

## SHOW ME: BLESSING

### SHOW ME SERIES - Part 5

#### Ben Rudolph

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Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you here this morning. This will be the fifth sermon in the series of James, so please turn in your Bibles to James Chapter 3. We are in the series called 'Show Me,' and the reason why it is called 'Show Me' is because James is a book that deals with the actual living out of the Christian faith. Throughout this book as we have been studying it, we have found that James is not a book that tells a story, it is not a book that is really deep theologically, but it is a book that is highly practical. James has a number of small teachings throughout the book and each of these teachings is connected to each other.

For example last week we talked about the reality of faith in works, and that if you are truly a follower of Jesus, if you are truly a Christian, then you will show it. You can't just say, '*Well, I just believe,*' if you never have a life that backs it up. Now James turns his attention to what I think is one of the primary ways that we as followers of Jesus can show a world that we really are followers of Jesus, and that is with our language. It is with our tongues.

Here is what I know; words are powerful, are they not? All of us can remember when someone said something to us that was hurtful, that harmed us. I can think back to when I was in middle school thirty years ago and I can remember like it was yesterday the names that I was called, and the things that people said to me to cut me down. I can also remember those times when adults pulled me aside as a young child and poured life into me by speaking words of kindness and encouragement. It is always fascinating to me how much we remember those things that were said. We can remember moments because words are powerful.

Now all good parents try to teach their kids that they have to learn to navigate the waters of how people treat them. And maybe you heard this as a child, and maybe you even said this to your own kids, '*Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt me.*' Now is that true? No, it is not true. I remember when I was a young middle schooler, and then when I was in junior high that most of us at that age weren't sure who we were and we were embarrassed about everything.

Now I hated my last name being Rudolph. So as a middle schooler anything that was different is like chum in the water for that age group. Anything that was different about you they were going to pounce on. And I remember walking into a room that I hadn't been in before and when I was introduced to everyone as Ben Rudolph. And the laughing would start, '*Where is Santa?*' And I was just so bothered by it.

As an adult if someone asked me '*Where is Santa,*' it wouldn't bother me at all. But there are things when you are young that people say to you that will affect you. And as we got older many of us may remember the harsh things that were said to us by our parents, by a spouse, by a friend or by a loved one. We remember those moments of pain and that is why James is writing this to us.

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What he is saying is this, our words, how we use speech in communication is one of the most significant ways we show ourselves as being different than the world. If we are going to display the nature of Jesus, the love of Jesus, the goodness of God then one of the ways that we do that is with our speech. And here is what I know; this is a problem that is bigger today than it has ever been. Not because we talk more but it is because we type more. There is social media with Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat and I just read about two other new ones and I don't even remember what their names were.

The whole idea is there are more and more digital platforms by which people are writing things on. And has our society elevated itself in the last ten to twelve years because of all this digital communication? The answer is no, it has not. I would say that our society as a whole has devolved. I would say the language that we share with people; the verbal or digital attacks are getting worse. I think the boldness is getting worse. I think the slander is getting worse. I think the complaining is getting worse. Everything that we do with our communication is devolving and not improving.

And I believe that is true for us whether we go to church, or we don't go to church. We are being sucked into this vortex of toxic communication today. And we have to decide what we are going to do about it. James is writing to a group of people who again claimed to be followers of Jesus, and this is what he says about the tongue. Let's read in James Chapter 3 and verses 1 through 12:

*“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.*

*How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

*With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.”*

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There are a lot of illustrations here of nature, but what James is saying is if we are going to be followers of Jesus, and we just talked about faith and works, the way that we display our faith in a tangible way on this planet, if we are going to do that, one of the first things we have to think about is our language, our speech, and how we use our tongues. So James shares this big problem that we have with our tongues. He says the issue is that all of us sing praises to God when we come into these environments at church, and I love singing these worship songs, but then we also can be people who sing praises to God at church and then leave here and at lunch we will slander, we will gossip, we will complain and we will use our tongues to curse people.

Now James is talking about blessings and curses but he is not talking about swearing; he is saying that blessing is the idea that words can bring life, and curses are the words that bring death. James says that if we are followers of Jesus we should be people who are known for our blessings. That we are to bless with our speech, we are to bless consistently with our speech. We can't just be different in our church environment or when we are with our kids, and then talk differently when we are at work, or when we are with our friends. James is saying that our speech should not be different in different environments, but that we should speak blessings consistently.

