

Destruction From The Lips

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If you are like me, you want to operate in the Spirit, empowered by God's power as He uses you for His glory. So pay attention to what I'm about to tell you because I want to talk to you about the presence of both bitter and sweet fountains in the Kingdom of God. You must have an understanding of this subject if you are ever going to obtain God's highest and best in this life.

James talks about this fountain in the third chapter of his epistle:

For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. (James 3:2, 6-12)

This passage makes it clear: *Without divine intervention, the tongue will not be changed; for it cannot be changed in the natural.* It must be by the Spirit of God.

But verse 12 seems like a contradiction of verse 9. James says that with our tongues we bless God; then we turn around and curse men who are created in His image. James then declares that we are never to allow our tongues to be used for evil like that. What is the reason he gives? Because it is absolutely impossible for bitter and sweet water to flow forth from the same fountain.

Years ago I questioned God about this. I asked Him: "If it is impossible for bitter and sweet water to flow from the same fountain, how can a believer curse men who are made in Your image and then turn around and bless You in the next breath?"

You may wonder the same thing, but here is what we all have to understand: When the Word of God says something, it means what it says. This is the number-one rule for meditating on God's Word. It doesn't matter whether we believe or even understand what the Word says. If God says something in His Word, we may as well consider the matter settled, because that is exactly how He sees the situation.

We have to realize that the Kingdom of God isn't a democracy. God isn't waiting for our vote to determine what is true. If He said it, it is so. He has already set the standard for truth. The Word is the standard against which we are to measure everything else in this universe. It is the discernor of the intents and the thoughts of our hearts. If we didn't have the standard of the Word by which to measure everything that goes on in our lives, we wouldn't know how to change for the better, much less what to believe.

So with that in mind, let's talk about what is actually happening when you see someone talk badly about another person one day and then raise his hands on Sunday morning to worship God.

As you listen to this salt-water fountain spouting out words of "*Oh, how I love Jesus,*" you may think back on the times he has hurt other people with his words. Very likely you begin to think, *This just doesn't make sense. I thought salt and sweet water could not flow from the same fountain.*

But the truth is, salt and sweet water *cannot* flow from the same fountain because God said in His Word that it could not. A key to understanding this passage in James can be found in Matthew 7:17-20, where Jesus declares that every tree is known by its own fruit.

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. (Mt. 7:17-20)

You see, a tree is a manufacturing company. It starts out as a seed and has to go through many changes. It has its own circulatory system, and water is its "blood." The tree's roots pull up minerals through the water in the ground. It also mixes sunlight with carbon dioxide and produces a by-product called oxygen.

As all these processes take place, the tree works toward one goal—producing the fruit that will eventually manifest on its limbs. It is inevitable that the fruit will come. As Jesus explained, whatever that tree has working on the inside of it will eventually appear on its limbs.

The same principle applies to our lives. Whatever is working on the inside of us will eventually appear on the outside. What we really are is what we will eventually manifest. The stronghold that is dominating our lives will eventually be revealed, whether it is the stronghold of God's Word transforming our lives, or a sinful stronghold that turns us into salt-water wells. In the latter case, we may try to cover up the problem for a while. But in time, the real person *will* step forward because the Word of God always serves as a *discerner of the intents and thoughts of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12).

In my naive and gullible days after I was born again, I wasn't able to spot salt-water wells when they came into my life. Even after I had been a Christian for many years, I'd still be shocked when a salt-water well finally spewed out his true character all over me.

Keep in mind that sweet and salt water *cannot* flow from the same fountain. Therefore, the reason I didn't always recognize a salt-water well when it came into my presence was that the bitter water was manifesting itself in deception. In other words, the person was painting a false picture of who he was for me because he wanted me to believe he was full of sweet water. Yet in reality, that person was just as salty at the moment he seemed so sweet as he was when his true character was revealed—when the fruit was actually manifested on the limbs of that particular tree.

In my naivete, I allowed several salt-water wells to do me in before I learned my lesson. Perhaps this has happened to you too. Maybe you came into the presence of a salt-water well and sensed an inner witness that said, "Do not trust him." But then that person told you how rich you could get if you just followed his advice, so you immediately became his best friend. Then when that salt-water well flooded your garden, you realized, *Well, God warned me. I just didn't listen. I deserve this mess.*

So the truth of the matter is this: A salt-water well is always a salt-water well, even when it doesn't look like it. That person is just spewing forth a facade to make you believe that his water is sweet. When you no longer serve that person's purpose, he will discard you and move on to someone else.

You might get confused because you assume that you are seeing both sweet and salt water flow from the same fountain. But that isn't true. The person who hurt you was never a sweet-water well; his deception was just a manifestation of the salt water within him.

