

## James 3:1-2

**INTRODUCTION Pt. 1** - The tongue is you in a unique way. It's a tattletale that tells on the heart and discloses the real person. Misuse of the tongue is the easiest way to sin. There are some sins that an individual may not be able to commit because of lack of opportunity. But there are no limits to what one can say, no boundaries or restraints.

**INTRODUCTION Pt. 2** - In Scripture, the tongue is vicariously described as wicked, deceitful, perverse, filthy, corrupt, flattering, slanderous, gossiping, blasphemous, foolish, boasting, complaining, cursing, contentious, sensual and vile. No wonder God put the tongue in a cage, behind the teeth, walled in by the mouth. Someone once said because the tongue is in a wet place it can easily slip.

**INTRODUCTION Pt. 3** - The tongue is of great concern to James. It's mentioned in every chapter of his letter. Cf. James 1:19, 26; 2:12; 3:5,6,8; 4:11; 5:12, the tongue only produces what it is told to produce from the heart, Matthew 15:19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander." We should all consider the words of our Lord Jesus from Matthew 12:36-37 "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

**NOTE 1** - What you are will inevitable be disclosed by what you say. The first sin committed after the fall was a sin of the tongue. Adam slandered God by saying, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."<sup>1</sup> In describing man's total depravity Paul this in Romans 3:13-14 "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." Here is Isaiah's response when he glimpsed God's glory "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"<sup>2</sup>

**NOTE 2** - Scripture has much to say about the tongues evil. Cf. Proverbs 6:17; 17:20; 26:28; 28:23, Isaiah 59:3 "For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue mutters wickedness."

**NOTE 3** - The tongue, in its evil, also praises and glorifies God. Psalms 35:28 "Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness, and of your praise all the day long." Here are some of the wonderful things the tongue spoke, Psalms 8:1 "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory above the heavens." Cf. Psalms 19:7-14

**APPLICATION:** A transformed nature will produce transformed behavior. And new behavior involves new speech, speech that corresponds to a saved and sanctified life and that reflects the holy nature of the One who has given the new life. Cf. Colossians 3:1-2; 5, 8, 15-17

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:15; ESV

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 6:5; ESV

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**POINT 1** - Consider what you teach, vs. 1,2A. James was focused on teachers in the church, who may have wanted to become teachers for the wrong reasons. In Jewish circles rabbis were often held in higher regard than parents. They often wanted to be seen, relished and honored, cf. Matthew 23:1-7

**POINT 2** - Besides official rabbis, any respected Jewish man might be given opportunity to speak. Jesus wasn't a rabbi yet He spoke. Paul, Barnabas weren't sanctioned rabbis, yet they spoke. It was common in the early church to have mature men speak in a service. And because of this we find that Paul regulates such activities in Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 14:26 "How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." (NKJV)

The point being in our local churches now, many today teach Bible studies, Sunday school, youth, fill in for the pastor and other opportunities to speak God's word. Many make a vital contribution to the teaching of the word of God. But we cannot escape the warning, not a discouraging statement, but a warning that when you teach, you are held to a greater standard of judgement.

**POINT 3** - The seriousness of the statement, "Let not many of you become teachers". In the great commission the Lord commands all believers to make disciples and proclaim the gospel. In 1 Timothy 3 we see that one who desires the office of a bishop, desires a good thing. And even Paul said, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel."<sup>3</sup> The point of James' teaching is no believer should begin any form of teaching without a deep sense of the seriousness of this responsibility. It is God's will for all His people to articulate the gospel message. For those who have the desire to stand before others and teach the Word of God, it carries with it great implications. Cf. Ezekiel 3:17-19, Paul instructed Timothy to deal with erroneous, misleading and confusing teaching at Ephesus, cf. 1 Timothy 1:3-7. According to vs. 19-20 they have made a shipwreck of the faith.

Peter and Jude gave the severest possible warning against heretical teachers, cf. 2 Peter 2:1-3, Jude 8,10,16. And Paul's warning given through Timothy to the church at Ephesus applies to every church, cf. 1 Timothy 6:3-5

**POINT 3** - Not only false teachers, but also those who ignorantly and carelessly interpret the Word in order to impress others are a great danger to the church. (Story of John Knox and his view on preaching)

Because right speech is a crucial mark of true faith, teachers are held to a higher standard in what they say, for obvious reasons, for what they say exerts a powerful spiritual influence on others. Teachers are in danger of misusing their tongues and thereby incurring stricter judgement. Remember James 1:19. Every teacher, including the Apostles, are to be aware of this, 2 Timothy

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:16; ESV

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2:15 “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”

**POINT 4** - We all stumble in many ways. No one is exempt from the dangers of the tongue. We find in 2 Chronicles 6:36 “there is no man who does not sin” yet this doesn’t give us an excuse to sin or do things that are right in our own eyes. As pastors, teachers stand before men to teach God’s word, it remains the most honorable, yet trembling thing to do.