

James 3:1-12 – The Tongue

James 3:1-12

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

James 1:26

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.

II Timothy 2:24, 25

And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition . . .

I. Teachers and the Tongue

vs. 1 Teachers judged harsher

vs. 2 We all stumble (sin)

must be ready to ask for forgiveness

control speech -> control entire body

vs. 8 no one can tame the tongue – but with God, all things are possible.

II. The Tongue is Merely an Indicator of the Heart

Matt. 12:34-37

You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man out of good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil. And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment.

James 1:26

If anyone thinks himself to be religious...

What "slips out" when we are under pressure?

Matt. 1:19

And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.

III. The Characteristics of the Tongue James 3:3-12

James 3:3-12

- vs. 3 Horse / Bit
- vs. 4 Ship / Rudder
- vs. 5 Body / tongue
Forest fire / small flame

A small thing (3 inch muscle) which has BIG influence

The tongue poisons things

- vs. 6 Defiles the body
Mark 7:15 - *the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.*
- vs. 7 All species tamed
- vs. 8 No one can tame the tongue – then where is our hope?

The tongue does damage that cannot be made right – relationships permanently damaged

The tongue is inconsistent

- vs. 9 Bless / Curse
- vs. 11-12 You either heal or you hurt, and it is determined by who you are

Prov. 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue

Power for Death:

- Gossip – Prov. 6:16-19
7 things God hates lying tongue, false witness, spreads strife

Application question: How safe is the absent one in your conversations?

Sarcasm - Cutting others down in jest.

Spreading strife - purposefully undercutting and spreading your side of a story rather than talking with the person or dealing with the situation.

Matt. 4:23, 24 - Go to the person and make it right.

Prov. 18:17 - *The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.*

Power for Life:

- Prov. 15:2 – *The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable . . .*
- Eph. 4:29 - *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.*
- Col. 4:6 - *Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned . . .*

IV. Supernatural Control

- Spiritual Battle
- The real question is, “How do I change my heart?”

Heb. 4:12

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

John 6:63

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

II Tim. 3:16, 17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

We spend time in the Word because it changes the very fiber of our personality.

Jer. 23:29

Is not My word like a fire declares the Lord, or like a hammer that shatters the rock?

Psalm 141:3 – Prayer

Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.

Practical Steps:

- Fill your heart and mind with the Word – memorize it.
Gal. 5:16 - *Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh*
Rom. 8:6 - *For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,*
- Pray daily asking for wisdom in this area.
- Commit to God and a fellow spiritual warrior to never let an unwholesome word or off color joke proceed from your mouth.
- Think before you talk. Prov. 15:28 *The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer.*