

The Tongue and Our Source

In James chapter 3 much is said about the tongue. Beginning in verse 1 James says something very interesting: “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.” Then he tells us in verse 2 that this judgment is related to our words: “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.” And in verses 3-4 he uses illustrations to further impress us with the enormity of the problem of man’s tongue: ³ “Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. ⁴ Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires [or, will].”

The tongue as the controlling member

Notice in verse 3 that the horses obey us and we *turn* their whole body. And then in verse 4 the ships are *turned*. So the word “turn” is a key word here. You have a horse that needs to be controlled, and to control the horse you put a bit in its mouth. The nature of a horse is that it wants to go its own way. Yet with a bit you can turn the whole body of the horse. So the bit in the mouth is the point we need to see in this illustration, because it is that which turns. We could say that the turning is the control of the horse. Of course, James is

talking here about how to control ourselves.

The second illustration is the ship, which is driven by fierce winds. Like a horse driven by its wild nature, a ship is somewhat wild in the middle of a storm. It is blowing here and blowing there and out of control. So James’ thought is about control. And here he tells us that the direction of this great ship — like big ocean liners — is actually altered by a little rudder in the back of the ship. The rudder actually controls these ships. It turns them, just as verse 4 says: “They are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.”

Now look at the application in verse 5: “Even so the tongue is a little member” — just like a rudder is a little thing — “the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!” So James goes from bits in the horses’ mouths to the rudders of ships to a little fire. You just consider how forest fires start from someone not putting out a match or not dousing their campfire. Just a little fire, just a little flame — but that little flame creates a huge impact on the whole forest. Notice the way James is talking. You have the bits, you have the rudders, and you have a little fire. These three things are somewhat insignificant and yet they have a profound effect. And this is all related to how to control ourselves. In verse 6 he says, “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and

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it is set on fire by hell.” So these verses are all related to the tongue. Isn’t this interesting? Controlling ourselves is related to the tongue.

Then James says in verse 7, “For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.” Look at all the animals in the world, even the wild animals. We all know you can tame a wild animal. This is what James is saying: You can tame the bird, the beast, the reptile, and the creature of the sea. They have been tamed by mankind. So we are talking about control over unruly things. Just look at all these pictures: the bit, the rudder, a little fire, and taming.

The tongue and the source of our being

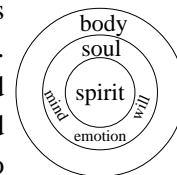
Then in verse 8 James says, “But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” So how do you control yourself? The Bible says that no one can tame and control the tongue. James 3 is one of the deepest chapters in the Bible. This may shock you, because it is talking about your tongue! Yet it is one of the deepest chapters because it talks about controlling your whole being. It shows us a most marvelous realization about how to control ourselves. How can I control myself as a human being? Although James is speaking about the tongue, what he shows us is that the tongue is connected to the source from which we live. Who is our source? Who is the inner spring and fountain and source of our life? This is crucial because the tongue and the source of our being are connected.

Consider our own experience. One day we received Christ. Before that time, we were the source of our being. We ran our own ship, so to speak. We went our own way. We lived our own life. So we were the source. But one day we were saved. How? Just by a simple prayer, by opening our mouth as Romans 10:9 says: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” To be saved is not merely to receive a ticket to go to heaven someday. To be saved is to have Christ come into you and to have your source actually changed. Jesus enters into your spirit, and you now have a new source from which you live and spring. By opening your mouth to pray, by opening to receive Christ, you have determined your destiny and you have determined a whole new source of your

being, because He comes to live inside of you. So the mouth and the source of our being are vitally interrelated.

To appreciate this interrelatedness even more, let us continue reading in James 3:8-12: ⁸ “But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring [or, fountain] send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring can yield both salt water and fresh.” All these verses, especially verse 11, bring home James’ point about how interrelated our mouth and the source of our being are. In verse 11 he says, “Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?” Water is coming out, words are coming out. Where do they come from? They come from a source. That is why when we talk about self-control and being a person who is under self-control, the question is, who is our source? According to the Bible, we cannot tame ourself, but we can come from another source.

