

Passage: James 3:1-12

Title: The Test of the Tongue

Summary: By just His words He (Jesus) spoke the universe into existence. Now in our study today He will tell us how we can use our tongue to build up, to create, to change things from darkness into light. Oh the power of the tongue!

James 3:1–12 (NKJV) 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.

Joshua Chamberlain

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain was an American college professor from Maine who volunteered during the American Civil War to join the Union Army.

Chamberlain's fame grew out of the Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. On July 2, 1863 — the second day of the three-day campaign — the colonel's regiment had been ordered to occupy critical land between two hills, Big and Little Round Top. Their mission was to hold the far left flank of the Union line at all costs. If they didn't, the entire Union position was in jeopardy.

The Confederate soldiers knew that, too.

Soon after they got into a defensive position, the 20th was bombarded with attacks from the Confederacy's 15th and 47th Alabama regiments. They managed to fend off the enemy six times, but they were running low on ammunition.

Chamberlain knew the regiment wouldn't be able to withstand a seventh barrage, so he ordered the 20th Maine Infantry to go on the offensive. With bayonets drawn, the soldiers charged down Little Round Top, startling enemy forces so much that they were able to force the enemy back and capture hundreds.

Thanks to their charge, the Union's line, which had grown flimsy, was once again secure. A win at Gettysburg helped turn the tide of the war in the Union's favor.

Joshua Chamberlain Quotes

One of things Chamberlain was known for, was his speech, to build and gather, rally and give courage to his soldiers under his command.

But the cause for which we fought was higher; our thought wider... That thought was our power.

I knew I may die, but I also knew I would not die with a bullet in my back....in retreat. I am, at least, like the apostle Paul who wrote, "This one thing I do, I press towards the mark".

The Background

A decisive speech that made victory at Gettysburg had happened several days before.

- It's his fourth day on the job commanding the 20th Regiment of Infantry, Maine Volunteers. He is just a few short weeks from the Battle of Little Round Top, Gettysburg. After starting with 1,000 men he is down to 358 and anticipating the imminent arrival of additional troops. His aide awakens him and informs him that 120 additional troops from the 2nd Regiment of Maine have arrived. However, the troops are mutineers being delivered under Union guard because they are refusing to be reassigned. Because the troops are from Maine, Chamberlain has no choice but to accept them. In addition, he is told to force them into duty or shoot them.

His comments to the 120 mutineers are captured by Michael Useem in his book “The Leadership Moment” as quoted from Michael Shaara, “The Killer Angels” published in 1974. Below are his re-created comments from Michael Useem’s book, The Leadership Moment, p. 134.

I don't know what I can do about it, I'll do what I can. I'll look into it as soon as possible. But there's nothing I can do today. We're moving out in a few minutes and we'll be marching all day and we may be in a big fight.

I've been told that if you don't come, I can shoot you. Well, you know I won't do that. Not Maine men..

Here's the situation. I've been ordered to take you along, and that's what I'm going to do. Under guard if necessary. But you can have your rifles if you want them. The whole Reb army is up the road a ways waiting for us and this is no time for an argument like this.

I tell you this: We sure can use you. We're down below half strength and we need you, no doubt of that..

This regiment was formed last fall, back in Maine....Some of us volunteered to fight for the Union. Some came in mainly because we were bored at home and this looked like it might be fun. Some came because we were afraid not to. Many of us came..because it was the right thing to do.

This is a different kind of army. If you look at history, you'll see men fight for pay, or women, or some other kind of loot. They fight for land, or because a king makes them, or just because they like killing. But we're here for something new...This hasn't happened much in the history of the world. We're an army going out to set other men free.

Here you can be something. Here's a place to build a home. It isn't the land – there's always more land. It's the idea that we all have value, you and me, we're worth something more than the dirt...What we're fighting for, in the end, is each other...

I think if we lose this fight the war will be over. So, if you choose to come with us, I'll be personally grateful. (Useem, 1998, p. 134).

