That is wrong and sinful. James 1:19-20 command us, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” We need to be slow to speak, but quick to hear. We do not need to

be irrational and just say things without thinking. Matthew 14:6-10 talks about the importance of using word and making oaths. Sometimes the things we say can hurt not only us, but others as well.

“But when Herod’s birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, ‘Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter.’ And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison.”

Words can be very dangerous. The words that Herod spoke, and the oath that he took, led to John being beheaded. We can hurt others by the words that we say. When we hear about something, we need to go to one another. If someone does something bad to us, we should not go to others to gossip about it. Matthew 18:15 says that we need to go to that person and talk to him. We need to sit down, open up the Word of God, and see what the Bible has to say so that we can be unified. But there may come a time when have to expose a person in his sin if he is unwilling to repent (Rom. 16:17; Eph. 5:11).

The last point I want us to look at is that we can help others with words. Romans 10:14-17 says,

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed?’ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

We must help others with the words we speak by telling them what the Bible has to say in order for them to go to Heaven. Matthew 5:2 says that Jesus opened His mouth and taught people. We can do great things with our mouths, our tongues, and our words. But we need to understand that we have to be willing to control the things we say. In 1 Corinthians 9:16 Paul said, “Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel.” We can help others get to Heaven by the words that we speak.

What do the precious words of the Bible say that we have to do to go to Heaven? We must hear (Rom. 10:17). We must believe that Jesus Christ is Who He said He was—the Son of God (Jn. 3:16). We must repent of our sins (Lk. 13:3), and no longer continue in our sinful lives. We must confess that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:10). And we must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of our sins to have our sins washed away (Acts 22:16). The tongue is a powerful thing. Let’s always know how to control it. If you have yet to obey the truth, we hope today that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

### **Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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### STUDY QUESTIONS FOR JAMES LESSON 3 (CHAPTER 3)

1. With what single topic does the majority of James 3 deal?
2. From James 3:7-8 we learn that man has been able to tame all manner of beasts, but there is one thing he never has been able to tame. What is it?
3. Explain the meaning of James 3:10 (“Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so”)
4. What did the apostle Paul say in Ephesians 4:29?
5. According to Matthew 15:18, what is the ultimate source of evil things that come out of our mouths?
6. What did Paul mean when he said in Colossians 4:6 that our speech must be “seasoned with salt”?
7. What was the main point of Paul’s comments in Ephesians 5:3-4?
8. What point is being made in Proverbs 26:18-19 (“Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, ‘I was only joking!’”)?
9. What is the main point of 1 Timothy 5:13?
10. Instead of using curse words (or euphemisms that mean essentially the same as curse words), according to Matthew 5:16 what should we be doing?
11. According to the last part of 1 Timothy 4:2, what dangerous thing can happen to people who become desensitized to certain sins?
12. In 2 Peter 2:7-8, Peter discussed an Old Testament character who was repulsed by the actions of the citizens around him. Who was that person?
13. When Jesus said in Matthew 7:1, “Judge not, that you be not judged,” what type of judgment was Jesus discussing?
14. According to John 7:24, what type of judgment are Christians to use?
15. What type of judgment was Paul discussing in Romans 2:1-3?
16. What does James 4:11 command us not to do?
17. According to John 12:48, what will be our judge on the Day of Judgment?
18. According to 1 Timothy 5:2, under what circumstances is it acceptable to rebuke others?
19. What does James 1:19 command us to do?