With three concentric circles we can show how our being is made: the outermost circle represents our body; the middle circle, our soul; and the innermost circle represents our spirit. So man is composed of spirit, soul, and body. Christ comes into us as the Spirit, and He joins Himself to our spirit. And what happens when Christ comes into us is that our source changes from our soul to our spirit. So now we have a new source, and that source is Christ living in our spirit. We have to see that this is why God made us the way He did. When you are born again, the most marvelous thing about it is that you come back to the way God made you. He wants to be your source. He wants to be the spring from which everything comes. He wants to be the fountainhead out of which we live.



We used to live in the soul realm. The soul is made up of our mind and our emotions and our will. These are the parts of the soul. We just lived in that realm. We made our own decisions. We thought our own thoughts. We were like the captain of the ship. We were thinking, “I can just live my own life.” This is the very thing you learn at the university — to be self-sufficient, to be

independent, to rely upon yourself. Of course, this is the world's thinking. But in the Bible you come under God's thought. His thought is that we are dependent people and we are to live out of the source of Christ Himself, and out of this comes everything. So the matter of source is all-important.

Knowing ourselves according to God

In Genesis 2:7 we read about the way God made man: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground" — this is speaking of our body — "and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." The Hebrew word here for "breath" is *neshamah*, which is also found in Proverbs 20:27. There it is translated "spirit": "The *spirit* of man is the lamp of the Lord." The spirit of man is where the Lord lives and shines.

When God created man, when He breathed into his body the spirit of life, the main thing in His thought was that our spirit would be the center of our being. It is the part that He breathed directly into us to be the controlling center and the place from which we would live and move and think and choose and feel and react. Everything was to come from this center.

So the way God made us was by first forming a body. Then, before the soul could come into existence, God had to breathe the spirit into man. When this happened, Genesis 2:7 says, "man became a living soul." The New King James Version says, "a living *being*"; but the Hebrew word here is *nephesh*, which means soul. Man became a living soul. So first the body was made; then the spirit was breathed in; and then man became a living soul. This indicates the order of our being.

Just consider the order. The order was not the mind first, not the emotion first, not the will first, but the spirit first. Of course, our spirit needed a body. Our bodies are vessels. So God's thought was to put the spirit in us first. He is saying to us, "You cannot have a mind, emotion, and will freewheeling. I did not make you as an independent creature. I made you to be dependent upon Me. So I breathed My Spirit into you, and you became a living soul. Look at you! You have a soul that is now joined to your spirit." This shows us one thing. When you wake up in the morning, your soul is there, but it is dependent. So before you are even getting out of bed, "Lord, I love You. Lord, You are my

life. Lord, I am dependent on You." And everything in you and anything about you is brought to your center. There is no other question, there is no other decision, but to sink into fellowship with the Lord, into union with Him, opening to Him.

The key to our being is our tongue

The key is your tongue! It is as simple as going to the switch on a wall. We may be in a room and enjoying the light. To enjoy this light, we did not have to install wires. The wires were already installed. Everything that is necessary to enjoy light in the room was already there. Now, all we need to do is a very simple thing — walk across the room, go to the switch, and turn it on. When you turn it on, light is there!

Did you know that the tongue is just like that switch? When you received Christ, He was "wired" into you. You are wired with Christ. In other words, He is installed. He is in you. You are not hunting for Him. Now, what is the key to enjoying the living Christ? What is the key to enjoying the life of Christ in you? "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Turn on the light. How? The key is the tongue. Just like the bit controls the horse and the rudder controls the ship, so the part of our being that controls us — that controls our mind, emotion, and will — is the source of our spirit, Christ. But this source, this fountain, is connected to our mouth.

That is why the first thing you do to receive Christ is not "works" — it is not promises, it is not your own righteousness, it is not your own doing, it is not trying to prove you are going to be better, it is not making yourself feel acceptable to God. You just stand there and say one word — "Jesus!" When you say "Jesus," you have just opened yourself to receive Christ into you. He is coming in and you are becoming alive to God. Just opening to speak that name changes our whole being. And now we go on living in the same principle by which we received Christ — just opening to speak that name.

Now let us consider the position our tongue has among our members. James 3:6 says, "The tongue is so set" — notice those words "so set" — "among our members that it defiles the whole body." Of course, this is a negative illustration because it is speaking of

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Christ as Our Shepherd

(Part One)

“For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters.”

