

# How We Speak

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## **Psalm 116: 1-10a**

- <sup>1</sup> I love the LORD, for he heard my voice;  
he heard my cry for mercy.
- <sup>2</sup> Because he turned his ear to me,  
I will call on him as long as I live.
- <sup>3</sup> The cords of death entangled me,  
the anguish of the grave came over me;  
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.
- <sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the LORD:  
“LORD, save me!”
- <sup>5</sup> The LORD is gracious and righteous;  
our God is full of compassion.
- <sup>6</sup> The LORD protects the unwary;  
when I was brought low, he saved me.
- <sup>7</sup> Return to your rest, my soul,  
for the LORD has been good to you.
- <sup>8</sup> For you, LORD, have delivered me from death,  
my eyes from tears,  
my feet from stumbling,
- <sup>9</sup> that I may walk before the LORD  
in the land of the living.
- <sup>10</sup> I trusted in the LORD when I said,  
“I am greatly afflicted.”

## **James 1: 19-21, 26-27**

<sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup> because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. <sup>21</sup> Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

<sup>26</sup> Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

## **James 3: 3-12; 4:11-12**

<sup>3</sup> When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. <sup>4</sup> Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. <sup>5</sup> Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. <sup>6</sup> The

tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

<sup>7</sup> All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, <sup>8</sup> but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

<sup>9</sup> With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. <sup>11</sup> Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? <sup>12</sup> My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

## James 4

<sup>11</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. <sup>12</sup> There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

### JAMES' WISE WORDS ON ANGER

Starting first in Psalm 116, this is a mirror psalm of praise for deliverance. It expresses the confident joy of the one who has known the salvation of the Lord, a return to rest in his soul and place of well-being after affliction.

in v 3 we get the issue:

<sup>3</sup> The cords of death entangled me,  
the anguish of the grave came over me;  
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.

<sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the LORD:  
"LORD, save me!"

In v 6 it says: **The Lord protects the 'unwary'; when I was brought low he saved me.**

It is true that we are often unwary or vulnerable in affliction, sometimes we get there and don't know how we got there. It's a surprise and a wake up call. I'm going along fine and then bang, something comes out of the blue that upsets the equilibrium and I discover that I don't have sufficient resources to deal with it. I may have a blind spot, be unselfaware.

In this space there is an invitation for understanding and judgment to mature, to call out to God for salvation. The Psalmist applies trust and belief in God to save him.

<sup>10</sup> I trusted in the LORD when I said,  
"I am greatly afflicted."

There are two resolutions that the writer has come to as a result of affliction, sorrow and near death:  
**v2 I will call on him as long as I live.**

This is like his default setting. I think it's a real good one to have on your lips all the time. When I am troubled I will turn to God and trust Him.

<sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the LORD:  
"LORD, save me!"

**The second resolution is in v 9: that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.**

<sup>8</sup> For you, LORD, have delivered me from death,  
my eyes from tears,  
my feet from stumbling,

<sup>9</sup> **that I may walk before the LORD  
in the land of the living.**

What does he mean by this?

*To walk before the Lord* is a metaphor for your way of life.

*Before the Lord* is not in front of...going ahead in control...it's not being paraded before or on show like a trophy or a slave....it's not behind...being led by a string.

So what is it? I think it's about being with. I walk in His presence, I enjoy communion with Him, I am under His eye...under the influence of his observation.

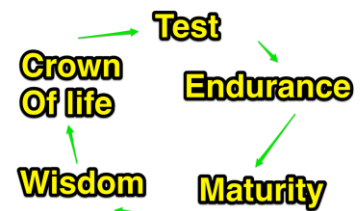
I live my walk in the sight of God in the midst of men/people...in the earth. Add to this the meaning of the word rest in v 7.

<sup>7</sup> **Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.**

And it means to walk leisurely, unhurried, free from care in the earth. It has this sense of unthreatened well being and peace. Wow what a place to live and move and have my being in the sight of the Lord, free from care and pleasing to Him.

I will call on Him and I will trust him in affliction. I will walk before Him in the earth and be at rest in my soul. Cohesive lives are ones that are genuine, whole and unified. Internal and external harmony. Living in the knowledge that I am fully known and loved and at peace. This is the journey we are on to get closer and closer to this oneness with God, to abide.

This has implications for the manner in which I live: to act and speak in a manner becoming His presence. James will say to especially guard what comes out of my mouth. Remember from last week that trials will produce endurance and we will learn better ways of thinking and being. Our wisdom will be evident in sound judgements and careful speech and in faith-filled action.



