

## Spiritual Wholeness “A Guarded Heart”

**Introduction:** Today we turn our attention to one of the great and most practically applicable texts in James’ letter. Here James reveals one of the most crucial components of Spiritual Wholeness—A Guarded Heart.

Already...

- Endurance in Trials
- Obedience to the Word

The issue for James is a Guarded Heart—yet he never mentions the heart—rather the entire conversation centers around the tongue—our words.

Two ways that teaching on words ties to the previous section:

1. Words are also works—very significant words

NOTE: Words of Jesus

*For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:37 NKJV*

2. Connects with one of James’ descriptors of true religion

*If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. James 1:26 NKJV*

But, how do we come to call this issue of words a “guarded heart” issue?

- Solomon’s Words

*Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. 24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you. Proverbs 4:23-24 NKJV*

- Words of Jesus

*But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. Matthew 15:18 NKJV*

This section says clearly that when one's tongue is controlled, it manifests a transformed heart!

Paragraph unfolds in four stages:

- Warning to teachers about judgment
- Power of the tongue
- Difficulty of controlling the tongue
- Double nature of the tongue

## I. Warning to teachers about judgment (3:1, 2)

- A. Before launching into the main subject (destructive potential of the tongue) James discourages readers from becoming teachers.

*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. James 3:1-2 NKJV*

1. Teachers (didaskaloí) were prominent in the early life of the church.

- a. Comparable to Jewish Rabbi

*But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Matthew 23:8 NKJV*

- b. Teaching a gift ranked high by Paul.

*And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 1 Corinthians 12:28 NKJV*

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. Ephesians 4:11 NKJV*

*For ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching. Romans 12:7 NKJV*

- c. Position held in high prestige
- d. Many were seeking position of teacher without the proper moral and perhaps intellectual qualifications
- e. Possibly the reason for such a bitter, partisan spirit in the community was teachers who had been so critical

2. Believers should not be too eager to be teachers because the judgment will be harsher for them.

- a. The tongue is the hardest to control
- b. So as teachers, words are used often, so the danger of sinning is greater

3. Because they bear so much responsibility for spiritual welfare of those to whom they minister—will be scrutinized more carefully.

*But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more. Luke 12:48 NKJV*

4. James is not trying to talk those who feel a call to teach out of teaching—he is trying to warn them about entering ministry with insincere or cavalier motivations.

B. A person who does not sin with his speech is perfect.

*For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. James 3:2 NKJV*

#### Two Assertions

1. We all stumble in many things (stumble=ptaio)

- a. Word for stumble can mean ruin, defeated, sin, slip up, or inadvertent sin
- b. Common assertion of Scripture

*Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker? Job 4:17 NKJV*

*"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV*

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23 NKJV*

NOTE: James does not believe in sinlessness and neither does any New Testament writer—but he does believe that those who have the implanted word of God can fulfill the royal law of love.

*But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful bearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. James 1:25 NKJV*

*If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well. James 2:8 NKJV*

2. The person who can control the tongue is indeed able to keep his whole body in check.
  - a. It is so difficult to control that if it can be handled—all else will be easy in comparison.
  - b. Perfect=talaios=achieving one’s goal/destiny, intended design
  - c. If we can conquer the speech, we can conquer our spiritual lives

## II. Power of the tongue (3:3-6)

### A. Illustrations to support his assertion regarding the importance of the tongue

*Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. James 3:3-5 NKJV*

1. Bits in horses mouths to control and turn the whole body.
  - a. Not so much control as direction
  - b. Tongue can control the destiny of a person

(ILL) Hot tempered people, too much foolish talk cannot succeed—(ILL) People who don’t know when to be quiet

2. Rudder in the ship—small thing can control very large things
3. So the tongue—though small has great power
4. Another illustration which leads to the destructiveness potential

*Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! James 3:5 NKJV*

(Disastrous consequences pictured by a forest on fire)

### B. The tongue is a fire

*And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. James 3:6 NKJV*

1. It is the conduit of all iniquity

NOTE: 7 Abominations

*These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren. Proverbs 6:16-19 NKJV*

NOTE: 3 are sins of speech

2. Jesus said what comes out of the mouth is what defiles

*Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." Matthew 15:11 NKJV*

3. Defiles (spilousa) the whole body

*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. James 1:27 NKJV*

“Unspotted” (aspilon)

4. Its source is Hell itself—Satan wants to destroy

*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. John 10:10 NKJV*

*“Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.”*

*“Far easier to heal are the wounds caused by stick and stone than the damage caused by words.”—Douglass Moo*

### III. The difficulty of controlling the tongue (3:7, 8)

*For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. James 3:7-8 NKJV*

A. All types of animals can be controlled

NOTE: Part of creation command

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. Genesis 1:26 NKJV*

B. **But the tongue no man can tame**

1. Only God by His spirit is able to help us
2. Unruly evil—unruly—same words as double minded—back and forth (restless)
3. Full of deadly poison

*They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; The poison of asps is under their lips. Psalms 140:3 NKJV*

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit. Proverbs 18:21 NKJV*

**IV. Double nature of the tongue** (James 3:9-12)

*With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. James 3:9-12 NKJV*

A. **Deplorable nature of double-mindedness**

*He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. James 1:8 NKJV*

*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:8 NKJV*

1. Inconsistent faith
2. Unlike God who never wavers

B. **Contradiction**

1. **Blessing God/Cursing Men** (created in His image)

a. **A barometer of our spiritual wholeness**

*For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:37 NKJV*

- b. This should not be (10)

**NOTE:** Those transformed by the Spirit of God should manifest wholeness and purity of heart in consistency and purity of speech.

2. Fresh and bitter water from same spring?
3. Fig tree bears olives or grapevine bear figs?
4. Salt water and fresh not possible
5. Bad things don't produce good things

**Conclusion:** One who is double minded and inconsistent in his walk cannot consistently speak pure and helpful words.

- A. Only a renewed heart can produce pure speech
- B. A heart yielded and surrendered to God
- C. A heart filled with the Spirit

(ILL) Praising in the Spirit

*But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.  
Jude 20 NKJV*