Revelation 7:17

This is a most striking verse about Christ. First, He is identified as the Lamb. He is the Lamb of God who is in the midst of the throne. Second, we are told what the Lamb is doing. He is shepherding and leading His flock to living fountains of waters. Of course, we know typically lambs do not shepherd, but instead are “shepherded.” But in this verse, Christ is both. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). And He is the Shepherd over His flock, the church. What does this tell us about Christ? It tells us that He is *everything* to us! He is the all-inclusive Christ. He is a Christ who can be a Lamb and a Shepherd to us at the same time. What a Christ!

That Christ is our Shepherd is a most important truth presented to us in the Bible. Christ is revealed as the good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14), as the great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb. 13:20), as the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4), and as the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25). Moreover, He is the Shepherd of Psalm 23 — “The Lord is my Shepherd.” Let us consider what it means in our experience for Christ to be our Shepherd.

He Is Our Everything

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” The phrase, “I shall not want,” depicts the relationship between a shepherd and his flock. The relationship is simply this: the shepherd is completely responsible for providing every want, every need, of the sheep. Now, we know that sheep are some of the most (forgive the expression) dumb animals in creation. They cannot provide for themselves. They are not even remotely self-sufficient. In fact, if left to themselves they will eat what is bad for them, they will wander and get lost or tangled in brush, and they will frequently put themselves in harm’s way. And to add to all of this, they are totally defenseless. They cannot protect themselves from their enemies or even run from them.

Sheep need a shepherd to fully provide for their every want and need. Again, sheep are not self-sufficient. They

are utterly shepherd-dependent. The shepherd is responsible to supply the sheep with food, water, rest, leading, guiding, and protection. He is their complete overseer. Hence, when Jesus says that He is our good Shepherd, does He not mean by this that He intends to supply us with all that we need? That He is responsible for providing our food, water, rest, leading, guiding, and protection? Yes, He does! In fact, He not only provides these supplies — He Himself *is* all of these supplies. Christ Himself is our food. He is the green pasture upon which we feed. Christ is the still waters from which we drink. Christ is our rest, in whom we lie down. In other words, Christ is the all-sufficient Provider and the all-sufficient Provision.

This is why Paul refers to Christ’s all-sufficient grace (2 Cor. 12:9), and to the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19). His Spirit is so full of supply, so full of riches. He is able to meet every human need, want, and problem. Indeed, there is simply nothing that is too big for Him. His grace is sufficient and bountiful. This is why, in God’s eyes, every problem has one solution — Christ. Christ is the answer. Regardless of how difficult, how trying, how perplexing — every need is fully met by Him. Even our deep needs. Do you have any deep needs? The supply of Christ our Shepherd is more than sufficient for those needs.

We Are So Insufficient

He is the Shepherd and we are His sheep. And when Jesus says that we are His sheep, He is disclosing to us a very important fact about ourselves — that apart from Him we have nothing and can do nothing (John 15:4-5). Though we like to think of ourselves as self-sufficient and independent, in reality we are but dumb sheep. Left to ourselves we eat the wrong things, we wander and get lost, and we fall prey to our enemy, Satan.

And so, under the Shepherd’s guiding hand, He helps us to see our insufficiency and His all-sufficiency. He allows us to go through experiences that expose how needy we are. For example, He may give us an environment that is beyond us. At first, not even thinking about turning to Him or looking to Him, we go out to meet the environment in ourselves. We confidently set out to solve the problem, or we muster up whatever strength we have to overcome it. But as we do so, we are wandering from Him. And without even realizing it, we have drifted far away from Him. Isn’t this our natural tendency? As an old

hymn says, “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it”! What dumb sheep we are! Before we know it we are tangled in the brush — we cannot solve anything, though we have done our best trying. We cannot even cope with the problem. We find ourselves stuck in the brush, utterly exhausted. Finally, in complete desperation, we cry out to our Shepherd. We realize our insufficiency and even our “dumbness.” We turn to Him for His supply and become dependent on Him.

And what a good, merciful Shepherd He is. Immediately He comes to us, gathers us in His arms, and carries us in His bosom (Isa. 40:11). He rescues, saves, and supplies us. Of course, this is what He was after all along. This is why He gave us the environment. It was to teach us how utterly insufficient we are and how completely sufficient He is (2 Cor. 1:8-10). His grace, His supply, is sufficient for every need. Perhaps you are presently in the midst of just such an environment. Maybe you are in the stage of wandering — going out to meet it in your own strength. Or maybe you are in the stage of being tangled in the brush — fighting against your environment or blaming those who outwardly seem to have created your environment. But if we could get through our “dumbness” and see that our environment is from our Shepherd’s hand to lead us to Himself, to cause us to cry out to Him in complete dependence, how quickly He would come to save us. How immediately He would supply us with grace that is sufficient!