I've learned over the years how to avoid being Mr. Gullible. Now a salt-water well can only hurt me if I elect to allow him to do it, not because I don't know the kind of person I'm dealing with.

"But how can you tell the difference?"

It isn't always easy, and I certainly can't do it without praying. If I don't pray about my relationship with a particular person, I don't have much discernment. Instead, I tend to become overpowered with the majesty of the person's personality. I think I've found a best friend, a confidant, someone I can depend on and trust. Then the salt water starts spewing forth through the person's character, and suddenly I'm hurt once again.

Now, I'm not talking about people who are just coming off dope or who have just gotten saved after being abused and hurt by the world. I understand that transformation is taking place in the lives of people like that. They are still babies who need the sincere milk of the Word. They may go back and forth between displaying godly character and lying about their misdeeds; nevertheless, I know that their growing process is still intact.

No, I am talking about people who have already grown past that baby stage yet have chosen not to change their character. These people have learned the language of religion. They know just how a Christian is supposed to act. When you start a verse, they can finish it. They seem to be absolutely everything you have been looking for in a Christian. Still, in the back of your mind you wonder why they left the church they last attended.

Over the years, the Holy Spirit has purged a lot of salt water out of my own life. First I had to get past the purging of the common temptations Christians face, such as not wanting to go to church or to spend time worshiping God. Then the Holy Spirit began to purge the traces of the salt water that were still hidden within.

Little by little, God has purged more and more of that salt water out of my life. I realize that every now and then, some salt water still flows out of me. But at least I have come to the place of hating the salt water that manifests in my life. That's a very important step toward becoming a sweet-water well!

One salt-water area that had to go in my life was the tendency to be less than absolutely truthful with people regarding my motivation in different situations. You see, most of us want to appear a little bigger and more spiritual than we really are in other people's eyes. Therefore, we often give excuses to cover up weak areas in our lives.

For instance, someone may ask a fellow believer, "Why didn't I see you at the church service the other night?"

Instead of responding truthfully by saying, "Well, I just didn't want to go," the second person might say, "I had to put in some extra time working that night." This kind of excuse is so common in the Body of Christ that Christians don't know what to do when someone actually answers honestly! The truth is, when Christians don't go to a particular church service or church function, the reason is usually that they just didn't want to go. Too often, however, they give an excuse to cover up their true motives or their lack of spirituality.

I have learned that the more closely I represent the absolute, accurate truth in a situation instead of what I would like people to believe about me, the more I become the sweet-water well God desires for me to be. The same principle holds true for all of us.

So salt and sweet water cannot flow from the same fountain. What a person really is will eventually appear on the lips. When a salt-water well appears to be spouting forth sweet water, it is usually salt water flowing in deception. This is what makes the tongue so potentially dangerous. As James said, the tongue is the tiny member of the human body capable of delivering an entire world of iniquity!

You see, all a water fountain does is deliver what is in the reservoir. So if the reservoir has arsenic in it, then the fountain, which in this analogy is the tongue, is eventually going to poison everyone who drinks from it. That's why James spoke of the POWER of the tongue—because the tongue has the ability to deliver whatever is in the person's inner reservoir. And if the reservoir is full of envy and strife, James 3:16 says that the tongue will deliver confusion and *every* evil work.

James even likens the tongue to the rudder of a ship. The ship is massive, but the little rudder can either turn that ship into the path of a storm, or it can guide the ship safely away from the storm. In the same way, your tongue can either create a storm or calm a storm down that threatens to disrupt your life.

However, you cannot tame your tongue by natural means. The only thing that can tame your tongue is your new nature empowered by the Word of God. These are the weapons of your warfare that can pull down the strongholds in your life that are not of God and replace them with the revelation knowledge that sets you free.

James exhorts us to major on this goal, for if we master our tongues, we can bridle our whole bodies (James 3:2). In other words, to master the tongue is to change the contents of our inner reservoir. However, there is only one way to master what is in our reservoirs so that our tongues don't poison the people around us: *we must depend completely on the supernatural power of the holy spirit.*

Remember, bitter and sweet water cannot flow from the same fountain. Eventually what is really in your reservoir is going to come forth. If you want to be in church, you will be in church. If you don't want to be there, you will eventually stop going. If you want to pray, you will pray. If you don't want to pray, you will stop praying. You will eventually do exactly what you want to do because every tree is known by its own fruit.

James goes on to ask in James 4:1, "Where does all this bitter water—these wars and fighting among you, come from?" Then he answers his own question: *Bitter water always originates in the lusts of the flesh.* A person who is a salt-water well is in a backslidden condition. He can't ask anything of God with any success because when he does, he asks in order to consume it on his own lusts.

