

## The Letter of James – Chapter 3

***Taming the Tongue (James 3:1-12)*** - *The tongue is you in a unique way. It is the tattletale that tells on the heart and discloses the real person. Nowhere is the relationship between faith and works more evident than in a person's speech. If you were to account for the words of your mouth, what would your speech say about you?*

### Key Points:

- What we say is a reliable measure of one's spiritual condition.
- The tongue has the potential to condemn, power to control, and propensity to corrupt.
- Our words have equal potential to bring life or death based on the contents of our hearts.

### Key Words:

- ***The Tongue***: In Jewish literature, it was common to attribute blame to a specific part of the body. The personification of the tongue was to point out the spiritual truth that the mouth is a focal point and vivid indicator of humanity's fallenness and sinful heart condition (Matt. 15:11, 16-19; Rom. 3:13-14). Every chapter of James' letter includes some reference to the tongue (1:19, 26; 2:12; 3:5, 6, 8; 4:11; 5:12). The characterization of the tongue in chapter 3 uses the Greek word *akatastatos* translated to mean and unruly evil. This word is also used in James 1:8, meaning unstable.
- C.H. Spurgeon said: "He who speaks with an ill tongue about his neighbor has an ill heart; rest assured of that. let us engage in our Christian career with the full assurance that we will have a great deal more to be forgiven in ourselves. Let us count on having to exercise gentleness, and needed its exercise from others. 'Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.'"

### Questions to Consider:

- Who is James addressing when he speaks of "teachers"? Of what does he warn them?
- Why are the metaphors James uses for the tongue particularly appropriate? What do they convey?
- Read Matthew 12:33-37. How does Jesus describe the relationship between the heart and the mouth?
- What eternal perspective does Jesus give on the consequences of our words?

***Faith and Wisdom (James 3:13-18)*** - *The kind of wisdom a person possesses will be revealed by the kind of life one lives. Wisdom enables us to put things together and relate God's truth to daily life. How can you tell a person who is living a life marked by wisdom?*

Key Points:

- There are two types of wisdom: wisdom of the world and wisdom of God.
- The world's wisdom comes from reason, while God's wisdom comes from revelation.
- True wisdom is found only in God and measured by the Word of God.

Key Words:

- Wisdom: Wisdom is the proper and effective application of truth to everyday life. True wisdom is not intellectual, but behavioral. For the Jewish culture, wisdom meant skill in living righteously. James offers wisdom as another true test of living faith in God.

Questions to Consider:

- How is godly wisdom described and defined in this passage?
- List the fruits of earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom that James mentions. Compare and contrast them. How are they different? What are the results or consequences of each?
- Read Proverbs 2:1-7. Identify all of the synonyms for wisdom in this passage. What do these terms reveal about the nature of wisdom?
- Read Colossian 2:2-3. What does this passage say about Christ and wisdom?