The Christian Life Is a Supplied Life

Do we realize how much Christ as our Shepherd wants to be our complete supply? The entire Christian life is a supplied life. It is not a life of effort or strain. It is a life of grazing in the pasture, of drinking the still waters, of lying down to rest. It is a life of being carried by Him in His bosom. Our only problem is that we live undersupplied, malnourished, and exhausted from our own efforts. So often, as dumb sheep we eat the wrong things that do not supply us. We feed on and drink of the things of the world — its pleasures, activities, and preoccupations. We live for hours in front of the TV or computer or newspaper or movie screen. But we spend little time in the Word of God or prayer. We don’t spend time with the Lord. We don’t stop ourselves to draw from Him and find rest in Him. We rarely lie down in Him. What is the result? We find ourselves coping with anger,

lust, jealousy, depression, critical thoughts, and condemnation. Why? Because we have fed the flesh and the self. And if we sow to the flesh, we will of the flesh reap corruption (Gal. 6:8). In other words, the outbreaks of anger, lust, and so forth that we experience are simply symptoms telling us that we are feeding on the wrong things.

But if we would listen to our Shepherd and submit to His voice, He will always lead us to feed on Himself as our food supply. Haven’t you heard the Lord often speaking to you about spending time with Him in the Word? About taking time to be with Him in prayer, to just behold Him? To let Him lay you down from all your busy preoccupations? Do you not hear Him calling you to come unto Him so that He can rest you? (Matt. 11:28). He is leading and guiding us to Himself as our food, drink, and rest. And as we come, we sow to the Spirit. And as we sow to the Spirit, we do not reap corruption, but life! (Gal. 6:8). We find ourselves spontaneously bearing the fruit of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, longsuffering (Gal. 5:22-23). Oh, the Christian life is a supplied life!

He Restores Our Soul

As we eat and drink Christ, He does something more — He restores our soul (Psa. 23:3). All of us have certain quirks and peculiarities in our soul. As a result of sin and so much sowing to our flesh in the past, our souls have been, to one degree or another, warped and damaged. Thus, we cope with inward problems and hangups that often seem constant and unsolvable. After many years of trying to straighten ourselves out, we conclude that our inward problems are insurmountable. For instance, we may have a temper that can go off at the slightest provocation. We do not just get angry once in awhile — we have a temper that is very difficult to control. Obviously, this is not normal. Our soul has been damaged and warped, and it needs to be restored.

The most encouraging news is this — our Shepherd restores our soul! Yes, His grace is sufficient for even that! His life has the power to change us and restore us to normalcy. Though to our natural thought this may seem impossible, remember Paul’s word: “But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us” (Eph. 3:20). Jesus Christ is so able. Our only need is to feed on Him. To drink Him. To daily lie down in Him. To let Him be

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our fallen side — the flesh and all the evil things that come out of this wrong source. But just take the principle of the tongue here — it is set among our members. And it is set in such a way that it “defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature.” The American Standard Version translates this “the *wheel* of nature,” which is a more descriptive translation of the Greek word *trochos*. The tongue sets in motion things in your being. This is the way the tongue works. If you say negative things, if you start complaining, if you let a little complaint and murmur come out, pretty soon you are really feeling bad about everything. And the more you talk to someone about it, the worse you get worked up. You know how it works. This is the wheel of nature, the fallen nature in us.

So you open your mouth and you say things. But just reverse the process. Just say, “Praise You, Lord. Thank You, Jesus. You do not make any mistakes. Thank You for this delay in the appraisal of our house. Thank You that we can’t get the approval until the garage is done, until the family room is done.” This was in my thoughts as I was driving one day. And then I said, “Lord, You do all things well! You know better than we do why this is the case.” Before this, I was on one track in my thinking and I could have led my whole being in that direction. But I just switched tracks and started to thank Him, saying, “God, You do all things well!” I turned. And as a result of turning, my whole being was brought into an enjoyment. I began to enjoy the Lord from that point on in a new kind of way. This shows us how the wheel of nature is set in motion by our tongue.

