

Faith That Works
“Taming the Tongue”
James 3:1-12

Introduction- We are studying the epistle of applied Christianity, the book of James. In it we find the marks of a faith that works. What is a faith that works?

1. It is patient in trouble, chp. 1.
2. It practices the truth, chp. 2.
3. It has power over the tongue, chp. 3.

The Bible mentions the tongue 215 times. The greatest chapter on the tongue is found in James 3. Of course by the tongue, James most certainly has in mind the gift of speech. Everyday we read, hear, and speak words, and so it's easy to forget what a wonderful thing a word is; communicating with words is one of the greatest gifts God has given to man.

“When God gave us the faculty of speech, He gave us a tool to build with, but it can also become a weapon of destruction,” Warren W. Wiersbe

How are you doing at taming the tongue?

I. The Power of the Tongue, vs. 1-6

James points out two powers that lie in the tongue.

1. Power to Direct (vv. 1-4).

A. A warning to teachers (vs. 1a).

B. The reason for the warning (vs. 1b-2).

- A stricter judgement (v. 1b).
- Everyone stumbles (vs. 2).

C. Illustrations (vv. 3-4)

- With the tongue you can praise God, pray, proclaim the gospel and lead a person to Christ. But sadly with the tongue you can also tell lies, slander, ruin a person's reputation, or break a person's heart. The tongue can be our strongest asset or our greatest liability.

Proverbs 18:21, “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue.*”

The tongue has the power to direct for good or bad.

2. Power to Destroy (vv. 5-6)

As a single spark sets fire to a forest, so one malicious word can bring disaster to a life, a marriage, a family, a child, a church, a community, a nation.

Illus.- For every word in Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf*, 125 lives were lost in World War II.

Illustration of destructive speech- Lies, gossip, innuendo, flattery, criticism.

All need to be under control.

Ephesians 4:29, “*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.*”

II. The Problems of the Tongue (vv. 7-12)

1. It’s untamable by man (vv. 7-8).
2. It’s inconsistent (vv. 9-10).

John Bunyan tells us of Talkative from *Pilgrim’s Progress*: “*He was a saint abroad and devil at home.*” *Many a man speaks with perfect courtesy to strangers and even preaches love and gentleness, and yet snaps with ungracious and impatient anger and irritability at his own family at home. It has not been known for a man to speak with piety on the Sunday, and to curse a squad of workmen on the Monday. It has not been unknown for a woman to speak with sweet graciousness at a religious meeting and then to go outside to murder someone’s reputation with a malicious and a gossiping tongue.*” -William Barclay

3. It’s contrary to nature (vv. 11-12).

The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart.

“*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 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.*” Matt. 12:34-35

III. How Do We Tame the Tongue?

1. Be saved.
2. Be spirit-filled.
3. Think before you speak.

Ask:

1. Is it true?
2. Is it kind?
3. Is it necessary?

Words to build with:

- Please and thank you.
- I'm sorry.
- I love you.
- I'm praying for you.