



SERIES: FEBRUARY – MARCH FAITH IN REAL LIFE

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Scripture: James 3:7-8

TITLE: Taming the Tongue

Way back in high school, I enjoyed performing the classic Disney play "Beauty and the Beast." In the show, I got to play everyone's favorite character, Gaston. Gaston is such a great villain because he's so good at being bad! If you're familiar with this story, you know that in the beginning, the beast is ugly on the outside, where Gaston is outwardly attractive. But by the end of the show, we come to understand that the true beast is Gaston; he is the one whose heart is filled with an uncontrollable evil. This is a powerful illustration of the uncontrollable Beast-like nature of evil that naturally resides in all sinful human hearts.

James continues explaining this idea of evil in today's passage, James chapter 3:7-8 (ESV). In this verse and immediately before this, James has used several illustrations to show how the human tongue and the words we speak have unbelievable power even though the tongue is such a small and seemingly insignificant part of our bodies. The tongue is so powerful that it can unleash a wildfire of evil that can hurt us and others around us.

In 3:6, James has told us that the very source of this evil tongue is from hell itself. James continues to flesh out these ideas as we read verses 7-8, which say,

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Here, James compares the human tongue to all types of untamable beasts. I believe this calls our attention back to creation from Genesis 1, as we are told that God set humans apart as His image-bearers. Part of our responsibility is to have dominion over and control all the many wild animals around us.

Every time I go to the zoo, I'm amazed at how powerful humans are! They can make horses jump fences, make bears go through hoops, and train whales to do flips! Yet, James tells us of a more powerful beast we cannot tame. Our tongue!

Again, looking at this language, James says that this evil tongue is restless, continuously looking for opportunities to pour out evil words that cause problems. James is telling us that our tongues possess power through our words to unleash a type of deadly poison. As we look to Scripture, I believe this poison is the poison of sin. The poison that infects our hearts convinces us that we are greater than God and don't need to submit to Him.

As we think back to the Garden in Genesis 3, we think about poison; it makes me also think about a snake. Satan came in the form of a serpent, and he didn't physically attack Eve; he didn't bite her or use fangs to unleash his poison. He used only words. With words alone, he planted in Eve's heart and mind an untamable evil that caused humanity to hate the Creator we were made to love. This is now the deadly poison of sin and rebellion that our own tongue seeks to unleash with every word.

This leaves us with the hard question, what hope can we have if the evil of our tongues is untamable? This is where we need to notice that verse 8 tells us no human being can tame the tongue. But God can. God has the power to change our hearts and transform us so that our tongues no longer utter an evil poison, but instead, our tongues might be used to speak words of truth, to bring peace, and to proclaim the unmatched power of the Gospel!

God alone holds the power to tame the beast that is our evil tongues!