As a human being, I have all kinds of members. My mind is a member of my being, and my emotions are a member, and my will is a member. Then there is my body — my eyes and my ears and my feet — these are all members. We can break our body down into its member-parts. James says the tongue is set among all these members. It has a position. Just think about your mouth. It has a position with your eyes, your ears, and your mind. We have many members, and they are all parts of our being. But the tongue is set among the members in a special way so that it influences the rest of the members. It influences. Your mind can be influenced, your emotions can be influenced — your whole being can be influenced by one member. The tongue can turn your whole being. This shows how

crucial your tongue is. And this is not just because of the physical anatomy of the tongue. You have to realize that the tongue is connected to the fountain, just like James says: “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing” (3:10). This indicates that there is a source to live by and to spring from. And our new source is for speaking what God is operating in us (cf. John 14:10, 24).

Our members as parts of Christ

Look at our members. All of our members are parts of Christ. First Corinthians 6:15 says, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!” Here Paul tells us that our bodies are members of Christ. All the parts of our being are members of Christ. We have been redeemed by Christ. We belong to Christ. So every part of me, every member, is a member of Christ. And with one member, among all these members that are members of Christ, I can influence everything in my being. It just takes one member, and that is the tongue. So you praise, you call Jesus, you get into the Word, you speak the Word of God, you sing, and you touch the source. And what happens is that this “wild horse” that could not be tamed gets tamed. Why? Because the tongue leads you to the source. God is your source, and the secret of living by God as your source is to pray, is to call “Jesus,” is to fellowship. It is to learn how to interact. Interact with your fountain. Interact with your source. And then everything springs from that.

The law of sin in our members

Now let me prove that self-control does not come by self-control. Self-control comes as a result of changing the source of your life. You and I try to control ourself. We try to control our lust. We try to control our temper. We try to control our inordinate thinking. We try to control the passions of sin which are in our members, working in our members. We try to control the law of sin. Our members are full of the law of sin. We try to control. We make a resolution. We think our resolution is going to change our lust. We have addictive habits. We have propensities and we have lusts in our flesh. And we think that our thought

is going to control the law of sin in our members. Paul thought that “thought” could do it. But he realized one day that thought — just thinking about being different — was not going to do it. Paul was the greatest thinker that you could find. In Romans 7 he was thinking about the law of God. And he even had a strong will. Paul was a very strong person in his natural life, and he determined within himself to be different; but even that could not do it. Paul discovered that the law of sin was in his members, and that he could not control it in himself.

Self-control is the fruit of the Spirit

There is a secret. We should all know the secret. We find it in Galatians 5:22-23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Look at this! Self-control is the result of the Spirit. Self-control is the fruit of the Spirit. This is why we can say that self-control does not come by self-control. To be self-controlled, disciplined, taming your being, keeping it on track toward the goal of the kingdom, following the Lord, being a person who is not an unruly person but who is under God’s control — this all comes by being in the Spirit for the producing of the fruit of the Spirit!

Self-control is one of the greatest lacks among Christians. Early in my own Christian life, I had a thought life that would not stop. Old thoughts used to run into my mind and just control me, and I did not know what to do with those thoughts. All I could do was just drive down the freeway for miles and miles and hope my thoughts would go away. But they didn’t. I would just drive and drive, but the thoughts were still there. I did not know what to do with my mind.

Even though I was a Christian, I did not know where the “switch” was. I did not know that my spirit was where Jesus lives in me and where I could be joined to Him. I could go to the spirit-switch and with my mouth cry “Jesus!” I could call and interrupt — “Thought life, go ahead and think! I am going to visit Jesus now. I am going to sink down into my spirit and I am going to pray and I am going to call on the Lord.” I did not know all this in those days. But thank God, I know it today. I am still subject to thoughts. I may be overtaken with thoughts this minute by hearing a bad report. You know, something may happen that is just enough to tilt you; it is enough to get you off course.

But the point is, we know we can turn and call on the name of Jesus and immediately realign our wild thought life. So it is wonderful to know that our mouth is for this.

