

# A FAITH THAT WORKS

## (A Study of the Book of James)

### How to Tame the Tongue

TEXT: James 3:1-12

INTRODUCTION: James 3:1–12 1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he *is* a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. 3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

So, how do we tame our tongues?

#### I. NONE OF US CAN TAME OUR TONGUE BY OURSELVES.

This is actually James primary point in this lengthy text about the tongue.

- **The tongue is small, but as powerful as a bit in a stallion's mouth.**
- **The tongue is little like a ship's rudder, but it determines the direction of the vessel.**
- **It is the spark that sets a forest on fire.**
- **It can defile the whole body!**
- **The tongue is full of poison, deadly poison!**
- Every kind of wild animal can be tamed, but **No man can tame his tongue.**

**That is, no man can do it alone.**

Matthew 19:26 But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

James 3: 9-10 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

## II. WE MUST FIRST ENGAGE IN THE BATTLE OVER EVIL SPEAKING.

What does the Bible identify as evil speaking?

### A. Blasphemy

Exodus 20:7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.

1. **Blasphemy is the act of insulting the Almighty or showing contempt for Him.**
2. Using the name of the Lord in an exclamation or as a curse is a violation of the third commandment and constitutes blasphemy.
3. God says, "You shall not!"
4. God says that He will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

### B. Filthy speech

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.

1. Every culture has its perverse speech and dirty words.
2. If a word is one you would not want to use in the presence of God, do not use it anywhere, because God is always present and always listening.

### C. Deceit

Psalms 34:13 Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit.

1 Peter 3:10 For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, *And his lips from speaking deceit.*

1. God says that we are not to bear false witness. (Ex. 20:16)
2. This means **we are not to deceive others in any way.**
  - a. Lying
  - b. Exaggeration
  - c. Implication by tone or other indicators

### D. Flattery

Psalms 12:2-3 2 They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; *With flattering lips and a double heart they speak.* 3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, ...

1. Flattery is **excessive praise for selfish motives.**

2. Flattery is often used with seduction (Proverbs 6:24) and deception (Romans 16:18).

### E. Gossip

Leviticus 19:16 You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; ...

1. **Gossip is reporting things (talebearing) about which you have no first-hand knowledge.**
2. A tale can be gossip even if it is true!
3. A gossip tells things that ought not be said to parties who ought not to hear.  
Proverbs 11:13 A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter. and (1 Tim. 5:13).
4. A gossip causes strife. Proverbs 26:20 Where *there is* no wood, the fire goes out; And where *there is* no talebearer, strife ceases.
5. Gossip driven strife will destroy the fellowship of a family, an organization, a business, or a church!

### F. Slander

Proverbs 10:18 Whoever hides hatred *has* lying lips, And whoever spreads slander *is* a fool.

1. **Slander is saying something untrue or deceptive to harm the reputation, character, or testimony of another person.**
2. May be a partial truth, but not the whole truth.
3. The one who slanders is a verbal terrorist. Psalm 64:2-4 2 Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, From the rebellion of the workers of iniquity, 3 Who sharpen their tongue like a sword, And bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows--bitter words, 4 That they may shoot in secret at the blameless; ...
4. Notice that the Holy Spirit in this text says that the slanderer often does his evil work anonymously. (My policy about anonymous letters, etc.)
5. Slander is often the result of ungodly anger and bitterness. (Psalm 109:3)
6. A person who desires to slander can always find something bad to say.

### G. Complaining – Murmuring

Num. 14:27 “How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me.

1 Cor. 10:9-10 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

## HOW DO WE WIN THE BATTLE OVER EVIL SPEAKING?

**A. Recognize that this is not a problem of genetics or background but a problem of the heart!**

**Luke 6:45** A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

**B. Repent.**

**C. Confess our sin to God.**

**D. Confess to those we have offended by our evil speaking.**

**E. Commit to repeat: confess again whenever we do it again.**

## III. WE WIN OVER SPEAKING EVIL BY SPEAKING GOOD.

Replace evil with good.

**Romans 12:21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- **Replace blasphemy with reverence and praise.**
- **Replace filthy speech with pure speech.**
- **Replace deceit with the truth spoken in love.**
- **Replace flattery with encouragement.**
- **Replace gossip with loyal conversation.** **Matthew 18:15** "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."
- **Replace slander with edifying words.** **Romans 14:19** Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another.