And so, most all but 6) of them joined Chamberlain. None of them were aware of the key battle just around the corner. They end up being a decisive factor in the victory, and the very Country we live in today. And..... it was by the power of the tongue,

The Power of the Tongue of God

The power of the tongue of Jesus? By just His words He spoke the universe into existence. Now in our study today He will tell us how we can use our tongue to build up, to create, to change things from darkness into light!

Hebrews 11:3 (NKJV) ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Genesis 1:1–3 (NKJV) ¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In Every Study

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need

Written by James / Didn't believe – to Leader / Hindsight / Everyday Living

The Book of James was written by none other than Jesus' brother James. James was a leader in the church, a pillar in the church (Acts 21). James didn't believe that Jesus was God when He

walked this earth (John 7:5); but after the resurrection Jesus appears to him (1 Cor 15:4-7), and everything changed. James is going to write us this letter, he will talk about everyday practical stuff. He will talk about trials in life, our works, our tongue, prayer, and other things; as he writes these things, no doubt he will be remembering how Jesus handled them, reflecting back on watching situations, and watching his oldest brother. He will reflect on Jesus' life of love, and a life of sinlessness, in a world that can be so hateful at times, and so full of sin. James will write these things based on hindsight, based on first hand witnessing of how his older brother lived life, everyday. James watched Jesus handle everyday life, and that is what this book is about; it is about living everyday life as a Follower of God, in a fallen world.

Jesus Rubbed Off / Nature Illustrations / Favorite Teacher - Sermon on Mount

We can see how much Jesus rubbed off on James, for James style resembles his brother so much. Like Jesus used nature as illustrations for His teaching points, so does James some 30 times. He uses nature analogies such as the sea, flowers, sun, fire, horses and ships to name a few). It is obvious who James favorite teacher was, because this epistle covers every topic that Jesus covered in the Sermon on the Mount. There is amazing parallelisms between the two; James does not actually quote the Lord's words, but he obviously had internalized Jesus' teachings and reproduced them with spiritual depth. Jesus covered about 30 topics in the Sermon on the Mount, and we will see that James touches on every one of them in this epistle. The Book of James is Sermon on the Mount 2. The Book is also very quick and concise, moving from thought-to-thought quickly. So the Book of James is the New Testament Version of the Old Testament Proverbs. It resembles Proverbs because it is very poetic the way it flows its thoughts using illustrations and analogies.

So We can Examine Self / How am I Doing

Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount so that we might examine ourselves and ask the question, "so how am I doing in each of these areas?" James writes to the church, to us, and as we read, we have to ask ourselves, "so how am I doing in these areas?" This book is practical and applicable for us living in the year 2022, and the ultimate goal of this epistle is giving to us in verse 4 of chapter 1, to bring us into maturity, perfect and lacking nothing.

As in school, we take tests to see how much of a handle and mastery we have on a subject, we will do the same in this book.

3 Key Verses

Here are three key verses to get us going:

*James 2:20 (NKJV)*²⁰ *But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*

*James 1:22 (NKJV)*²² *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

*James 1:4-5 (NKJV)*⁴ *But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.* ⁵ *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

The Outline of the Book of James:

Chapter 1

- Introduction (1:1)
- The Test of Perseverance and Suffering (1:2-12)
- The Test of Blame in Temptation (1:12-18)
- The Test of Response to the Word (1:19-27)

Chapter 2

- The Test of Partiality (2:1-9)
- The Test of the Law (2:10-13)
- The Test of Faith and Works (2:14-26)

Chapter 3

- The Test of the Tongue (3:1-12)
- The Test of Wisdom Applied (3:13-18)
- Chapter 4
 - The Test of the World's Influence (4:1-12)
 - The Test of Dependence (4:13-17)
- Chapter 5
 - The Test of Endurance (5:1-11)
 - The Test of Prayerfulness (5:12-20)

Works & Words / But Words are Important

In chapter 2, James stressed that mere words are not the issue. The proof of one's salvation is seen in works. Yet here in chapter 3, we'll see him plunge into a discussion about the tongue. Why? I suggest the reason is that, although it is true that it is our works and not our words that validate and verify our salvation, this does not mean words are not important in our spiritual life. The power of speech is one of the greatest powers God has given us. With the tongue man can praise God, pray to God, preach the Word of God, and lead a lost sinner to God. Yet with the same tongue a man can tell lies that ruin a man's reputation or break a person's heart. That takes us back to the theme of this book, the purpose of this book, that we might mature. In chapter 1 we were told to be Doers of the Word, and chapter 2 we saw that it is to be faith the works! Our words will affect or marriages, our families, and every relationship we have with another person. This study, this test, is vital to our Christian walk.