And if I could summarize our entire sermon today it is this – speak blessings consistently. That is what James is saying. Let's be people that when we talk, what comes out of our mouth is blessings. God's nature is to bless, and to bring life with His words. When God created the world He spoke and brought life. And we as His followers should be people who speak and bring life, being blessings to those around us. That is our calling. We were created to bless. We were created to worship with our mouths. And when we don't do that, we go against the nature that God has put in us.

If we are going to speak blessings consistently we have to first go back to the beginning of this passage to realize if we are doing that. Do we find ourselves in an environment where when we come to church we are all happy and we say one thing, like *'Hey brother, isn't God so good?'* and then in another environment we are the opposite in our speech? We may do that in the very same day. And if that is true then we have an issue, we have a problem.

So if we are going to speak blessings consistently the first thing we have to do is we have to acknowledge that there is a problem. We have to acknowledge that there is a problem with every single person in this room. Look again at what it says in verse 1 of Chapter 3: ***"Not many of you should become teachers."*** Now some of you are like, *'Praise God for that verse, because when the pastor asks me to lead a group or teach something, I can just say I am just trying to obey the Bible here.'*

Now listen, teachers are people that have audiences. Teachers are people that have platforms. And what James is saying is we have to be careful not to want all the influence, not to want a platform or audience that we can influence with our words,

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because what is going to happen is we will eventually be judged by what we say. It is an incredible responsibility to be a teacher. But I believe going back to the social media, the digital platforms that are out there today, that all of us are teachers. All of us at some level are influencing others; all of us at some level have an audience. I don't care if it is ten people or ten thousand people, what we say and especially through our digital communication is out there for everyone to see.

And I wonder if we just randomly picked one of you from the audience and said we are going to log into your Twitter account, or your Facebook account and we are going to look at your posts over the last few months, how many of you would be like, *'Oh dear Lord, please don't do that?'* We need to ask ourselves if everyone that read what we have posted, if everyone that was around us when we communicated at work, would they be able to acknowledge that we were followers of Jesus.

James says: ***"Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man."*** Now let's do a quick test. How many of us in this room are perfect? Good, none of you are liars. That is fantastic. All of us have problems. James is saying that all of us have a problem with our tongues. This is a universal problem. When it comes to how we speak all of us have issues that we need to address. And because it is a common problem I believe common problems are easier to live with. Common problems are easier to let slide. If everyone in the group has a common problem, guess what we will think? *'It's okay. Don't worry about it.'*

Here is a scenario: you are in your Life Community, you are in a small group here at Life Fellowship and you build relationships with these people. And you meet after your first post-holiday, maybe Thanksgiving or Christmas and everyone comes together and they are saying, *'I ate horribly. I gained five pounds. I gained ten pounds. I just ate too many sweets. I ate out too many times.'* And everyone agrees, and then someone says, *'Let's make an agreement in this room that we will eat no fast food and no sugar for forty days.'* And everyone is all for it, because all of you are in it together.

Then everyone goes their separate ways. They come back the next week and what has happened? Someone speaks up and says, *'Guys, I was so hungry and Chick-fil-A was right there. What was I supposed to do?'* And then someone else speaks up and says, *'It's okay. We understand. We have been there before.'* The next week a few more people say, *'I was at a friend's house and their chocolate cake is amazing.'* And someone says, *'We understand, in fact why don't you bring that chocolate cake with you next week to the meeting.'* See what happens?

When we all have common problems and we share it with the group that also has the problem it will not be a big deal. *'Let's all just kind of forget that we even agreed to change this part about our lives.'* If all of us have a problem with our tongues, all of us

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are willing to live with a level of sin, a level of disobedience, and a level of rebellion against God's standards and God's ways. And that should scare us. We need to begin to take our words seriously. We need to acknowledge that there is a problem.

James is sometimes called 'the wisdom book of the New Testament' because there are so many great sayings in the book of James. There are a lot of short sections that deal with actual practical living. And the wisdom book of the Old Testament is the book of Proverbs. We are not going to turn there this morning but if I was going to give you extra credit this week I would give you an assignment. And the assignment for some of you achievers in the room may go do this. I would encourage you to read and go through the Book of Proverbs, and every single time you see a verse that deals with speech or communication, circle it.

