Sermon

Ever said anything you instantly regret?

Some people live by words such as authors, journalists, lawyers, teachers, preachers.

Controlling words is OK most of the time but when interrupted, or when others butt in, or you are tired…

Lawyers use words to break down self-control in court settings.

James wants us to realise that:

[1] Words are powerful: The image of a ship’s rudder (v4)

Martin Luther King – ‘I have a dream’ speech; Winston Churchill – ‘Never in the field of human conflict’

But also “Mein Kampf” – for every word >100 died in WWII.

Most of our words do not have such a great impact, but they still wield some power: stirring, belittling, comforting, encouraging. See v9 – blessings and curses. We do well to remember this.

[2] Words can be destructive (v8)

“Sticks and stones…” But words can hurt, and sometimes more than actions.

In the Jeremy Kyle show words might be said that can permanently damage a relationship.

Teenager girls who falsely accuse a male teacher can ruin his life.

It is not always what we say but the way that we say it.

James says ‘the tongue is a fire’ (not ‘like a fire’ v6, despite GNB).   
Fires can be useful *and* destructive. So can our tongues.

[3] Words reveal our hearts (v11f) (see also Luke 6.43-45)

If you want to know what someone is like, listen to how they speak, especially about those with whom they disagree. If they show respect, even if strongly against, that is different from the acid tongue, which comes from an acid heart.

So for the rest of today, consider how you use words. Fill mind with good thoughts and see if that helps.