Mind you, James watched his big Brother Jesus, speak for a lifetime, and thus James very much is telling us how Jesus spoke (when others were blessing Him, when others were cursing Him, when others were gossiping and slandering, when other we friend on Sunday, and foe on Thursday), James watch and listened, and we are blessed to be given the specifics on how to use our tongue.

6 Pictures / Meaningful Classification

In order to impress the importance of controlled speech, and the great consequences of our words, James gives us six pictures of the tongue; as a bit, as a rudder, as a fire, as an animal, a fountain, and as a tree. You can put these six pictures into three meaningful classifications that reveal the three powers of the tongue.

Outline: The Test of the Tongue (3:1-12)

- Power to Direct: The Bit and Rudder - 3:1-5
- Power to Destroy: The Fire and Animal - 3:5-8
- Power to Delight: The Fountain and Tree - 3:9-12

[Power to Direct: the Bit and Rudder - 3:1-5](#)

Symbol of Power – Controlled by Small thing / Never Underestimate Power of Words

Our first two pictures of the tongue are a bit and a rudder. In those days horses were a symbol of power and strength. James is saying look at the powerful horse, so big, yet controlled by such a little thing - a bit. Look at huge ships, they are driven by fierce winds, but steered by such a small thing - a rudder. The bit and rudder have the power to direct, and James is making the analogy that the tongue effects the lives of others. Never underestimate the guidance you give by the words you speak, or do not speak.

(James 3:1 NKJV) My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

(James 3:2 NKJV) 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.

(James 3:3 NKJV) Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.

(James 3:4 NKJV) 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.

(James 3:5 NKJV) Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things.

(James 3:1 NKJV) My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

Reproduce of It's Kind

As we have studied, the seed is to reproduce to the same kind of the original. And so here we are, the word of God meant to replicate in us, the word of God that we speak as Christians. We represent him. I will go as far as to say, as Christians, as we are put out to be living epistles, we even speak for him. And so here our speech, the vitalness of it, the power of it, and hence why such a high degree of the calling that is before us in our passage today. Speaking of the tongue, I believe one of the most powerful passages of the scriptures that is so much so powerfully overlooked, because it's hard for people to truly come and acknowledge every word that I say is measured, and every word that I say, as it replicated the image of Christ in my life, in my words, in my speech.

James 1:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Genesis 1:11–12 (NKJV) ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. ¹² And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Not Out of Context (Tongue & Teachers)

It would seem almost out of context to talk about teachers in the stricter judgment but it's actually a tie-in purposefully that we see here as we weave these thoughts, these pearls together, here through the book of James. The tie in is direct, a warning. Don't become a teacher just because you're a gifted speaker, maybe a gifted orator, maybe a gifted communicator. It has to be a calling and it has to be a gifting as we read in Ephesians chapter four. And by all means, when the gifts have been given men, it needs to be used.

Ephesians 4:11–16 (NKJV) ¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

But the tie-in force is no one sitting here today would disagree with the statement that I make, that I must carefully study this word. I must sit before the Lord and prepare the vessel and then allow the vessel to be used by the Lord to speak and teach the word of the Lord,

- because marriages are on the line,
- because children are on the line,
- because addictions and the freedom from are on the line.
- because hearts are on the line,
- because death and hell are on the line,

