

**James 3: 1—5, 13—18**

**INTRODUCTION** — Rev. Ron Dunn was the pastor of a large church in Ft. Worth, Texas — he had had a great, well—known preacher share a sermon at his church, and the preacher had held the congregation spell—bound for forty—five minutes with a tremendous, spirit—filled message!! Ron and his wife took the nationally known preacher out for dinner that evening to one of the nicest restaurants in town. While there, Ron later told, the guest preacher was rude to the waitress — really rude, even offensive and crude! Ron chose to not say anything to the guest preacher, but he decided to never have him back to Ft. Worth. Ron said, the man couldn’t control his tongue.

**I. WATCHING YOUR TONGUE**

1. “*Faultless in what he (she) SAYS.*” (v. 2)
2. Controlling the tongue is more than cursing, ‘tho that is part of what James writes about here — see v. 9—10.
3. But controlling one’s tongue is, overall, about all of the trouble that our speech can cause.
4. A father was once watching a football game on TV as his young daughter played nearby. Angered by his team’s bad play, he grabbed the closest thing and threw it down. His little girl’s favorite toy was shattered, along with her heart. The dad immediately embraced his daughter and apologized. He replaced the toy and thought all was well. But he didn’t know how much his fury had frightened his 4-year-old, and she didn’t know the depth of her pain. In time, however, forgiveness came.

Years later he sent an identical toy to his daughter when she was expecting a baby. She posted a photo of the toy on Facebook with the words, “This gift has a very long story going back to my childhood. It wasn’t a happy story then, but it

has a happy ending now! Redemption is a beautiful thing. Thanks, Grandpa!”

The Bible urges us to avoid angry outbursts by putting on the new self, “which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:24). And if we are the victim of anger, God asks us to “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (v. 32).

Restored relationships are not easy, but they are possible by the grace of God.

5. “*The tongue is a fire . . . .*” (v. 6) includes all the ways we can hurt others by what we say, whether outbursts of anger, like that dad, and including gossip, spreading lies or half—truths, or “stretching the truth” by the way we pass things on to others.

Example: It probably doesn’t hurt anyone when a fisherman (or –woman) “stretches” the truth about that fish they caught, telling that it was three feet long when it was only nine inches! ! ! But when someone . . . . .

Example: The old “Telephone” game that lots of youth groups and classes have used . . . .

6. What we need to do instead — speak in positive ways about others. . . . Your mother or grandmother may have told you: “If you don’t have anything good to say, don’t say anything!”

## ***II. WISDOM of the WORLD vs. the WISDOM of GOD***

1. James moved from telling believers to use their speech wisely, to contrasting the world’s wisdom with the wisdom that comes from heaven.

2. What is the world’s wisdom? James defines it as “*Bitter envy and selfish ambition.*” (v. 14) But what is that? Think of Wall Street. I watched a TV show last year on financial analysts, and one analyst said that the movie, “Trading Places” had one of the best explanations of how things work on Wall Street, in trading stocks and guessing at the market. If you ever saw that movie, you remember how it ended?

The rich and powerful Duke brothers, who lost hundreds of millions of dollars trying to cheat on the market, lost everything — and the chairman of the New York Stock Exchange insisted on selling their chair on the exchange, confiscating their mansion and Rolls Royces, and leaving them destitute!! Because — that is too often the final act of those who put “selfish ambition” and greed before everything else, especially before God and honesty and caring for others for Jesus’ sake.

3. What does James tell us about heavenly wisdom? A person with godly wisdom is pure — and loves peace, is considerate, does not seek to dominate others, has compassion, exhibits “good fruit” (the fruit of the spirit — “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” — Galatians 5:22–23 ) — and a person filled with heavenly wisdom is sincere, and one who makes peace.

**CONCLUSION** — Rev. Dr. John Stott said of his own personal theology: “I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross. The only God I believe in is the One Friedrich Nietzsche ridiculed as ‘God on the cross.’ In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?”

Latin American theologian Rene Padilla remembered vividly one of his early encounters with Rev. Dr. John Stott.

On the previous night we had arrived in Bariloche, Argentina, in the middle of heavy rain. The street was muddy and, as a result, by the time we got to the room that had been assigned to us, our shoes were covered with mud. In the morning, as I woke up, I heard the sound of a brush—John was busy, brushing my shoes. “John!” I exclaimed full of surprise, “What are you doing?” “My dear René,” he responded, “Jesus taught us to wash each other's feet. You do not need me to wash your feet, but I can brush your shoes.”

The WISDOM of CHRIST is to SERVE OTHERS for JESUS’ SAKE, with HUMILITY, and CONTROL OUR TONGUE, as BEST as we can.