

## #5 James Chapter 3a

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Here in chapter 3, James begins to explain in depth the absolute necessity for a Christian to control his tongue. The tongue will always reveal what is in the heart. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." The tongue reveals the heart.

James has been giving us a number of tests of true and living faith. Are you or is another person really born again? Is he really a child of God? Here is how you can test yourself... here is how you can tell about someone else.

In chapter one he said that true and living faith will be evidenced by our endurance through trials, by our humility in temptation and by obedience to God's Word.

In chapter two he says it will be proven by our love and concern for those in our congregation who are poor and needy and in that we do not show partiality toward the rich. It will be evident by a life's pattern of good works. True and living faith is shown by good works, not caused by good works. Good works will not save anyone but one who is saved, his new life will be exemplified by good works.

His next test is whether or not we can control our tongues. The truth of our faith will be revealed by our tongues.

Our tongue is very important to God and to James. He talks about the tongue in every chapter of this letter which is, again, several tests which reveal the reality of our hearts, of our faith. In chapter 1:18, he said that we had been born, begotten by the Word of God; then, this whole book is how our new life, eternal life will be proven out in how we live, act and speak.

A true child of God with new life will be borne out by these tests; an imposter will eventually reveal himself.

Now he will go into depth to show that our new life, our eternal life, our life that is actually one with God will be proven in how we speak... our tongues, our speech will show the reality of our heart condition... in whether or not we can and choose to control our tongues.

Those who study such things tell us that we speak about 18 to 25, 000 words a day... and that men speak about 25,000 words whereas women speak about 30,000 words. Perhaps women have more to say because they are more intelligent. I always say that if you want details, ask Debbie. If you want something done right... ask your wife to do it.

By the time the man comes home from work, he has already used up his 25,000 words, and the woman is just getting started.

A doctor wants to see your tongue.' He wants to take your temperature. James is saying, 'Let me see your tongue.' It will show me your spiritual temperature.

Our tongue is a living member of our body which acts almost of its own accord for good or bad.

In Psalm 64 it says: Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation;

Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

<sup>2</sup>Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked,

From the rebellion of the workers of iniquity,

<sup>3</sup>Who sharpen their tongue like a sword,

And bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows—bitter words,

<sup>4</sup>That they may shoot in secret at the blameless;

Suddenly they shoot at him and do not fear.

Destructive words can be spoken in secret from afar... that's why the Bible speaks of gossip and backbiting... sowing division... as serious sins.

But Jesus said, 'For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. <sup>3</sup>Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.' Luke 12:2

When we speak our own words, they are often to destroy. When we speak God's Word... it brings healing.

In Romans 3, Paul says of the rebellious lost: "Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of snakes is under their lips: Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."

When Isaiah asked God if He really had the right guy for the job, he said, 'I am a man of unclean lips.'

James 3: My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. <sup>2</sup>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.

Why does James, why does God's Word say that most of us shouldn't be teachers or seek to be teachers? How does a teacher teach about this without sounding proud because he is a teacher? I didn't seek to be a teacher... I am honored that you would ask me to be your teacher. I'm not prideful in being a teacher because I know myself too well. This all started a few years back when I simply offered to come in to a very small class some Sunday and just talk about what interested me the most... prophecy and the end times. That led to an entire quarter of teaching and then to another class and eventually I stumbled into this group... I just wanted to help people understand the reality of where we are in the end times and in God's timetable for eternity. I wasn't looking to be a teacher... I wanted to be a singer but that just plain didn't happen... God had other plans. The main reason I agreed to take this on full time was really for selfish reasons... I knew that as your full time teacher, I would be forced to study and understand God's Word more than I would if simply left on my own... I'm naturally lazy... but I want to be faithful... I need to be pushed... you are the ones pushing me.

One of the reasons James tells most of us to not seek to be teachers is that there is such an opportunity for destructive hypocrisy and deceit. It's very easy to believe you've been called to that ministry because you're a better Christian than those you watch over. It's easy to overlook and cover over your own sin when you're a teacher; it's easy to get caught up in pretending to be more sinless than we are. Then, when that sin is out in the light as God's Word promises it always will be... then people are hurt and relationships are destroyed. Recently we've seen so many instances of Pastors' and teachers' sin being revealed. I think it's because we are nearing the end of the Church Age when the Rapture will remove all of the true believers in an instant. God's Word promises that our sin will find us out and God is cleaning house before the Lord Jesus Christ returns for us.