All these things are on the line. And so every word that is to be spoken needs to be measured and it needs to be carefully thought through, and then carefully delivered that it reaches its mark like an arrow hitting the mark. A teacher must hit the bullseye. You cannot be happy with the American League baseball average of if you can bat 400, you're a great, great batter. No, you have to hit the bullseye. That means hit the mark. That means hit the heart so that lives can be changed, because it's the word of God that's living and powerful, sharper than a two-edge sword. It's the word of God in Romans 12 that transforms and changes people.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Romans 12:1–2 (NKJV) ¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

So again, the tie in is everyone would agree you need to measure your words and you can't just come and start speaking about what you feel like. You need to speak under the control of the Holy Spirit. You

need to speak, that your words carry weight and your words matter. And that's what's being said here in our passage. Just as we would agree, a teacher needs to be careful and not careless with his words, they must hit the mark. Every one of us in every conversation, we represent Jesus Christ. We're a representation of him. And we have words that can be transforming. We can also have words that are destructive and deforming of relationships, of someone walking away feeling less and down. You never know the weight of your word. You might think that you were just speaking, but you don't know what's processing on the other side. That someone walks away and feel that they've been talked down to or critiqued or criticized, and they walk away and they're affected for life. And for you, for me, it was just a careless conversation. We really didn't even measure it. We must be careful with our words.

Every Word (THINK before Speak):

- T – Is it Truthful
- H – Is it Helpful
- I – Is it Inspired
- N – Is it Necessary
- K – Is it Kind

A Person Discipline Tongue – Disciplined Life

It's really simple and you'll see it, you'll agree with it, because you know when you know it, when see it or you are it. A person who has discipline over their tongue will have discipline over all the other areas of their life. And a person who has no discipline over their tongue, more times than not, they have no discipline over all the other areas of their life. And so there is a place here, the power of the tongue represented of the power that a person has over their whole being. What a passage we're studying today. And I pray that the Holy Spirit would stop us in our track and say this is more than just about speaking kind words. This is about godly Christian life inwardly and godly Christian life outwardly. And both are greatly affected. And our tongue, the control or lack of it, how the influence is and representation of who we truly are can be seen. And then we can say, Lord, I need help, or Thank you for your great power.

Additional Notes on Teaching

Impact of Teachers

James begins his discussion by saying, "*let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*" Look at the influence and impact a teacher has in the lives of those they teach. Teachers are a gift to the church from God. We studied in Titus that God makes His Word clear to people through teaching/preaching:

Ephesians 4:11–12 (NKJV) ¹¹ *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*

(Titus 1:3 NKJV) *but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior;*

More Insight – More Accountability

The more insight the teacher is given, the more accountability they have, they will have to give and account before God on every Word they said:

(Hebrews 13:7 NKJV) *Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.....*

(Hebrews 13:17 NKJV) *Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

Inevitable Offend / Sin in Multitude of Words

Now, it is inevitable that sooner or later we will offend people with the words we say, the more a person says, the greater his chances of offending someone. I wish I could say that all of the problems teachers encounter is due to the powerful messages we bring and the conviction they cause in the hearts of people. But that's not the whole story—not by a long shot! You see, greater condemnation comes to teachers because in the multitude of words there lacketh not sin (Proverbs 10:19). We who are always speaking inevitably say things we wish we hadn't said or in a way we wish we hadn't said them:

(Proverbs 10:19 NKJV) *In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.*

Bema Seat / Judged for Every Word / Motive / Must Always be Prepared

Thus, condemnation comes not only from other people, but from within our own hearts when we realize our inadequacy to communicate the Word properly. "Be careful," says James. "Don't be too eager to be a teacher, knowing that you'll receive greater condemnation from within and without than if you sat quietly in a pew, taking it all in." This isn't judgment in terms of salvation, but the "Bema Seat of Christ" (2 Cor 5:10) where he will reward us for our works here on earth. (Note: The judgment of the believer's works, not sins, is under discussion here. His sins have been atoned for and are remembered no more forever (Heb 10:17); but every work must come into judgment (Mat 12:36; Rom 14:10; Gal 6:7; Eph 6:8; Col 3:24 - 25). The result is reward or loss of the reward, but "He himself [the Christian] will be saved" (1 Cor 3:11 - 15). This judgment occurs at the return of Christ for His Church (1 Cor 4:5; 2 Tim 4:8; Rev 22:12). For other judgments, see notes at Ezek 20:37; Mat 25:32; John 12:31; 1 Cor 11:31; Jude 6; Rev 20:12.) Teachers you are accountable for every word that you speak in the name of the Lord. We will be judged on the way we taught (in love or heavy-handed), our motive for wanting to teach (for mans applause or God's directing), and the content of what we taught (was it in spirit and truth). Teachers, we can never teach unprepared. James is making that point to us, be prepared before you teach so that you don't miss the mark, which may stumble or offend a brother.