And you know what you will find? You will be amazed at how many verses you start circling. There are scores of them. Proverbs is a very practical book. It is a book of wisdom on how we should live our lives in light of God's holiness and His goodness. How we should live our lives if God is the ultimate in the world, and the answer is found in verse after verse. There are many passages that talk about our speech and how we use it.

I want to read for you some of the verses in Proverbs. We could take the rest of this sermon and just read verses from the book of Proverbs, but I just want to read a few of them for you. Proverbs Chapter 10 and verse 19 says: "***When words are many, transgression (meaning sin) is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.***" That is saying the more we talk the more we will sin. It is just going to happen because we are going to be more inclined to say something we should not have said. The more we restrict our language we are less inclined to say something we should not have said. Listen, the next time you are at home and you don't feel like talking you might say, 'Honey, I am trying not to sin today.' No, that isn't a good idea. But the whole point is that the more that we use our tongues the more capable we will be of sinning.

Proverbs Chapter 12 and verse 18 says: "***There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.***" Boy that is a vivid picture isn't it? When we are rash with our words it is almost like a sword cutting people down. But we can also use our words to build people up. Then finally, Proverbs Chapter 13 and verses 2 and 3 says: "***From the fruit of his mouth a man eats what is good, but the desire of the treacherous is for violence. Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life. He who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.***" This is a common problem. Verse after verse and passage after passage in the Bible tells us over and over that our speech, our tongues are a problem for us.

So we have two choices to make. We can either acknowledge it and take it seriously, or we just get really comfortable with the way we use our language, the way we talk. We either let this become a way in which we know that we can reflect the nature

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and the goodness of God or we can just say, ‘*Hey, I am just saying ....*’ Have you ever been around some people and they say something like, ‘*I am just saying....*’ It is almost like they can say whatever they want whether it is rude or crude or mean because ‘*I am just saying....*’ There is some truth in that and they just let us off the hook.

I think another reason why the sin of our mouth is so prevalent is because there are so many different ways we can sin with our tongue. I have a list of six things that I think are common according to Scripture of ways in which we sin, ways in which we abuse our language. The first one is crude or perverse language, whether it is swearing, or cussing, or just talking in a coarse manner about sexual things. That is a big one that the Bible talks about. The second one is complaining. I mean it is just constant grumbling and whining. People who do that are known as someone who never has a good day. There is always something wrong in life, something wrong with the sun, something wrong with the food. There is something wrong with everything in life and it is their mission in life to let everyone know that there is a problem. That is complaining.

We also have attacking, the verbal attacking. This flows out of anger and they just attack people. This can happen especially in families with husbands and wives towards one another and parents with children. They use the verbal weapon as Proverbs said, the sword to slice people down. Some people are very good at that.

Then there is slander. They just talk bad about people. They point out their problems, their issues, their faults and it makes them feel good about themselves. And then there is gossip which is the idea of sharing something intimate, whether it is true or not about someone else in order to make themselves look better.

Lastly there is lying and deceit. I don’t need to explain lying, but there is a reason why we do this. And the reason why this is important to acknowledge is that you might be here in this room and say, ‘*Man, I can’t stand people that gossip,*’ while you have a problem with not being able to tell the whole truth. You might be someone who says, ‘*I just cannot be around that person because they complain all day long,*’ but you have no problem tearing people down.

See as long as it is not my sin with my tongue I don’t like it, but if it is my sin with my tongue, ‘*Hey you know, I am just saying....*’ So we have to begin to take these problems seriously so we will be able to speak blessings the way we were created. We were created to worship, we were created as people to bless, and we were created to give life to people with our words. We will never change unless we first acknowledge that we have a problem.

So that leads us to the second point and that is – we have to put out the fire. Look again at James Chapter 3 where it says: ***“If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder***

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*wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.”*

In this passage James is giving us illustrations in nature. He says look at horses that have a tiny bit in their mouths and these massive creatures can be guided with them. He says think about giant ships being blown by the wind and all it takes is a captain with his hand on a steering device being able to guide that huge ship. And think about lighting a tiny little fire in a forest and if it is unchecked that fire will consume thousands of acres. We hear about this every year on the news in the summertime where there are fires out of control in Arizona or California or Washington. We are always seeing these things happen.

