

James – Life after Faith

James 3:9-12

“Dealing with a Jekyll and Hyde Tongue”

1. BE CONSCIOUS OF THE CAPABILITIES OF YOUR TONGUE
  - A. It is capable of worship
  - B. It is capable of wickedness
2. BE CONVICTED BY THE CONTRADICTIONS OF YOUR TONGUE
  - A. In light of your Father
  - B. In light of your family
3. BE CONCERNED FOR THE CONSISTENCY OF YOUR TONGUE
  - A. How fit you are for God’s work
  - B. How fruitful you are in God’s work

1. In Robert Louis Stevenson’s book, “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” Dr. Henry Jekyll concocts a potion that allows him to turn himself into a completely different figure; a man he calls Edward Hyde.

2. Dr. Jekyll is a respected scientist and professor. Edward Hyde is a wild man, who commits and enjoys the worst crimes and evils. In the book it says, “Henry Jekyll stood at times [shocked by] the acts of Edward Hyde.”<sup>i</sup>

3. The point of the story, though, is that Jekyll and Hyde were *not* two separate men, but different sides of the same man. In spite of how different the two characters seem to be, Dr. Jekyll admits, “...I was radically both...”<sup>ii</sup>

4. In James chapter 3, the subject is primarily that of the tongue. James makes clear how dangerous and destructive a loose and unbridled tongue can be.

5. As he continues addressing the subject of the tongue, he deals with the fact that sometimes the tongue can be a lot like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

6. He says in verse 9 that with the tongue, “...*bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.*”

7. All of us recognize that at times our tongues can sound like they belong to two different people, depending on where we are and what we are doing.

8. Bro. James challenges us in this text about this matter of a Jekyll and Hyde tongue, and he says, “...*My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*”

9. Let’s look at this passage as the Spirit of God continues to deal with us about the subject of our tongue. There are some things we should remember that will help us to keep quiet the “Hyde side” of our mouth.

10. First of all, I believe this passage is a challenge to:

#### I. BE CONSCIOUS OF THE CAPABILITIES OF YOUR TONGUE

1. A standard piano has 88 keys, and is capable of sounding notes across 7 and  $\frac{1}{4}$  octaves. That is a wide range.
2. In verse 9, Bro. James reminds us that the tongue has quite a range as well. It can strike some high notes, such as praise to God. It can likewise reach some low notes as well, as when it is used to curse a fellow man.
3. We must be aware of the range of capabilities, both good and bad, that lie within the power of the tongue. Proverbs 18:21 says, *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue...”*
4. Notice a couple of things regarding the capabilities of your tongue. First of all:

#### **A. It is capable of worship**

1. James says of the tongue, *“Therewith bless we God...”* The word “bless” is translated from a compound of two words, and it literally means “good word”.
2. Our tongues are not all evil, and are not always used for bad things. At their highest moments, they can be used to say good words to and about their Creator.
3. Psalm 109:30 says, *“I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude.”*
4. Hebrews 13:15 says, *“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”*
5. The purpose for which your tongue was created was to worship God by giving Him praise. Therefore, the most powerful and profound thing you could ever say is, “Jesus is Lord!”
6. Almost no one understood the power of words like Sir. Winston Churchill. He published nearly 10 million words in his lifetime, and his speeches were masterpieces.
7. Once, Churchill was so delighted with something he had said, he blurted out, “Oh, how glorious English words are!”<sup>iii</sup>
8. Not all words are glorious. But the ones that bless God are reminders of the wonderful capability for worship that we have in our tongues.
9. Notice not only that your tongue is capable of worship, but notice also that:

#### **B. It is capable of wickedness**

1. Look again at verse 9. James says, *“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.”*
2. While it is true that your tongue is capable of a heavenly vocabulary; the same tongue is likewise capable of a hellish violence.
3. James says that with our tongues, we can curse men, even though they have been made in the image of God.
4. The word translated “curse” literally means to call down some kind of evil or harm upon another person.
5. In our culture, most people simply skip the middle man, and just curse people themselves. Either way, it is an ugly act.
6. We saw an example of this at the 2009 *US Open* tennis tournament, when Serena Williams ripped into a line judge after she had called a double fault on the tennis star.
7. Williams threatened to use the ball to inflict all sorts of harm on the judge during her tirade brought to you by the letter F.
8. Who would have thought that Serena Williams had a mouth like that? The truth is; there is a sense in which all our mouths are capable of the same kind of wickedness.
9. That is why you must always be conscious of what your tongue is capable of doing. Notice a second thing we should remember when dealing with the Jekyll and Hyde tongue. Notice not only that you should *be conscious of the capabilities of your tongue*, but notice further that you should:

## **II. BE CONVICTED BY THE CONTRADICTIONS OF YOUR TONGUE**

1. Notice carefully that James uses the pronoun “we” in verse 9. Even the brother of Jesus, and the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Jerusalem had to deal with the issue of the Jekyll and Hyde tongue.
2. Now look at verse 10. James says very plainly, *“Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”*
3. Based on the tenses of the words James uses, one writer translates that last phrase this way: “These things ought not to...keep on taking place.”<sup>iv</sup>

4. Though James himself battled the same issues with his tongue as the rest of us do, he knew that we must not settle for Jekyll and Hyde tongue for the rest of our lives.

5. Why? Why must these things not be so? Why should you be convicted about the hypocritical, contradictory tongue? I think there are a couple of good reasons found in this text. First of all, you should be convicted:

#### **A. In light of your Father**

1. Look back at verse 9. James says that we bless God “even the Father” with our tongue.

2. Once you come to faith in Christ, you are adopted into the family of God. At that moment, the eternal God is no longer just your Creator. He becomes your Father.

3. Romans 8:15 says, “...ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father.*” Through Jesus, you have a new and important relationship with the God of heaven.

4. When you bless Him on Sunday, and then blast your neighbor on Monday, your Heavenly Father hears both of those uses of your tongue.

5. God does not hear you *only* when you pray. He is not listening *only* when you are in church. He heard you when you asked for His blessing, and He also heard you get rude with cashier who wasn’t moving fast enough.

6. A dad sat down with his family to eat a meal, and he said the blessing, thanking God for the food he was about to receive.

7. No sooner than he said “amen”, he began to gripe about the food his wife had cooked. His little girl asked him, “Daddy, was God listening when you prayed?”

8. The dad said, “Sure He was.” The little girl said, “Was He listening too when you said you hated mommy’s meatloaf?” The dad paused, and said, “Yes. He was.”

The little girl then asked, “Which one did he believe?”

9. We about convicted about the contradictions of our mouth in light of the fact that our Father hears every word we say.

10. We should be convicted, not only in light of our Father, but also:

#### **B. In light of our family**

1. Look again at verse 10. James says, “...*My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*”
2. I often refer to James as “Bro. James”. The reason why is because that seems to be his favorite way of addressing other Christians. He calls them “my brethren”.
3. He uses that title “brethren”, 15 times in 5 chapters. James recognized his relationship to all the other people who had believed the gospel, and entered the family of God.
4. In that relationship, I believe we find another reason we ought to be convicted by the contradictions of our tongues.
5. As believers, there is a sense in which we represent the whole family of God. What people see in us, they will to some degree associate with all of God’s people.
6. When someone who knows you are a Christian, hears you using profanity, gossiping, slandering, and otherwise letting your tongue loose, it says something to them about the family of God!
7. In my mom’s house, there were certain words that were clearly out of bounds. Some of those words were words that our friends were allowed to use, and that many people did not think anything about.
8. But if we used them in the presence of my mother, she would say, “Hey boy, we don’t talk like that.” I understood who that “we” was. It was our family.
9. The family of God has their own, special standards for the tongue as well. When you violate those standards, you ought to be convicted about it.
10. There is a third principle we find in this text regarding the issue of dealing with a Jekyll and Hyde tongue. Notice not only that you should *be conscious of the capabilities of your tongue*, and *be convicted by the contradictions of your tongue*, but notice also lastly that you should:

### **III. BE CONCERNED FOR THE CONSISTENCY OF YOUR TONGUE**

1. As we’ve moved through the book of James, one thing you will have noticed is that James is fond of illustrating his points with things from everyday life.
2. Already in this chapter James has used the images of a bridle, a rudder, and the animals.