How do you make sure you're not in this category? Verses 6-10 tell you what you must do. You must humble yourself *in the sight of god, not before men.* You see, God doesn't care whether or not men are watching. That makes no difference to Him. He cares that you humble yourself in His sight and become teachable, bringing forth fruit worthy of repentance. Only then will He lift you up to become a sweet-water fountain. Only then will you be able to resist the devil and cause the enemy to flee from you.

James also says in verse 8: "... *cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*" We see here that a person who has an impure heart is also double-minded. He is a salt-water

well. He will curse you in one breath and bless God with the next breath. That's why James says this person must first stop sinning and then purify his heart.

Jesus had this to say about the pure in heart in Matthew 5:8: Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Who fits in this category of "the pure in heart"? The man or the woman who operates in total absence of deceit.

Nathaniel was such a person. Jesus said of him, "You are an Israelite in whom there is no deceit" (*see* John 1:47-49).

Nathaniel's response was immediate: "Jesus, You are the Son of God."

Now, why would Jesus' statement confirm to Nathaniel that this Man speaking to him was the Son of God? I can tell you exactly why. In God is no darkness at all. In His immutability, God cannot change or be changed, nor is it possible for Him to lie. This means He cannot add Himself to a person's lie, no matter how insignificant the lie seems to be—how candy-coated in deceit it is.

So this Israelite was amazed when he heard Jesus say, "You have no guile." Why? It was because Nathaniel had paid the price to walk in truth. He knew that there are only two reasons a man lies: **1)** He either believes that the temporary solution the lie brings to a problem outweighs the more permanent solution God would have brought had he not lied; or **2)** he wants to be something he is not. Either way, a person who will exaggerate or misrepresent the truth has no capacity to understand a man who refuses to do so, much less believe in an infallible God who is *incapable* of lying.

This subject starts to get real interesting now. You see, once you start paying the price to walk in truth and live as a fresh-water well the way Nathaniel did, you'll find out that it can cost you dearly. For instance, if adjusting your income total even one dollar on your income tax return will cost you five thousand dollars, you will still do it in order to keep deceit out of your life.

Most people will say, "Well, I can bury this dollar over here. It isn't legal, but the IRS will never find it."

But I refuse to do that. The assassination of my character carries a much higher price than a mere five thousand dollars.

"Do you mean that you would lose five thousand dollars because of a one-dollar adjustment?"

Yes, I would lose the wealth of the world before I would consent to anything that would contribute to the assassination of my character.

Now you can see what Nathaniel meant by his declaration to Jesus. In essence, Nathaniel was saying, "No man alive could understand what this decision to walk in truth has cost me. You have to be the Messiah to understand that!"

Jesus' response to Nathaniel was right in line with His statement in Matthew 5:8. "*The pure in spirit are blessed, for they will see God. Therefore, Jesus told Nathaniel, "Henceforth from this day forward, your eyes are going to behold angels ascending and descending."*

I like that. Jesus didn't say this to any other apostle except Nathaniel. I mean, a few of the others may have had a few heavenly visitations in their lifetime, but they didn't continually see angels coming and going between Heaven and earth! Why was Nathaniel allowed to see such heavenly visions? Because

God knew that this disciple would never take that information and misjudge it, exaggerate it, or lie about it. When Jesus told Nathaniel something, He knew He could trust him.

Can Jesus say the same thing about you? Have you made the decision to pay the price of truth in your life? Are you a salt-water well or a sweet-water fountain?

God always gives us the grace to change—as long as you are willing to yield to the authority of His Word.

But what if a person looks for grace while he's still using the Word to connive, scheme and cover up his sin? What if he intentionally attaches himself to people who are gullible, capitalizing on their love and using their energy for his own gain?

A person like that is in trouble, for James 4:6 says God is *opposed* to him. After the person finally shows his true character—the salt water that has been lying hidden within him all along—he will more than likely move on to look for another gullible group of people. However, rest assured—what he really is on the inside will eventually be known. Remember, a tree's fruit, whether good or bad, will eventually be manifested on its limbs.

This is one reason I encourage people to pray much in the Holy Ghost. When a person is diligent to do that, it isn't long before the salt water begins to drain out and the sweet water begins to flow freely.

So humble yourself in the sight of God, and get rid of the salt water that remains in your life. Start repenting and calling on God to change you until you begin to bring forth fruit of repentance. Worship God. Pray in the Holy Ghost. Meditate on His Word and continually confess His truth. Refuse to spew out salt any longer as you present yourself to others as you truly are.

Always remember, the Word of God is your two-edged sword that divides between spirit and soul. It is the only qualified agent by which you can purify your heart, for only the Word can discern the intents of your heart, letting you know what to pull down and what to construct in your life as you seek God with all your heart.

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