Stay in Word / Stay in Book / How's the Bible Study / Teachers Here / Don't be Afraid

That is why we need to stay in the word. I take consolation that I stay in this book. I will miss a verse here and there (I'm not perfect), but I stay in the book, and the Word speaks for itself. People ask me all the time, hey how's the church going. I say good for we study the Bible, and anytime you study the Bible it is a good thing. I make such a big point about this because there are so many of you that are here that teaches. It is a focus of our ministry. Probably over 50% of the people here teach, whether it be with the Youth Group, Children's Church, Assisted Living, or at home with your children, you guys teach - and Praise the Lord for that! May I note, we all get scared when we hear "judgement", but there is also rewards there, and we long to hear those words "well done", that is why we teach. Because we are becoming like Jesus and that makes us want to share His Word and love with others. Don't let the fear of making a mistake keep you from teaching. Remember Ephesians 4, you are a gift from God to the His Church. James is saying just make sure you are prepared to teach because the words from your tongue have a tremendous influence on those you teach. Just like steering a huge ship or powerful horse. [\(Matthew 25:21 NKJV\)](#) "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Being Lured / Never Go Beyond the Word / Giving a Piece of Jesus

Be careful about being lured beyond God's Word, into the latest movements out there (Holy Laughter, etc). Never go beyond God's Word and you will be safe. Even days when you feel like that was a painful study, always remember, you just gave out a piece of God to the people, for God will never give Himself apart from His Word, for Jesus is the Word (John 1:1):

[\(John 1:1 NKJV\)](#) *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Represent Jesus / A Glimpse to Some

You represent Jesus Christ, for some you are the glimpse of God to the people. We must never misrepresent Him. Remember Moses at the Rock

[Numbers 20:11-12 \(NKJV\)](#) ¹¹ *Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. ¹² Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."*

[\(Leviticus 10:3 NKJV\)](#) *And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.' " So Aaron held his peace.*

Bad Teachers / The Fall of a Teacher

When bad teachers come into the church, or people come in from a church of errant teaching, then that requires that all that errant teaching be corrected. The people are going back to zero, or fighting to get to zero, before they can grow in maturity. The fall of a teacher makes us feel greatly violated, for we put so much trust in them and then find that they didn't live the word they preached.

Good Bereans / Not a Challenge

That is why we must be "Good Bereans"

Acts 17:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰ Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Don't ever feel like you can't approach me and ask me about a something I said. Don't think that I will be offended or feel challenged. That is what you are supposed to do, Acts 17:11. It blesses me that you are searching the Scriptures and thinking these things through for yourself. If I can't answer you on the spot, I will always get back to you, and many times I'll be giving you a homework assignment to read something, then come back and talk to me, that is discipleship.

(James 3:2 NKJV) 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.

If you are not offensive with your mouth, then you are a mature person. Will the tongue direct you, or will you direct the tongue.

Quotes:

One of the first things that happens when a man is really filled with the Spirit is not that he speaks with tongues, but that he learns to hold the one tongue he already has. - J. Sidlow Baxter

The great test of a man's character is his tongue. - Oswald Chambers

(James 3:3 NKJV) Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.

(James 3:4 NKJV) 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.

(James 3:5 NKJV) Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things.

Small In Themselves – Yet Powerful

James presents two items that are small of themselves, yet exercise great power, just like the tongue. A small bit enables the rider to control the great horse, and a small rudder enables the pilot to steer the huge ship. The tongue is a small member in the body, and yet it has the power to accomplish great things.