3. He does the same thing in order to illustrate how strange and unnatural it is to have an inconsistent, Jekyll and Hyde tongue.

4. In the illustrations James gives, we find a couple of reminders of why we should be concerned about having a consistent tongue. First of all, the consistency of your tongue can affect:

#### **A. How fit you are for God's work**

1. Look now at verse 11. It says, *"Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?"*
2. The word translated "fountain" describes natural openings in the ground, or springs that can still be found on the hills around the Holy Land.
3. Some of these fountains contain fresh water that is fit for drinking. Some of them contain "brackish" water - or even stagnated water that is contaminated and "bitter", as James calls it.
4. The point James is making is that they are either one or other. There is a consistency in these sources of water.
5. Think of it this way, however, what good are those fountains of bitter water. They are of no use to anyone.
6. In much the same way, when our mouths are full of bitter words, we are of no use to God. He can't use angry, griping, hateful, profane, offensive words.
7. My grandmother in North Carolina used to serve us juice out a set of glasses called "snuff glasses". I wasn't sure why they were called "snuff glasses", but I eventually figured out that they used to hold snuff.
8. Of course, they had been washed, but still, only in the Appalachian Mountains would you drink out of glass that held something you spit out your mouth.
9. God can clean out our mouths, but he cannot use them so long as they are still filled with "bitter water."
10. You should be concerned for the consistency of your tongue, not only because it can affect how fit you are for God's work, but also because it can affect:

#### **B. How fruitful you are in God's work**

1. Look at verse 12. James gives another example of consistency. He asks, *"Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?"*

2. The obvious answer is, “No.” A fig tree is expected to produce figs and figs only. A grape vine is expected to bear grapes, and no other types of fruit.
  3. Again, James is illustrating the point that it is unnatural for a tongue to give both blessing and cursing. The point is clear.
  4. However, think about his illustration of plants bearing fruit. Are we not taught in Scripture that the believer is to likewise bear fruit?
  5. Paul teaches us that the fruit of a life indwelt by the Holy Spirit is, “...*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, [m]eekness, temperance: against such there is no law* (Gal. 5:22-23).”
  6. It is a simple fact that if our tongues are producing the fruits of anger, jealousy, hatred, and strife, they cannot also, at the same time, produce the fruit of the Spirit.
  7. With that being said, I wonder, what is coming out of your mouth? Is it sweet or bitter? It is useful for God, or harmful to others.
  8. What kind of fruit is your tongue producing? It is a harvest of hatred? Is it spiritual food that is good for the use of edifying?
  9. If you love the Lord, and desire to be used by Him, then you must be concerned for the consistency of your tongue.
- 
1. According to a legend, an ancient philosopher named Xanthus sent his servant to the market on one day to buy the best thing he could find for a special dinner the philosopher was going to have.
  2. At that meal, they had nothing but tongue. Every course consisted of some kind of tongue. The servant explained, “I did get the best thing in the market...Isn’t the tongue...the organ of eloquence, the organ of kindness, the organ of worship?”
  3. Again, the Xanthus had a dinner, and instructed the servant to go to the market, and this time to purchase the worst thing he could find.
  4. Again, the whole meal consisted of nothing but tongue. Xanthus asked his servant, “Didn’t I tell you to get the worst thing in the market?”
  5. The servant said, “I did; for isn’t the tongue the organ of blasphemy, the organ of defamation, the organ of lying?”

6. The tongue can be an instrument for the glory of God, or it can be a tool for the devil. It *can* both bless God, and curse men.

7. However, as James says, this should not be so. If we will let the Holy Spirit control our tongues, we can be used by God, and fruitful in His work.

8. The Hyde side of your Jekyll and Hyde tongue can be silenced, but only by the help and grace of God.

---

<sup>i</sup> Stevenson, Robert Louis, [The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde](#), (*Bantam Classics*, Kindle Edition, 2004), Location 936-41

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid*, Location 862-67

<sup>iii</sup> Johnson, Paul, [Churchill](#), (Penguin Group, Kindle Edition, New York, 2009) Location 1845-50

<sup>iv</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S., [The New Testament: An Expanded Translation](#), (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1961), p. 544