



SERIES: FEBRUARY – MARCH FAITH IN REAL LIFE

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Scripture: James 3:1-2

TITLE: Build or Burn?

Misinformation, misquoting, misspeaking, or fact-checking. These are all words that are part and parcel with speaking from a position of authority today. Our words are always under fire and under scrutiny but never in such a quick-fire and quick-judgment mode as we see today and especially for those of authority and influence.

And though, these terms are new, the power and influence of words is not.

For the past two chapters of James' letter, James has been focusing on the importance of our actions and their reflection of our relationship with God. Now, James is going to shift from actions to our words.

Here is how James begins in James 3:1-2 (CSB).

Not many should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is mature, able also to control the whole body.

One of the questions I often get is “why are you a pastor?” or, “How did you become a Bible teacher?” Well, many people are surprised when I say, “I wasn’t looking for it. It was a calling.”

When Arnie Cole, our former CEO, asked me if I wanted to help lead Back to the Bible into a new day, I said, “no thank you.” It’s not that I didn’t feel called to ministry and likely in a leadership role. But there is a unique burden in preaching and teaching. It’s not something to be sought but rather a calling. Well, God called, and I answered but not with utmost respect and concern.

James says, “*Not many of you should become teachers because you will receive a stricter judgment.*” Now, the role of teacher or in the time of this writing, Rabbi, it was both prestigious and burdensome. But with this role came great responsibility. And it came with a greater ramifications. This is likely why there is stricter judgment. This is both true from God according to Jesus in Luke 12:48. But it is also true from how it impacts the lives of the pupils and the reputation of the Gospel.

Then James says, the person who masters his tongue or his words is truly mature. Jesus said that out of the mouth flows the condition of our heart. If then our spirit is corrupt, our mouth will surely expose us.

Our lives matter as James preached in chapters 1 and 2. And today, our words as leaders matter greatly. But so do everyone's words.

So here's my challenge for you today: do a heart check. What is going in your heart? Do you seek to be a teacher of the Word? Why? Do you desire to lead in ministry? Why? What do your words reveal about you? What about your e-mails? Your texts?

It may be a frightening discovery. Our words can build or burn. Which will it be for you? Choose right words and right motives.

When we do, we will win the day.