Words Direct / A Word in Season

The words we speak affect the lives of others. How important it is that our tongues direct people in the right way. You have no idea what the right word, at the right time, does for a person who is hurting or discouraging. Maybe it is a dry season, a time of confusion, a point of quitting, and you come with a Scripture verse, or just a word of encouragement from the heart, and then everything changes. A simple hello, a thank you, a how are you doing, or you really bless me. You people bless me, you really do, I just want to say that so that you hear that from me:

(Isaiah 50:4 NKJV) "The Lord GOD has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak A word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned.

(Proverbs 15:4 NKJV) A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

DL Moody

On April 21, 1855, Edward Kimbel went into a Boston shoe store and led young Dwight L. Moody to Christ. The result was one of the greatest evangelists that ever walked this earth. The tongue has the power to direct others lives that can affect the whole world.

Power to Destroy: the Fire and Animal - 3:5-8

Tongue can be Wild / Just a Spark

The tongue also has the power to destroy. James likens our tongue to a fire and an animal. Our tongue can be wild at times as a wild animal, and our tongue can be a spark that turns into a raging fire.

(James 3:5 NKJV) Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

(James 3:6 NKJV) 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.

(James 3:7 NKJV) For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

(James 3:8 NKJV) But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Just a Spark / Chicago Fire

It is only about 10 ounces of flesh, yet the tongue is capable of massive destruction. A fire can begin with just a small spark, but it can grow to destroy a city. On October 8, 1871, a fire started in a small barn in Chicago, by the time the fire was put out 100,000 people were left homeless, 17,500 buildings were destroyed, 300 people died, and 400 million dollars in damage. Just from one barn fire.

Repairing Damage / Heated Moments / Tempers Flare

Our words start fire. We spend so much time repairing the damage the tongue has caused from gossip, hurting words in marriage, digging up the past, all to purposely hurt someone. Once the fire is lit, it is hard to put it out. It is in that "heated moment" of an argument or confrontation, that the tongue lets loose, and the words can never be returned. Then the pain and the hurt cuts and burns to the heart. Then later in the evening, when everything has cooled down, you your mind goes over everything you said, and everything said to you. The fire has been set. Run with the bucket of forgiveness, ask for forgiveness that the fire may go out. But many times, we know it is only the beginning.

Quotes:

Some men's tongues bite more than their teeth. - Charles Spurgeon

People with sharp tongues often end up cutting their own throats. - Anonymous

People who can hold their tongues rarely have any trouble holding their friends. - Anonymous

Gossip / Nicaragua

Then there is gossip, those of you going to Nicaragua will see a big sign with the word gossip on it, encircled with the line through it. It is that important to Pastor Dean, it has been that damaging, that he had to paint that on the wall, We can burn a brother or sister so subtly in the name of a sharing a concern, a prayer request, or giving background information - It is gossip. Gossip is the purposeful sharing of information, knowing that it will make the other person look bad. Gossip destroys people and even churches, we cannot have it. It must be crushed in its tracks, extinguished before the fire gets a chance to consume. I might note here that the truth can also be gossip if it is used to hurt or tear someone down. Someone may be struggling with this or that, that is the truth, but sharing it with others will do nothing to help them.

Gossip Here in this Church / No Wood – No Fire

For those who like gossip, you won't like it here. For all that come into the church they have to know that whatever they share from their heart about what is going on in their lives, that it is safe, and it won't be spread throughout the body.

If you don't respond when someone is burning someone else, then the conversation flames out. The is true when they attack you:

(Proverbs 26:20 NKJV) Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.

For where there is no wood there is no fire. What do you do when someone starts to burn someone else or you, you can let the conversation end by not responding. Fire spreads, and the more fuel you give it, the faster and farther it will spread. Give it no fuel and it goes nowhere.

Why So Much Talk on Gossip / People get Hurt / Preconceived Ideas

Why am I talking about this so much? Because people get hurt, you get hurt. If people are talking negatively about me, then when a person meets me for the first time, they have all these preconceived ideas about me already, I have become to that person, what they said I was, before they even met me.