Being a teacher is more than just knowing God's Word; to be a genuine teacher or pastor, you have to care about your students or your flock; their welfare is more important than your own... a real teacher's heart is to want to help others understand God's Word because that is what is good for them and because when they do really understand God's Word... they will glorify God... A false teacher seeks his position to glorify himself.

James tells us that teachers will receive a stricter judgment; that's a scary thought... it's enough to keep a wise person from ever trying to teach anyone about anything.

A stricter judgment... I think about that a lot... he says we all stumble in many things... he's talking about sin... I have to constantly watch myself and catch myself and confess myself and repent myself and pick up myself and keep on going.

As long as I'm not going backwards... I can encourage myself in the Lord.

It hardly seems fair... he says we all sin but poor teachers will have a stricter judgment.

Then he says, 'If anyone does not stumble in word, he *is* a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. But soon after, he then says... just kidding... no one is able to bridle their tongue... no one is perfect.

This goes right along with what Isaiah, John and Paul say, 'For all have sinned...' 'If we say we have no sin we make God out to be a liar,' 'Your sin has separated you from your God.'

But John says, 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

We are all sinners, we all sin by what we do and by what we say but God is full of grace, love and mercy for His children and His children are those whose living faith is proven by all of these tests of faith James is giving.

In all of these tests of true faith and salvation, none of us are perfect. None of us will have a perfect track record... but a true child of God will have God's Holy Spirit within him constantly convicting him of sin and bringing him to the point of confession of sin, strengthening him in resisting sin, and giving him the desire to turn from sin.

We have people who call us on the radio who are battling with some sin and they want to have victory over it. They confess their sin and ask for prayer in resisting sin. But we also have those who don't really seem to have any desire to resist or turn from their sin. We have a guy who calls in regularly; he smokes, drinks and uses methamphetamine. He claims to be a believer but he doesn't seem to have any real desire to turn away from his sin and his brother continues to enable him by paying his bills and propping him up. This guy doesn't seem to even think ahead far enough to not smoke cigarettes inside his apartment even if it means he will be evicted if he does... he did and he was... and his brother just propped him up.

We have another guy who has called occasionally who talks about those in the world who 'get to sin' getting to be able to sin whereas he's not allowed to ... even though he does... it's Meth again... he envies those who 'can' sin.

Both these guys... if I was determining their standing before the Lord... I would doubt their salvation... not because they sin.... but because they don't seem to have a desire to turn from their sin.

**Verse 3:** James goes on to say, 'Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.'

A bit and bridle are small things but with them, a large, powerful horse can be controlled. God tells us not to be like horses or mules that require bits and bridles to be controlled. He wants us to willingly submit to God's will in our lives. When we disobey, He chastens us. God's chastening is the bit and bridle He is forced to use on us when we refuse to willingly submit and obey.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will guide you with My eye.

<sup>9</sup>Do not be like the horse *or* like the mule,

*Which* have no understanding,

Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Psalm 32

God wants us to be willing to obey when He just looks at us or in a particular direction... to listen to His Holy Spirit directing us.

**Verse 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.

We can control our bodies and we can control our tongues... we are the pilot of this wonderful intricate machine which God has placed us into. It goes wherever we direct it and it does whatever we command it to do. The problem comes when we allow this machine to have a mind of its own... to do what it wants to do... when we allow it to control us.

Think of our bodies like an automobile and we are in the driver's seat. We steer it, we give it gas to make it go faster, we apply the brakes, but imagine if the computer in our car was able to take control away from us and do whatever it wanted to do... to go where it wanted to go... to go as fast or slow as it decided it wanted to go.

That is what happens when we allow our flesh, our bodies to control what we do. Some people allow their bodies to control them by using drugs or alcohol. Some people allow their bodies to control them by making them overeat and become overweight. Some people allow their bodies to control them in sexual promiscuity or with pornography.

One of the tests of a child of God is whether or not we daily work to wrest control away from our flesh, from our bodies and take control ourselves... our souls... controlling what our body is allowed to do.

Remember... our flesh always wants its own way... it wants to sin continually; our spirits, if we are born again... always want us to walk in God's will. Our souls make the decision... what to do... day in and day out. Our souls are what are in the driver's seat of this intricate machine we call our own bodies.

One of the ways we take control of our bodies is in doing our best to control our tongues.

Our tongues can cause so much grief. One word, one sentence can cause a lifetime of despair.

I said one sentence in haste, without thinking, and it caused me years and years of grief and conflict with certain people.

**Verse 5:** 'Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 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.'

