

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED UPON THE LETTER OF JAMES

YOUR TONGUE CAN CURSE AND BLESS

James 3:9-10 “With it (the tongue) 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.”

Bill and John had worked together for years. John became ill and soon thereafter he died. Bill decided to attend the visitation for John at the local funeral home to pay his respects to John’s wife and family. Bill noticed at the funeral home that John’s memorial service was scheduled for the next day at St. John’s Lutheran Church. He inquired a bit further and discovered John had been a leader at his church serving as an Elder, assisting with communion distribution on Sundays and even filling in as a Sunday school teacher on occasions. One member of the church described John to Bill as a “pillar of the church.” Bill was a bit taken aback at learning John’s significant activity at a Christian church. At work John was known for his “foul language,” “telling course jokes,” “tearing down people,” etc.

James says, “Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing.” Then he commented, “My brothers, these things ought not to be so.” (James 3:10) One would expect a Christian to praise (bless) God with the words that he or she speaks. What one would not expect is for the Christian to speak sinful, hateful, vulgar, course words and worse yet to “cause injury or harm by means of the words they speak about or against another person.” (Dictionary definition of curse)

Bless or praise means that the Christian is speaking a good word. Such words are the highest forms of words a person can speak. These words build up, encourage, bring about good in the lives of those who hear them. The writer to the Hebrews encourages believers to “build one another up every day.” (Hebrews 11:3)

Your tongue is capable of speaking good words, but it is also able to speak hurtful words that tear down and worse yet give a false witness to others about God and His love and mercy. Your tongue can be a little hypocrite that can make you, like John, into a big one. Or, your tongue can give clear testimony You are God’s child called to give praise and honor and glory to His name seven days a week.

James continues in the next verses, “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.” (James 3:11-12) Left to yourself, you cannot tame your tongue. Thanks be to God; He fills you with His Spirit to guard and guide your thoughts and words.

Prayer: O Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

God of grace and God of glory, On Your people pour Your pow’r;
Crown Your ancient Church’s story; Bring its bud to glorious flow’r.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage For the facing of this hour,
For the facing of this hour.

Lo, the hosts of evil round us Scorn the Christ, assail His ways!
From the fears that long have bound us Free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage For the living of these days,
For the living of these days.

Cure Your children’s warring madness; Bend our pride to Your control;
Shame our wanton, selfish gladness, Rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage Lest we miss Your kingdom’s goal,
Lest we miss Your kingdom’s goal.

Save us from weak resignation To the evils we deplore;
Let the gift of Your salvation Be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, Serving You whom we adore,
Serving You whom we adore.
(LSB 850)