In the book, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, Jim Cymbala writes about the importance of Christians holding each other accountable as they grow together in Christ:

About 20 years ago, I said something impromptu to the new members standing in a row across the front of the church.

As we received them, the Holy Spirit prompted me to add, "And now, I charge you that if you ever hear another member speak an unkind word of criticism or slander against anyone—myself, an usher, a choir member, or anyone else—that you stop that person in mid-sentence and say, 'Excuse me—who hurt you? Who ignored you? Who slighted you? Was it Pastor Cymbala? Let's go to his office right now. He'll apologize to you, and then we'll pray together so God can restore peace to this body. But we won't let you talk critically about people who aren't present to defend themselves.'" He adds, "I'm serious about this. I want you to help resolve this kind of thing immediately. And know this: If you are ever the one doing the loose talking, we'll confront you."

Cymbala added, "To this day, every time we receive new members, I say much the same thing. That's because I know what most easily destroys churches. It's not crack cocaine, government oppression, or even lack of funds. Rather, it's gossip and slander that grieves the Holy Spirit."

Know This / It is in Their Heart / Faith & Works

Know this, if someone will talk about someone else to you, you can guarantee that they will be talking about you when you are not there (probably to the person they just told you about), why, because it is in their heart, it is who they are, and out of the mouth proceeds the condition of the heart.

Matthew 12:33–34 (NKJV) ³³ "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

(Luke 6:45 NKJV) "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.

Matthew 15:10–11 (NKJV) ¹⁰ When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand: ¹¹ Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

James spoke of faith that works, he spoke of faith without works is dead, he spoke these things so that we might examine ourselves, for our tongues pour out what is in our heart. Your tongue gives you away.

(James 3:6 NKJV) **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.**

The Dump

Gahanna is the word used here for hell. At the time of this writing that is what they called the garbage dump that burned outside the city walls to the south of the city. Isn't that the way the tongue can be, like a continual burning garbage dump?

Hell – Heinous Things / Hitler

The tongue is set on fire by hell. The heinous things of hell are set in motion by the tongue.

In WW2, it is estimated that 50 million people died, and all of it was fueled by the demonic infused man Adolf Hitler. Hitler wrote a book, that sold millions, called *Mein Kampf* ([my struggle], filled with anti-

Semitic outpourings, worship of power, disdain for civil morality, and strategy for world domination. It became the bible of National Socialism). Here is my (un-exact estimate); the book is about 600 pages long, and thus on the average of 325 words per page, close to 200,000 words. Thus, for every word in the book, it cost the average of 250 lives.

All Satan needs was a willing tongue, and he can promote these things.

But Look at Great Things / Your Family / Assisted Living

But look at the great things it can do. Look at what it has done through Billy Graham, your family, at the Assisted Living, your marriage. It has the power to do great things. Ephesians 4, all the gifts given to the church are through the tongue. God knows the power of the tongue as it is fueled by the Spirit.

(James 3:7 NKJV) For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

(James 3:8 NKJV) But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Shamu / Caged Lion

The guy who tamed Shamu the Killer Whale at Sea World with his tongue, takes that same tongue and goes home and gets in an argument with his wife. He can tame a killer whale with it, but can't tame himself.

A caged lion can't hurt you, but once you let it out you're in trouble. Keep the tongue caged. You would never let a tiger loose in your home or Children's Church, but the unruly tongue will do the same.

Unruly / Poisonous / God can Tame

Verse 8 - the tongue is Unruly: it is a restless evil, it just wants to get out there and shoot itself off.

Verse 8 - the tongue is Poisonous: used in reference to a virus or infection that would eat away at something. The deceptive thing about poison is that it usually works secretly and slowly. And then it kills. How many times has a malicious person injected a bit of poison into the conversation, hoping that it would spread and finally get to the person he or she wanted to hurt.

Verse 8 - But no man can tame the tongue - No man can, but God can.

