

# *Faith in Action*

## *Taming the Tongue, James 3:1-12*

### ***We Must Watch What We Say***

***James 3:1-12 (NLT) <sup>1</sup> Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. <sup>2</sup> Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.***

- Teaching is a highly regarded profession and calling
- It is a high calling, second only to apostles and prophets
- Teachers are responsible for the spiritual lives of those they teach
- If the teacher fails to live what they teach, they face a greater judgment and condemnation
- The teacher's main tool is speech or the tongue
- We as teachers and believers offend others *often* with the words we say
- In many ways our words cause us to stumble, or cause others to stumble
- The more we speak, we increase our chance of offending someone with our words  
***Proverbs 10:19 (KJV) 19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.***
- The words we say reveal how far we are from the glory of God
- But just because we often say the wrong things is not an excuse for not controlling what we say
- When we learn to control our tongue, we can control our whole body
- Our faith and spiritual maturity can be measured by how well we control our tongue
- The tongue speaks whatever is in the heart or mind, and it will justify or condemn us before God  
***Matthew 12:34-37 (NLT) 34 You brood of snakes! How could evil men like you speak what is good and right? For whatever is in your heart determines what you say. 35 A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. 36 And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. 37 The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you."***

### ***It Only Takes a Spark***

***<sup>3</sup> We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. <sup>4</sup> And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. <sup>5</sup> In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.***

- A tiny bit in a horse's mouth can cause the horse to be directed and turn the horse's whole body
- A small rudder can guide a large ship
- The bit and the rudder are small, but very important, if they are not controlled, the entire horse and the entire ship are out of control
- The same is true of the tongue, it's one of the smallest parts of our body

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- The tongue is like a bit in a horse's mouth or rudder on a ship; who holds the reins or who directs the rudder of our tongues?
- But it has power to direct the course of our lives in destructive ways
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- Here are four serious problems that are *sparked* by the words we speak
  1. **Gossip** – the spreading of **unfavorable information** about someone else, even if that information is **true**.
  2. **Slander** – making a **false statement** or misrepresentation about another person that defames or damages the person's reputation.
  3. **Lying** – When we knowingly exaggerate, misrepresent or fail to tell the whole truth.
  4. **Critical Speech** – **negative comments** about someone that may be actually true but just doesn't need to be said.
- The destructive power of the tongue is compared to a raging fire
- When our tongues are out of control, they can cause terrible damage
- Idle and hateful words are so damaging because they spread destruction so quickly especially in the social media-driven age we live in
- The igniter of the fire is the devil
- Once the fire starts, it's hard to control
  - Wars have been started because of words
  - A few words spoken in anger can ruin a relationship
  - Promotions denied because of a slanderous review
  - An email, text, tweet, sent in jest can't be deleted and the damage has been done
- *Note to self:* social media, emails, text messages, etc. are forever

### ***The Tongue No Man Can Tame***

***<sup>7</sup> People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, <sup>8</sup> but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison.***

- Every animal in the world can be tamed, can be trained, and can be controlled
- But the tongue *no man* can tame
- The tongue is unruly, restless, evil and full of deadly poison
- Poison destroys and kills *anything* it touches
- If no person can't control the tongue, then why bother trying?
- No *man* can control the tongue, but with the help of the Holy Spirit our tongue can be tamed
- Through the Holy Spirit we have access to God's power to monitor and control what we say
- The Holy Spirit's will help you say the right things and avoid saying the wrong things
- The Holy Spirit will help you consider the feelings of others when you speak
- Even if you say the wrong thing, the Holy Spirit will move you to ask for forgiveness

### ***We Contradict Ourselves with our Speech***

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<sup>9</sup> ***Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. <sup>10</sup> And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! <sup>11</sup> Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? <sup>12</sup> Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring.***

- What we say can *contradict* who we are
- Sometimes we can bless God our Father, at other times we curse the people whom God has created
- At times our words right and pleasing to the ear, at other times they are coarse and destructive
- At times our words pure and holy, and at other times they are @#!\*!! (Expletive deleted)
- As Christians we are sending out confusing signals
- Our speech should consistently be glorifying God
- Who are we?
- Can fresh water and bitter water come from the same spring? Does a fig tree produce olives? Does a grapevine produce figs?
- It is impossible to draw fresh water from a salty spring, because it would be a contradiction
- If we can continue to speak holy things *and* hurtful things, it's no longer a contradiction, it means our tongue *and* our heart are bad

### *Taming the Tongue*

- How can we tame our tongue?
  1. *Repent* of the things you've said that were not true, mean-spirited, gossip, and slanderous
  2. Ask God to change your heart ***Matthew 12:34-36 (KJV)*** <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. <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.***
  3. Ask God to help you watch your mouth and your heart ***Psalms 141:3-4 (KJV)*** <sup>3</sup> ***"Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. <sup>4</sup> Incline not my heart to any evil thing, ..."***
  4. Allow the Holy Spirit to control what you say
    - a. One fruit of the Spirit is temperance or self-control
    - b. The Holy Spirit will help you *learn* self-control
  5. ***T.H.I.N.K. before you speak, THINK: T--Is it true? H--Is it helpful? I--Is it inspiring? N--Is it necessary? K--Is it kind?***
  6. ***Glorify God through the things you say Ephesians 4:29 (KJV)*** <sup>29</sup> ***Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.***