

SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

THE LETTER OF *James*

Words Matter

JAMES 3:1-2

James has reminded believers that the Christian life includes trials and temptations. He has also emphasized that genuine faith should produce evidence through our actions. Now, James connects back to one of the central themes of his letter: **the Christian life is revealed in action, but our actions can sometimes be obscured by our words.**

Jesus said: "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart." Luke 6:45 (NASB95)

James gives more attention to the dangers and responsibilities of the tongue than any other New Testament writer. In fact, some aspect of speech appears in every chapter of his letter. He first introduces the importance of our words in James 1:19: "But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger." Then, in 1:26, he makes the connection between our speech and the genuineness of our faith: "If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless."

Having emphasized at the close of chapter 2 that genuine faith produces good works, James now turns in chapter 3 to another practical expression of genuine faith: the good work of controlling the tongue. We are challenged to recognize: **a mark of spiritual maturity is the ability to control one's tongue.**

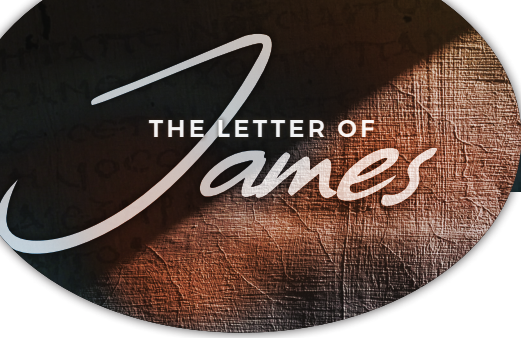
He begins by addressing teachers, because teachers carry a unique responsibility for the words they speak. But in verse 2, James broadens his focus to every believer. The message is simple:

Words matter.

1. A caution for teachers (verse 1)

a. Teaching carries with it a grave responsibility

- Motive
- Content
- Delivery



- b. Teaching results in a great accountability

2. A connection for you to personalize (verse 2)

Verse 2 is a transition from speaking specifically about teachers to speaking about all Christians. Yes, teachers must be careful about the words they use when they teach, but all Christians need to be careful with their words. A mark of spiritual maturity is the ability to control one's tongue.

- a. Words matter
- b. Words have influence
- c. Words carry responsibility
- d. Words and actions should be consistent

Take Away

"What do my words reveal about what is happening in my heart?"

A spiritually mature Christian is not someone who never makes a mistake with his words. A spiritually mature Christian is someone who increasingly recognizes the power of the tongue, submits his speech to God, and seeks to make his words consistent with his faith.

So, as we consider James 3:1–2, may we ask God to help us not only speak the right words, but to cultivate the kind of heart from which right words naturally come.