Remember James is saying you need to show some evidence of the change God has made in your life. Is it Dead Faith, Demonic Faith, or is it Dynamic Faith. Your tongue will be one of your greatest indicators of your spiritual growth. Your tongue will define you.

Remember – Real Faith, Shows Up in Real Life

Tongues of Fire - Peter

That very same tongue that can burn someone down, can also "catch them on fire". Look at the fire that was kindled by Peter's tongue on the Day of Pentecost. It says tongues of fire fall upon them, and 3000 were saved that first day, and then we read a chapter later that 500 were saved:

Acts 2:1–4 (NKJV) ¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Power to Delight: the Fountain and Tree - 3:9-12

Life Giving / Build Up - Fruit

James uses two more pictures for the tongue, a fountain and a tree. Water is life giving, and our words can give life. Water is cleansing and our words can refresh someone else and restore them. Trees are used to build structures and to provide shade, and produce body nourishing fruit, our words can build another up, comfort them, and nourish them. This is what Jesus has given us through His words:

Jesus said:

[\(John 6:63 NKJV\)](#) "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

(James 3:9 NKJV) With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.

(James 3:10 NKJV) Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

(James 3:11 NKJV) Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?

(James 3:12 NKJV) Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

James is saying what is true in nature should also be true in the human. Once we are born of the Spirit we should produce the things of the Spirit. But we know that doesn't happen overnight does it.

2 Sources in Us

There are two sources going on in us, the flesh and the Spirit. That isn't the case with nature, they only have one source to deal with.

People in My Life

Don't become a woodbin for someone else's fire. For where there is no wood there is no fire. Rather use your tongue for healing, for refreshing. Use your tongue for delight, let your tongue to bring forth grace, mercy, and truth – things that delight. There are certain people that I have in my life that when I know I am going to spend time with them I get excited, why, because I know their tongue, the words that will come from their mouth will refresh me, encourage me, and give me a fresh perspective on whatever is going on in my life at that time. However, there are those that I really don't look forward to seeing (and I'm talking Christians right here), that I just know I am going to be drained, sometimes even feel soiled, after spending time with them. Why because their whole conversation is destruction and tearing down of others, and never of delight, of building up.

You've Grown / Still need Growth

Now, I examine myself, and I ask myself how about me? And in all honesty, I have to say I am not where I want to be. I look at this teaching from James and it brings me to the remembrance of you have a long way to go, but it also shows me, look how far you have come. Therefore, I can encourage you personally if you are struggling in this area, and I can tell you from personal experience that God is able. But I can also tell you don't ever settle and get comfortable in this area, for one slip, one spark, with the tongue can start a forest fire that can destroy.

Be Thankful for the Battle

Be thankful that there is a battle going on. As Spurgeon said, "dead men don't wrestle." I never saw my tongue and temper as a problem (for I always thought it was the other person who the problem) until I got saved. But now that there is a new fountain flowing in me, a new source, I wrestle, and I am thankful of that, for dead man don't wrestle.

Delight / Life

Again, James is a mini Book of Proverbs, and we see in Proverbs this picture of a fountain. We see the tongue has the power to bring life:

[\(Proverbs 18:21 NKJV\)](#) *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.*

(Proverbs 10:11 NKJV) The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, But violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

(Proverbs 13:14 NKJV) The law of the wise is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death.

Give Tongue to God / Morning Time

No man can tame the tongue, but God can. Give God your tongue and your heart each day and ask Him to use your tongue as a blessing to Him and others. One reason our Lord was able to say the right word at the right time was because He communed with the Father and heard from heaven every day.

(Mark 1:35 NKJV) Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

Again, listen to what Jesus said was His source for the tongue:

(Isaiah 50:4 NKJV) "The Lord GOD has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak A word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned.

Recap

Outline: The Test of the Tongue (3:1-12)

- Power to Direct: The Bit and Rudder - 3:1-5
- Power to Destroy: The Fire and Animal - 3:5-8
- Power to Delight: The Fountain and Tree - 3:9-12

The Test of the Tongue, so how are we doing?

Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In Every Study

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need