And James said that our language has power. Our tongues have two kinds of power. There is a power to direct us and there is a power to destroy us. Maybe you wonder what I mean by the power to direct us. When we sin with our tongues, when we slander, when we gossip, when we lie, when we complain, what happens is we limit our relationships with other people. If you talk poorly about another group of people, what makes you think you are ever going to be a part of that group of people? If you tear down that other person in your workplace that is a person you are never going to be able to get close to. If you lie to another person, you will have to keep lying to cover up what you said, so you will build up walls. And when you lie it directs the course of your life. Instead of living a life of freedom, instead of being in a crowd and not worrying about what you are going to say or who you are going to bump into, you can look at anyone in that crowd and know you can meet them, connect with them, and get to know them.

Our tongue can also severely limit our lives and our relationships, because not only does our tongue direct us, it can also destroy us. What James is saying is so powerful. He is telling us that our lives can be set ablaze by fire, small but powerful. When things are small but powerful they leave an impression on us. I have had a chance to see this first hand this winter. This winter I had a mouse problem in our garage and it was the worst. Those mice are so tiny, so cute, but I hate their guts. We have this armoire in our garage and some other furniture, and if a mouse sets up shop in a location, what do they do? They just wreak havoc. And I am not trying to be gross or crude, but there was about a week before we found this mouse and there was already mouse pee and poop everywhere.

We caught that mouse and cleaned it all up and then guess what happened? There was another mouse leaving his trail of existence in our garage. There was a part of me in that moment after about the third mouse I caught when I wanted to just burn the garage down, because I was sick of these mice. And I don't know how many more mice I am going to have to catch because I don't know how they are even getting in. I have traps

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and I have poison because I want to do everything I can to stop these tiny little mice from ruining my garage. So I want to destroy them.

And this is what can happen with our tongues. Our tongue is very tiny but it can leave a trail of destruction. Because what happens is we don't just complain a little. The moment we start complaining to another person it becomes easier to continue. You are sitting with a friend over coffee and you say, *'Well, my boss,'* or my spouse or my kids, or the government .... And what becomes the easiest thing to do when you are sitting across from someone who is complaining is to say, *'Yeah, I hate that too.'* Right?

Someone says there is something they have to tell you and you can't tell anyone else. Have you ever been in that situation? What do we do normally? We lean in and say, *'I won't tell anyone.'* And they tell us a juicy little morsel. Now what are we going to do with this juicy little morsel. We are going to say to someone else, *'Hey, I need to tell you something but you can't tell anyone else.'* And the fire spreads.

What we need is for people to decide what they are going to do when the fire hits them. What are you going to do when the fire shows up in your life this week? Are you going to stop the fire, are you going to stop the gossip, are you going to stop the lying, are you going to stop the complaining, are you going to stop the attacks? Will you continue on with the cursing or will you change the course of direction and decide to speak words of blessing? Words have power and we need to be aware of the power of our words.

Here is what I know; when someone speaks these words to us in any of these ways, we can either go along with it and stoke the fire, or we can stand in the gap and not let the fire continue any longer. And that may cost you some friendships and it may cost you some relationships. There is nothing more awkward than when you are sitting with a group of people and someone says, *'I don't feel comfortable with this kind of talk and I think we need to stop.'* If you do that with a group of people, it is like someone throws a grenade, and guess who is not going to be invited for coffee next week, guess who is not going to be invited over to watch the game next time.

But those are the things we have to be willing to risk because we need to understand that the fire can consume us. We can destroy our own lives and the lives of other people with the power of our tongue. I can't tell you how many times I have talked with pastors or other people in churches about the amount of carnage, the amount of churches that have been destroyed with words. That is far greater than churches that have been destroyed with bad doctrine.

I believe with all of my heart that Satan has used gossip, slander, lying, and complaining more than any other vice to destroy the internal workings of the church today, many times more than bad doctrine has done. You know he can sow the seeds until the fire is so internal and these churches just implode from the inside. And it takes



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people to say they will not continue with this. To say this stops with me. We have to put out the fire.