**With this in mind let's turn to JAMES' WORDS OF WISDOM for speaking.**

**What comes out of our mouths might be an indicator of how our walk before the Lord is tracking. James comes back around this in four places, commenting on:**

**1. Anger 2. the tongue 3. Cursing 4. Judging**

We are often quick to anger. Some people just tick you off!! I could have used another word but...we're in church. We are quick to take offense and believe our rights have been trodden on and quick to blameshift. But in v 19 he is saying:

**v 19 Be quick to hear (listen), slow to speak and slow to anger**

- When something gets up your nose, don't try and blow it out too soon. Rather be quick to stand back and hear or listen. Put up with the irritation for a while and reflect on what is going on. Who is this about? What is this reminding me of? How can I approach this with peace and gentleness and trust in my affliction? In the meantime your nose might be running and your eyes watering, but the longer you can endure that James says the more you will mature and the more wisdom and insight you will get!

The patient perseverance of another way of being when something gets up your nose will result in a spoken response that is righteous and peaceable not a knee jerk reaction. By practicing a cautious response to people verbally, wrathful emotions will be put in check. You won't spew your snot all over everybody.

- In contrast James says in v 26: **<sup>26</sup> Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.** That's a pretty strong admonition. But it only takes one loss of control to do major damage. Giving vent to anger, perhaps even to the point of violence may seem to be just and right because it may mitigate that particular injustice but it may also end up substituting a new set of injustices for the old. In particular it breaches trust. Eg you may make a child obedient by lashing out and creating conformity, but in reality it has created a whole set of other problems.

#### ***V 20 for human anger does not achieve the righteousness that God desires.***

- The righteous life that God desires is not accomplished by giving vent to anger. Even righteous anger may not be a good motive for action. Eg of David Riddell after sound equipment was stolen from the roadfront venue during a break in the seminar. First response is blind anger. He went out into the street in a rage trying to find the person who had taken it. Getting nowhere the Holy Spirit reminded him of this verse. When this happens we knock out or overwhelm our ability to follow the Spirit. So his second response was to stop and listen to the Spirit. When he did this he got a picture of where the person was hiding and following the direction of the Spirit, he cornered the man with his gear who was absolutely astounded and retrieve the goods.
- So remember that human anger inhibits the wholehearted trust needed for relationship with God and with others. It injures the peacemaking process. And it injures the capacity we have to follow the Spirit, in fact it knocks us off kilter in relationship to Jesus full stop.
- Finally remember God reserves vengeance for himself.

**Think for a moment about the last time you were angry. What was happening? What caused the reaction?**

**Now I know that there are many causes for anger but I want to be true to this passage today and the next verse gives us some more clues.**

***<sup>21</sup> Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.***

- In this verse the admonition is that we are to get rid of or ***Lay aside*** like taking off a garment in readiness for physical activity, all ***filth*** and sordidness. This word ***filth*** is unique in the NT to James. It perhaps refers to the extreme horridness of the human condition, and even we who know Jesus must be reminded to put it off. This condition is like a residue, something **left over from one's life prior to conversion**. It hasn't gone away just because we come to church!

- In fact, evil practices are rooted in the memory and structure of desire of the soul. We are to eliminate evil and its old causes by a process of putting off and a putting on of ways of living according to the will of God. Kristin will tell us how this results in action, how faith without deeds is dead.
- But today we are in contrast to moral filth, anger and evil practices to – ***humbly, in meekness, accept the word planted in us.***
- Meekness is the product of wisdom, the opposite of anger. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth, is also a fruit of the Spirit. Meekness is a choice that you make after standing back and listening, after self control and having done your own work.
- Not to be interpreted as a doormat, a push over, allowing yourself to be trampled on. Jesus refers to himself as meek and lowly in heart in Matt 11:29, but he never permitted anyone to trample on him. But the fact that meekness is not doormatness is no excuse for arrogance.
- **Meekness is a choice to humbly accept the word or gospel of God which saves and shapes you**, as it is received into you and to respond to others in this manner – with unthreatened well-being and peace.

### **A FEW MORE WORDS ON ANGER TO SUM UP THIS PART:**

In anger we betray a division... The dipsuchos or deep double-mindedness I was talking about last week. When the soul is broken in two and pulling against itself, present anger is often the fruit of the dilemma.

**Anger is usually a form of protection, a vulnerable emotion rests behind it.**

It may also manifest as an underlying sadness or as full blown depression. Both of which are anger turned inward. Or it may be a more open rebellion which manifests the deeper pain, masking it with addiction or self medication or unhelpful relationships.

These secondary emotions, settle in to protect us from our unbearable feelings.

Anger signals that there are unmet needs and inner values trodden on.

There is a breach of trust somewhere and a di-lemma in the soul. The anger feels real and connected to the present time but in fact its displaced from its origin.

These bruises in the soul will be pressed when something in the present reminds us of those feelings. Guess what? - marriage, relationships, churches, workplaces are a series of these types of interactions we have to navigate. But when anger suddenly flashes out of the blue, or it persists until I am seething inside, if you find yourself over-reacting to someone, constantly irritated, wanting to bash their lights out, don't blameshift, don't make it about them... you have a choice to become bitter or better.

So hence the admonition to listen and stand back to hear. We need to look below the surface of our initial anger reaction to identify the primary emotion.

