

Sermon Study: Trouble with the Tongue

Text: James 3:1–18

Theme: The Power, Influence, and Consequences of Speech

I. The Tongue Is Powerful – It Can Guide or Direct Our Steps

Read: James 3:1–5

Reflection:

- Why does James begin with a warning to teachers? What does this tell us about the responsibility of speech?
- Consider the images James uses: the *bit in a horse's mouth* and the *rudder on a ship*. What do these analogies teach about the disproportionate power of the tongue?

Application:

- How often do you think before you speak?
- Can you recall a moment when your words set the direction of a situation—for good or for harm?

Prayer:

Lord, teach me to be slow to speak and quick to listen. Let my words be guided by Your wisdom and not my impulse.

II. The Tongue Is Influential – It Can Build Up or Tear Down

Read: James 3:6–12

Cross-reference: Matthew 15:11

Reflection:

- James calls the tongue a “fire” and “a world of unrighteousness.” How have you seen words ignite conflict or damage relationships?
- What does Jesus mean when He says that what comes out of the mouth defiles a person?

Application:

- Consider how you speak to different people in your life. Do your words consistently reflect Christ?
- Where are you tempted to flatter or insult to manipulate others?

Prayer:

God, bridle my tongue and cleanse my heart. Let no corrupt talk come from my mouth, only what is good for building up (Ephesians 4:29).

III. The Tongue Is Consequential – It Can Mislead or Show Truth

Read: James 3:13–18

Reflection:

- James ties speech to *wisdom and fruit*. What does your speech reveal about the source of your wisdom?
- How do jealousy and selfish ambition poison both our hearts and our words?

Application:

- Examine your recent conversations. Were they peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy?
- Where do you need the Holy Spirit to transform your patterns of speech?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, plant Your seed of wisdom in me. Let my mouth overflow with mercy and truth, bearing the fruit of righteousness.

Final Thought:

James 3 reminds us that our speech is never neutral—it always produces fruit, either for destruction or for blessing. The question is not just “*How do I control my tongue?*”, but “*What kind of heart is my tongue revealing?*”

The good news: if the Holy Spirit dwells in you, so does the power to speak life.