

**"True Faith and the Tongue"**

**James 3:1-12**

**Part 3**

**Introduction:** We come back to our study in the book of James today and as we do we again look at what James says about the tongue. At the close of James 2 he addressed the topic of how True saving faith will manifest itself in works. He did this with 2 illustrations from the Old Testament. He pointed to Abraham and his offer of Isaac on Mt. Moriah. Then he pointed to Rahab and how she hid the spies in the city of Jericho.

Now as we come to chapter 3 James is still thinking about True saving faith and how it will manifest itself but he now goes into another area and that is the area of SPEECH. James knew that when a man or a woman was saved that one of the evidences of the salvation would be the way they talk.

Now I have told you in the past 2 messages that the tongue is the revealer of the heart and that is exactly what Jesus said in Matthew 12.

**Matthew 12:34-35**

<sup>34</sup> *O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*

<sup>35</sup> *A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*

Someone who professes to be saved but cannot control their tongue and continues to gossip, slander, back bite, lie or anything of the sort is either carnal or unsaved.

**James 1:26**

<sup>26</sup> *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

True saving faith will manifest itself in the way we speak.

If you talk like the world when you are in the world then you better look very close at your own heart. If you are a gossip, if you have no problems talking about someone behind their back, if you can tell dirty jokes, and if you can curse and swear like your unsaved friends

then I will say that you are probably not saved and if you claim that you are then you have most likely deceived yourself.

**Illustration:**

Let me give you a true life example of what I am talking about. My father was a man that learned to tell me what I wanted to hear when I questioned him about his salvation. He could tell me that he had accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior and that he knew where he was going when he died. But I had a tough time believing that and the reason was because of his speech when he became angry. He would use the Lord's name in vain and it never bothered him. One day he found out I had him on the prayer list at church for salvation and he was furious. He blamed the Pastor but I told him it was me. He said I was wrong and that he was saved. I then asked him this, "Then how can you use the Lord's name the way that you do?" That went through him like a knife and he finally admitted he was not saved which led to his salvation.

I tell you that to help you to see that it was the speech of my father that revealed his true heart and I knew that it was not possible for a man to repeatedly use the Lord's name in vain and be saved.

Let me give you a quick outline of these verses then we will get to the text.

**I. The Tongue can Condemn**

**Notice James 3:1-2**

**II. The Tongue can Control**

**Notice James 3:3-5a**

**III. The Tongue can Cause Great Damage**

**Notice James 3:5b-6a**

James compares the tongue to fire because of several reasons.

1. Fire is very destructive.
2. Fire spreads.

An entire city can be burned with one match. In the same way entire families, large churches, complete reputations, and a person's personal character can all be destroyed by

one statement of gossip, one lie, or by one statement that is slanderous. That is the power of the tongue.

**Notice James 3:6b**

Here James lists the destructive power of the tongue.

1. It will defile the entire body. Just as smoke from a fire.
2. It will defile the lives of other people. If a rumor is started about someone their life can also become contaminated by the rumor.
3. It can be used as an instrument of destruction by Satan.

Now I want to remind you of something that I pointed out last week. That is seen in 2 verses.

**Proverbs 18:21**

<sup>21</sup> *Death and life are in the power of the tongue*: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

The tongue can be used for 2 purposes:

- a. **It can be used to kill and to destroy.**
- b. **It can be used to share the Truth of the Word of God which is life.**

**Matthew 12:36-37**

<sup>36</sup> *But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

<sup>37</sup> *For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

There are several thoughts to be gleaned from these verses:

1. **God is fully aware of every word which we speak.**

**Psalm 139:4**

<sup>4</sup> *For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.*

2. **We will be held accountable for every "idle" word.**

What is an "idle" word? Listen to the definition from Vines Dictionary.

*It means, "barren, yielding no return, because of inactivity". It speaks of words that are thoughtless or profitless.*

Now listen to this: we have been given tongues and the ability to speak so that we would glorify and magnify the Lord with our words. When we have the opportunity to do so and we instead make small talk and shrug our responsibility to speak for God then for those "IDLE" words we will be held accountable.

But let me take that thought further. If we will be held accountable for every "idle" word how much more will we be held accountable for the words that are destructive or misleading?

#### **Notice James 3:7**

Here in this verse James is setting the stage to show just how unruly the tongue can be. In this verse he reminds his readers that there is not any WILD animal that has not been tamed. Lions, elephants, snakes, and anything you can imagine have been tamed.

Now let us keep in mind that these animals have basically been bludgeoned into submission.

#### **Notice James 3:8**

This is the key verse to the entire section.

James gives us a contrast here. The contrast is between the wild animals and the tongue. The animals can be tamed but there is no man that can tame the tongue. James tells us 2 things about the tongue:

- a. **It is unruly.**
- b. **It is full of deadly poison.**

Now as believers these 2 descriptions should cause us to really pay attention to what James is saying.

We are ambassadors for Christ and therefore we are to live in a way that the world around us sees Jesus Christ in us. As believers we should desire to control the tongue and to be sure the poison is never unleashed on even one person.

But this verse tells us that no MAN can tame the tongue. Now let me explain what James is saying here.

There is not one person that has the ability to control his or her tongue. But if you are saved you do have within you the power to control the tongue. That power is given by the Holy Spirit and therefore in order for us to control the tongue we must be controlled by the Spirit.

## **2 Peter 1:2-4**

<sup>2</sup> *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,*

<sup>3</sup> *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

<sup>4</sup> *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

Peter tells us that we already have the power to control the tongue. But the problem with many believers is that do not know how to access the DIVINE POWER that has been given to them.

This power is made available to us by FAITH. I am not talking about saving faith I am talking about living faith. But before we can walk in the faith that is required for victory we must learn what the Bible says about the power we have within us. The bottom line is that we cannot walk by faith in something that we do not know about.

Let me show you something that will help you to see what I mean.

## **Romans 6:3-6**

<sup>3</sup> *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

<sup>4</sup> *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

<sup>5</sup> *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

<sup>6</sup> *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

Because we are IN Christ and our sin nature has been RENDERED powerless we can walk in newness of life (BY FAITH) in these promises. That is what it means to LIVE BY FAITH.

So if you unleash the poison from your tongue then 1 of 2 things is true:

1. You are controlled by the flesh and not the Spirit.
2. You are not saved.

**Notice James 3:9-12**

It is not possible to get salt water and fresh water from the same spring.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion I want to remind you that James is writing to Jewish believers. So with verses 9-12 James is pointing out that if they were Truly saved then there should not be a venomous speech coming from their tongues.

**Application:**

As believers we have within us the Holy Spirit and as believers our speech should be consistent with who we are in Christ. It is inconsistent with who we are when there is both gossip and blessing coming from our mouths.

Read from Chuck Swindoll's book.