### **WHAT MIGHT WE BE LOOKING FOR?**

- A sense of shame
- A doubt about my worth
- feeling as though you don't matter

Abuse, bullying, neglect, rejection...anything that produces shame will produce a rift or brokenness in the soul, a breach of trust. This may be in the form of a doubt or a question mark or an exclamation

mark, an inability to resolve the well-being questions. Who am I? Who do I belong to? Am I loved unconditionally for who I am? Am I ok?

Anger is the fruit of a discussion in the soul about trust, goodness, identity and love.

To resolve this you need to ask Jesus for wisdom, to take you to the source of the anger and you may well be reminded of a childhood incident.

Or it may be that this is actually a root of bitterness. You have so much anger that you are almost unable to function. Here's my wisdom. Get some help to get it out. James will say in Ch 4: resist the devil and he will flee from you and in Ch 5: confess your sins one to another that you may be healed. These are two mighty weapons in our arsenal against anger alongside asking for wisdom.

Lord save me! I will live before the Lord in the land of the living.

## **BREAKING SOUL TIES WHICH FORM WHEN OTHERS ARE ANGRY WITH US.**

**Reasons to say the Soul Tie Prayer – we are great at personal hygiene but not so competent at spiritual hygiene.**

Daily we form both godly and ungodly soul ties with people we interact with. We retain the godly ties and need to ask Jesus to break off the ungodly ones that are mostly formed with our loved ones when we argue, feel misunderstood, rejected etc. Soul ties are crucial component in healing.

### **Daily Soul Ties Prayer**

I ask you to break all ungodly spirit, soul and body ties between myself and anyone or anything else. Separate all unrighteous aspects of them from me and me from them.

## **THE TONGUE AND CURSING**

In ch 3 James talks about the tongue and how the fruit of the lips can cause such incredible damage. *Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. <sup>6</sup> The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

*You can tame animals <sup>8</sup> but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

*<sup>9</sup> With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.*

*My brothers and sisters, this should not be.*

Cursing is inconsistent with praising God in whose image all humans are made. We curse one another and we curse ourselves.

Many times when people come to me for help it has become clear that either they are suffering from the effects of what they were told as a kid, in effect a curse that has stunted their growth or that they hate themselves and speak out all sorts of negative words over themselves continually. The impact of these curses is incredible and perfectly illustrates the power of the tongue to set the whole course of one's life on fire.

we need to repent and break curses off one another.

## WHAT WE SPEAK ALOUD MATTERS

**Here's a trial my daughter Rose blogged about recently. She's 30 years old and has an toddler. My mornings are normally quite awful.**

I get a kind of morning sickness, even though I'm definitely NOT pregnant. I feel nauseous and grumpy till about 10 in the morning. I can't think properly. I'm no good at making conversations let alone decisions. I hate the mornings.

Being woken by a crying toddler at 6 in the morning over and over fills me with dread! But, I realise I've gotten myself into a VERY BAD habit! Waking up and feeling awful and thinking 'God I hate the morning' just reinforces the fact that my morning will be awful. If I expect the morning to be awful and it gets reinforced over and over, the rut I'll get stuck in will get deeper and deeper.

God says: His mercies are new every morning. **The mornings should be the best time of day, because that's when His mercies are new!** This is the time when we can start over and have a clean slate.

When I am woken in the morning and it feels like I haven't had enough rest, and I'm groggy and shaky and little boy is crying from the next room because his nappy needs attention, I now try and **speack life instead of death to myself.**

- Lord, your joy and love sustain me
- I can do all things in Your Name which strengthens me
- I will not let mercy forsake me
- My soul will bless you Lord, all that is within me will bless You because You are holy
- Your strength is made perfect in my weakness
- I will accept your new mercy this morning and I will rejoice and be glad.

## MAKING JUDGMENTS

Finally, let's speak about judging others, another aspect of spiritual hygiene:

***11 Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?***

### Reasons to say the Judgment Prayer

1. Judgments from others accumulate and if we don't lift them off they can lead to a weighted heaviness, tiredness, lack of ability to focus and can contribute to early burnout.
2. We make judgments daily against others: what they say, how they look, what we read in the newspaper, internal judgments when people, especially loved ones don't understand. These lead to other sins such as anger, resentments, hardness of heart, bitterness, self-justification

### Daily Judgments Prayer

In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I ask you to lift off all the judgments that others have been making against me and I choose to bless those that curse me. ...to forgive me for the judgments that I have made against others and lift off those judgments. I choose to bless these people instead of cursing them.

When you say the judgment prayer, from time to time stop and ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of recent specific judgments you have made. We judge others motives and behaviour from our own narrow point of view and only God knows people's hearts. Verbalize these presumptive judgments.

So to sum up: consider the power of the tongue to bring life or death and be careful.  
Step back and take a long look at what is going on in your life and what you are reacting to.  
Call on Jesus for help.  
Live before him in a manner that is worthy --lest our religion be worthless.