



Faith and Words

James 3:1-12

1] A Serious Understanding of Words [James 3:1-2]

Our mouths are the main way we evidence sinfulness

2] A Vision for Godliness with Words [James 3:3-12]

- a] They set a course [3-5]
- b] They yield a result [5-6]
- c] They hold up a mirror [9-12]

3] A Redeemed Purpose to Words [James 3:6-8]

Study Questions

- [1] What is the relationship between our hearts and our words?
- [2] How is it that our speech sets the course of our lives?
- [3] How does this passage help us to think about the excuse, "I didn't mean it"?
- [4] What other passages in James speak to how we use our words?

James 3:1-12 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ² For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴ Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ^{5a} So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. ^{5b} How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

"The tongue is so much more than what we actually say out loud. In fact actual speech is probably only a small percentage of the use of the tongue. We cannot think without formulating thoughts in words, we cannot plan without describing to ourselves step by step what we intend to do; we cannot imagine without painting a word picture before our inward eyes; we cannot write a letter or a book without talking it through in our minds on to the paper; we cannot resent without fueling the fires of resentment in words addressed to ourselves; we cannot feel sorry for ourselves without listening to the self-pitying voice which tells us how hard done by we are. BUT if our tongue were so well under control that it refused to formulate the words of self-pity, the images of lustfulness, the thoughts of anger and resentment, then these things are cut down before they have a chance to live: the tongue has deprived them of any power to 'switch on' that side of our lives. It is in this way that 'if anyone makes no mistakes in what he says he is a perfect man.'

The tongue is more than an evidence of spiritual maturity, it is the MEANS to it!" ~A Motyer