And that leads to the third point which is get to the root. We have to acknowledge that there is a problem, we have to decide to put out the fire, but then we have to get to the root, the root of the problem. This is what James says in verse 7: ***“For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind.”*** Now it is always fun for us to watch shows on Animal Planet or we go to Sea World or some other place where there are animals, and to see someone there who has tamed these creatures. People have trained birds, they have trained whales, they have trained dolphins and some have even trained lions. And we pay money to see wild animals do these tricks.

All of these animals can be tamed and it blows our mind. But James says no one can tame the tongue. ***“But no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”*** Now when I read that I don’t think James is saying, ‘*We are all just in trouble. There is nothing we can do. We are just going to have to figure out how to not sin with our words as little as possible.*’ Is that what he is saying? No, that is not what he is saying. What he is saying is don’t address this problem on the surface level. Don’t be the type of person that says, ‘*Okay, I am going to really try hard not to speak in that way. I am going to really try hard not to get angry and lash out verbally. I am going to try really hard not to gossip. I am going to try really hard not to complain.*’

We could do that all day long and it is not going to change anything. James makes this point because he believes the problem is not with taming the tongue; the problem is we need to transform our hearts. And he goes into this idea of blessing and cursing. Look at verse 11 again: ***“Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water?”*** There is a problem if we both bless and we curse with our tongue because that is a heart problem. There is something inside us where these words are coming from.

There is a wonderful study we can do in the Scriptures, and I did it this week. If you would study the amount of passages of Scripture that connect the heart with the mouth you would be fascinated. It is all over Proverbs and it is all over the Bible. Jesus made the same connection and I want you to hear this in Matthew Chapter 12. Jesus is speaking here to a group of people who are attacking Him with their words. They are saying that He is from the devil, that He is possessed by a demon. And so He is now going back and saying the reason why they can’t say anything good about Him is because there is something wrong with their hearts. Listen to what He says in verse 33.

***“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of the evil***

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*treasure brings forth evil. I tell you on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

Jesus was saying that He knows the condition of our hearts by the quality of our words. He knows the condition of our heart by the quality of our words. He knows where our heart is by what we say. James is drawing our attention to when blessings come out naturally by using the illustration of springs. Springs come forth naturally. You don't have to decide what kind of water is coming out because springs just naturally flow and it is usually fresh water. And this natural spring of fresh water coming out doesn't all of a sudden turn into salt water. Just as something internal in our hearts has to pour forth what is really in there.

And this is the question we have to ask ourselves – what is broken inside of us that when we are speaking there are words coming out that do not honor God? What is coming out in our words that is not blessing people but are words of death? If we have a problem with our words then we have a heart problem that Jesus alone needs to fix. I believe what we have to do is to invite Jesus in to help us. Anytime we are doing something that we shouldn't there is some kind of internal pain or longing, in us something in our heart that desires something, and we realize we need this fixed.

Look again what it says in verse 5: ***“So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.”*** I believe the problem in our hearts is this – that what is rooted in all of these ways we use our tongues is the idea that what is in my own life matters more than anyone else. It is pride. It is pride in our lives. It is pride saying, *‘I don't care what happens to him or to her, as long as I look better. I don't care how they feel; I only care about how I feel.’* When we put our feelings, our desires, our wants and our satisfaction above everyone else on the planet, what we will do is tear people down word by word. We will walk around with slashing swords cutting people down, wounding people with our words, leaving a wake of destruction behind us.

We need a heart change. We need to understand that it is Jesus who brings the goodness to life. It is Jesus alone who brings satisfaction to every longing of our hearts. We sang about it this morning, didn't we? *‘For every answer that I need it is found in Jesus.’* Do we believe that? When I don't like something that is going on in my life do I trust Him to help me not to complain? Do I trust Him to help me focus on praising and being grateful for what God has given to me? Do I focus on what people are doing and how they are treating me or am I focusing on how God treats me? Because of God's grace in my life I need to show grace and blessings to others.

One of the verses that meant so much to me that I memorized it when I was in high school was Ephesians Chapter 4 and verse 29. ***“Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up, that it may impart grace to those who hear it.”*** Listen, there is only one way that we can impart grace to those

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who hear it and that is when we are blown away by the grace of Jesus Christ. When we fix our eyes more on people, when our lives and hearts are filled with the horizontal and we just see people and what they do and how they operate, we will speak in ways that bring curses. But when my life is filled with the glory of God, when my eyes are fixed on Him, when I am in His presence, and I am filled with His well of living water what will pour forth is blessings.

