

Mid-Week Devotional

Sticks and Stones...



Read James 1:19-27

If any think they are religious and do not bridle their tongues... their religion is worthless. 1:26

When we were kids I am sure many of us used to say “sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me.” We might have even told our children this as they were growing up. Unfortunately, this is just another one of those many lies we grew up hearing and believing. This one, I believe is right under being told, you can be anything you want to be; that all you have to do is work hard. Someone gave me a little clipping that I keep on my desk that reads, “When my young son asked the inevitable question, “Mother. What can I be when I grow up,” I was thrilled at the opportunity to instill a positive attitude in him. “Son,” I replied, “you can be anything you want to be.” “Good,” he said. “I want to be a bear!” Well, I am digressing, but I could not resist. I think if you look back into your life at the times you were hurt most, you will agree that angry words were at the root of that hurt.

Unlike our Bill of Rights and the 1st amendment to our Constitution, the Bible doesn't teach free speech. In fact, there are some things that we must never say, even if we feel like it. This is because once those words leave our lips, they are out there, and can never be recalled. Words like “I don't love you,” or “You're not good enough,” or “I hate you,” or “I wish I never met you,” can cause such deep hurts and leave such deep emotional scars that they should simply never be said. Furthermore, once they are uttered, all the reassurances in the world that you really didn't mean it, like saying you're sorry a million times, can never close the gaping hole they created in the heart of the one you hurt.

James knew this all too well, and as a part of his ministry to the churches, he addressed the hurt that people caused each other. His answer to the problem was, well simply put, to stop talking so much. This included complaining, bickering, bragging, and gossiping just to mention a few. You see while this not only hurts others, it also hurts you by distorting the image of Christ Jesus in your life. What does it say to the world when we profess that our God is love, and then have so many hateful words pass our lips? Yes, we can blame it on our sinful nature and not being perfect. Yet, I suspect it goes much deeper, in fact, it goes as deep as your soul! Having been created in God's image makes everything we do spiritual, having spiritual consequences.

Even Jesus got angry, but He never allowed His anger to cause Him to sin. Have you noticed that the only time Jesus would talk about others was in prayer? And even then it was only to say, “Father forgive them.” So perhaps the lesson here is to take our frustration, our anger, and even our hurts, and turn them into a prayer that begins with, “Father forgive them.” When we do this, not only will we stop hurting others in our lives, but we will let our true image shine forth.

Gracious Father, give us hearts so full of love for You that our lips would be so busy showing that love that they would have no time to utter words that hurt.

Pastor Ed