The influence of one member upon the others

There is a principle in the Word that reveals that one member of the Body has an influence upon the other members. First Corinthians 12:26 says, “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” In its context this verse refers to brothers and sisters in the Lord. But also consider it as an illustration about the members in our own body: when one member is rejoicing, the whole body will rejoice with it. All the other members will rejoice with it. So when your mouth begins to rejoice, you cause your mind to rejoice. There is an influence. You cannot separate or isolate the parts of our body. Our members are not compartmentalized. Whatever gets into one member is going to influence the rest of the members.

Speaking and source

James is really burdened about source. What source do we live by? If you are speaking a certain way, it is not accidental. Source is not about just correcting your talk in an outward sense. If you are speaking a certain way, why do you speak this way? Because you are not a pure person. Purity is not about just cleaning something up. It has to do with the source from which you come. Purity refers to being a pure person, a person who is dependent upon God. We may think a pure person is someone who is all correct and all right and does everything right. But a pure person can be a weak person, even a failing person, but one who comes to God and depends on God and interacts with God.

Look in the Old Testament. Saul failed and David failed. They both failed. But Saul’s failures drove him away from God, and David’s failures drove him to God. So failure can drive you away from God or it can drive you to God. David was brought to the source of God (cf. Ps. 51). So in the same way, let every sense of failure drive you to God. Then you become more and more pure, you become dependent upon Him, and you draw from Him.

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Now let us look at James 3:13-15: ¹³ “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, soulish, demonic.” Do you see how James connects the lying tongue to bitter envy and self-seeking? Then he brings you right to the source. If you are this way, it means your source is earthly. Not only so, it is soulish. It is not just “soul”; it is called “soulish.” Soulish refers to the way you live. You live by just exercising your mind or you live by being so emotional. You just pump up your emotions with outward things. Or you live by your own will — trying and trying again. In other words, soulish means you live in the realm of the soul.

“Soulish” is in contrast to “spiritual.” What is spiritual? It does not refer to some kind of outwardly pious conduct, as we might think. Spiritual refers to anyone who will use this part — the spirit — to contact the Lord and say, “Jesus, I love You. Lord, I am not the source. You are the source. Live in my mind. Live in my emotion. You live through me, Lord.” So a spiritual person is a person who is dependent upon God. Thus, in this chapter what seems to be a very superficial matter — just changing your talk — turns out to be a matter of *the source* of your life.

Then James says in verses 16-18, ¹⁶ “For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” So what James brings us to is our source and being pure. And then he shows us the issue of the Lord purifying us — we become peacemakers.

Our tongue activates our spirit

After seeing all these things in the Word of God, how would you answer the question, how do I control myself? Only remember one thing. Self-control is the fruit of the Spirit. So learn how to pray, to sing to the Lord, to fellowship, to share the gospel. Learn how to let the Word bring you into the Spirit. Do everything

to help activate your spirit. Today everyone is exercising their body. And in the universities everyone is exercising their mind. Then if you go to a concert, everyone is exercising their emotions. So everyone is exercising these parts of their being. But the Bible shows us that on this earth the genuine humanity comes by exercising the spirit. By this we will discover God’s life being produced in us more and more, which is self-control.

The key is with our tongue — opening our mouth. Just realize that by praying, by touching the Lord, this mouth of ours can turn our whole being in the middle of a thought, in the middle of reactions, moods, depression, feeling bad about yourself. Just interrupt it! Feeling bad about yourself is typical for the flesh. That is how the flesh always feels. It never seems to want to give up its mood. So interrupt it. Call upon the name of the Lord, and immediately you are in the source of your being that controls all your members. It is in this way that we live in the reality of the kingdom life.*

* This article is taken from chapter 5 of *The Kingdom Life*, by Bill Freeman.

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our Shepherd. Do not look for a quick, instantaneous deliverance. Though God can do this and sometimes has done it, more often His way is to restore our soul by a gradual feeding, drinking, and resting. It is by a continual dependence on His supply. That is, we regularly sow to the Spirit. And as we sow to the Spirit, we will of the Spirit reap life. Sowing and reaping are not quick, instantaneous matters. They are gradual matters. But their results are wonderfully solid and eternal. As we are daily supplied by Him, He gradually restores our soul. — Kirk Eland

the Christian

the Christian is a nonprofit monthly publication of **Ministry of the Word, Inc.** This paper is for the spreading of the truth of God’s Word and the building up of the Body of Christ.

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