I want you to see this quickly with me. It is in the book of Psalms. I try to pray through a number of Psalms very day, and Psalms is a great prayer book. I remember the first time I read Psalm 73 when I was studying the Bible devotionally a number of years ago. I wrote down by Psalm 73, 'daily medicine,' because I believed it was something I need to be reminded of every day. And over the last few weeks I have just been going back to Psalm 73 over and over because it helps me, it centers my soul into a well that I need to be drinking from. I just want to read it because he talks about the connection between letting our eyes be fixed on people and letting that be what we see and talk about, or letting our eyes be fixed on God and letting that be what we talk about.

Psalm 73: ***“Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”*** Here is what he is saying, ‘*God, I know you are good to people. I have a theological foundation that God is good to His children. He is good to His followers. I believe that. But you know what I have struggled with? It is when I look around the world and I look at my co-workers or my neighbors and I see that they don’t love you, they don’t even worship you, they don’t come to church at all, but their life is filled with no problems. And here I am, I am trying to do everything I can to follow you and to obey you. I go to church with my family, and I do everything right yet every single day, every single week I have problems. God, I look at their life and I wish I had their life.*’ Do you ever feel like that? Do you ever see the that the people who hate God lack problems, while you are filled with the problems of those who love God? It doesn’t make sense to us.

Then Psalm 73 goes on in verse 4: ***“For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek.”*** Now don’t ask me how bodies can be fat and sleek at the same time, okay? But these people have it. ***“They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth.***

***Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. And they say, “How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and***

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*rebuked every morning. If I had said, “I will speak thus,” I would have betrayed the generation of your children.*

This is what he is saying, ‘*When my mind is fixed on all the people whose lives seem to be really good, I see that they hate you, God. I look at how the people who are anti God on social media and I look at their lives and their lack of problems. And God, I look at my life and I am stricken all day long. If I were to speak based on my feelings and my experiences I would have betrayed you, God.*’ And how many of us do that? We speak based out of our feelings and out of our emotions. And the Psalmist is saying he has to stop himself when he wants to speak out of that.

Listen to verse 16: ***But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.*** What he is saying is, ‘*When I come into your presence, God, when I come into your gathering with your people and I fix my eyes on you, you make everything come clear and make sense in my heart. And I have to learn to trust you.*’

Now listen to verse 23: ***“Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with our counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For behold those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.”***

You see my language is not going to be marked by what other people are doing. My language is not going to be marked by the hurts and the wounds that they have done to me, or by the injustices of the world that I see and feel. My language is going to be filled with the goodness of God in my life. If I focus on His goodness for me and focus on His love for me that well in my heart is filled with the love of Jesus so how can I not but speak blessings.

That is how we change our speech. It is not by taming the tongue but by filling our hearts with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the more we are filled with Jesus, the more we are in His presence, the more that He is at our right hand, the more that we hear His counsel, the more that we read His Word, the more that we are in His presence and our hearts are changed, we will speak differently. You fill your heart with the goodness of God and you will fill your life with words of blessing. That is how we do it, and that is what God calls us to do.

Three application questions and then we are done. Number one – what are the fires that you need to put out? See some of us have some fires that have been going on in our lives. I don’t know which of those six things is your stumbling block, but maybe there is a conversation you need to have with someone this week. Maybe there is a

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relationship built on one of those that you need to put an end to, or to at least confront. But there are some fires and maybe God is telling you to put them out.

Number two – who needs to hear words of blessings from you? Maybe you are someone who is used to cutting others down and God is saying He wants you to be someone who builds people up. He wants you to be known as someone who builds up others with their words.

Number three – how are you going to fix your eyes on Jesus and not on people? Listen, I would encourage all of us here today to ask God for a reset. Go to Psalm 73 every morning, read it, pray through it, and ask God to give you His perspective, to give you His counsel, to give you His eyes to see things, and to help you speak out of that goodness. Ask Him to fill your heart with that. Let's be people who are consistently known for blessings and that we speak blessings consistently. Let's not let the blessings end around our dinner tables or in our work places. Let us count how many times we can bring words of blessing to others.

*The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.*