It's so easy to blurt out something in anger or to swear or curse. Once something is said, it can never be retrieved. On the radio, we have an 8 second delay. There is 8 seconds between what is actually said and then when it goes out over the air. If someone swears or says something wrong... the engineer can push a button and the previous 8 seconds just disappears. There are times in my life where I would have given anything to have had just an 8 second delay over what I heard from my mouth or what was seen from my actions. So many things in my life could have been so much better if only my life had an 8 second delay... but our lives are immediate.

The moment Adam sinned by eating from the fruit that Eve gave him. I'll bet he would have given the whole world for just an 8 second delay.

The very first sin was with the tongue. Lucifer's rebellious heart was manifest when he said, 'I will be like the Most High.' As soon as Adam sinned, he began using his tongue to blame others. He blamed God for giving him the woman. He blamed Eve for giving him the fruit. She blamed the serpent.

I blame Adam. Every time I have to do yard work, I curse Adam. Leaves that have to be raked: Adam's fault. His sin brought death into the world to every part of creation. Leaves die; I have to rake them up. Blackberry vines: Adam's fault. Poison Oak: Adam. Weeds: Adam. Moles and gophers: Adam.

The fact that my body is breaking down and dying: Adam. I need glasses: Adam. First thing I want to do when I get to Heaven... tell Adam off... say, 'Thanks a bunch, loser.'

But then I always have to admit, I've done plenty of sin on my own so it's a good thing that the World wasn't sinless until I came along because I would have been the guy who brought sin into the World instead of Adam... I don't want that responsibility. So after I curse Adam... I confess it and try to approach my yard work with patience and gratitude.

**Verse 7:** For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. <sup>8</sup> But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

See... I bless God and then curse Adam... These things ought not to be so. Yes, I know... I'm working on it.

Actually, when I'm honest and think about it deeply enough, I realize that if Adam and Eve had never sinned... everything would have been completely different and maybe I would never even have been born... then I wouldn't have all of Eternal Life to look forward to. Some people think, 'I wish I'd never been born.' Terrible thinking for a Christian. No matter how miserable this part of life is... it would never be better to have never been born. We have no imagination for how wonderful and marvelous Eternity will be for us. On the other hand... for absolutely every person from all time who is not born again... it definitely would have been better for them to have never been born.

**Verse 11:** Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening? <sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

This is the test of true faith: does what comes out of our mouths when our tongues are unguarded, correspond to what we say or claim when we are guarded?

Does what I say when I'm doing yard work sound the same as what I say when I'm in front of 50 witnesses?

If so... that is good. If not... am I quick to confess it to God? Is my heart to change it or to allow it to stay the same while trying to cover it over?

**Verse 13:** Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom.

One who is wise and understanding does not condone and retain hidden sin in his life because his wisdom assures him that God will bring his hidden sin out into the light, that his sin will find him out. 'Works that are done in the meekness of wisdom' means that his good works are done quietly, not seeking the recognition and praise of others. He knows that God sees everything and that eventually God will reward him when he stands before Him.

**Verse 14:** But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup> This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.

Envy and self-seeking are part of pride and every other sin proceeds from them. The very first sin was envy and self-seeking: Lucifer was envious of God and he sought to have the worship that only God deserved.

Churches can be filled with envy and self-seeking. Envious of the Pastor or of someone else in a position of authority. Envious of singers or the choir director. Envious of teachers. Envious of others who seem to have conquered sin, even envious of someone who is going through a terrible trial: envious of the attention and care they receive. Envious of someone with a large, powerful testimony... Christians can be just as petty as anyone else.

**Verse 17:** 'But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup> Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.'

A Church could be a great place if this was how all its people acted, if this is what the Pastor was carefully teaching his flock. This is what would attract the lost that God is drawing to Himself. All of these things that James has been teaching us: these are the things that would attract so many. This is how a Church should be: people who are first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy... people who care for each other and make certain that the poor among them are cared for... people who don't show partiality to the rich... people who are doers of the Word and not hearers only.

James is what Pastors should read, understand and teach to their people if they want their flock to be healthy and growing. It has nothing at all to do with 'loving and serving the city;' it has everything to do with his flock learning to love and serve each other.

Did you ever see a healthy, happy family and wish that your family had been like that or wish that you could have been a part of that family? That kind of family is not attractive because they all go their separate ways to find some poor person to help... they are attractive because they go out of their way to love and care for each other... with each other, they are first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy... in other words, they love each other more than they love people outside their family... but because they have first been taught to love each other... then they can, and do, love other people outside the family.

That's how a Church should be. That's what will cause a Church to grow healthy, happy and large.

