

Encouraged by the Use of Our Tongue

James 3:1-12





Introduction

- This section explains 1:26
- Problem of desiring to teach and not ethically ready
- Control of speech crucial for one who would speak!
- Deals with the human problem of controlling one's tongue



Verse 1

- **Warning against becoming a teacher**
- **Knowing that you will receive greater judgment**
- **Situation that brings this up**
- **Implications about being a teacher**
- **Teachers revered in ancient times**



Verse 2

- We stumble in many ways
- Stumbling already mentioned in 2:10
- 2 Peter 1:10—do these things and you will never stumble—growth in Christian virtue (2 Peter 1:1-11)
- Does not=perfect (teleios) man
- Able to bridle his body=1:26 not bridle his tongue, earlier!
- Picture of putting in own mouth, not another!



Verse 3

- We put bits in horses' mouths
- Purpose of their obeying us vs. wild & untamed (think of destructive speech!)
- And we turn about their whole body
- Horse's obedience and submission to the desire of the rider
- We bridle our mouth to the obedience and submission of our desire to be responsible with our speech



Verse 4

- Illustration of large ships
- Being driven by strong winds
- Turned about by a very small rudder
- Wherever the impulse of him steering wishes/wills it to be (40+ will in N.T.)
- Notice emphasis: small but powerful, can be controlled



Verse 5

- **Likewise—simile drawn from rudder**
- **A small member of the body**
- **Boasts exceeding great things (megalomania)**
- **Haughty, sense of importance boasting**
- **Behold, see—pointing to a recent fire?**
- **How small...how great!....How little...how large!
Contrast is unbelievable!**



Verse 6

- Also...additional illustration
- The tongue is a fire
- A world of unrighteousness
- Romans 6:13 instruments *of unrighteousness*
- 2 Thess 2:10—*deception of unrighteousness*
- 2 Timothy 2:19—*depart from unrighteousness*
- 2 Peter 2:13, 15—*the wages of unrighteousness*
- 1 John 1:9—*cleanses us from all unrighteousness*
- The tongue is set...and what it is doing!



Verse 7

- **Indeed every species**
- **Is subdued and stands subdued**
- **Is tamed and has been tamed**
- **Mark 5:4 illustrates use of this verb**
- **in subjection to the human race**



Verse 8

- But (contrast) the tongue no man can tame
- No one is able
- 2:14 faith is not able with out works
- Fig tree is not able to produce olives
- Impossible because of its very nature
- Unrestrainable evil
- James 1:8—unrestrainable, restless
- James 3:16—disorder, confusion
- Death-bearing poison



Verse 9

- **By means of it, in it (the tongue)**
- **We bless and we curse**
- **The situational problem**
- **Notice pronoun “we”**
- **Those who have been made in the likeness or image of God**
- **Biblical anthropology—human beings reflect something of God their maker**



Verse 10

- **Out of the same mouth**
- **Proceed forth**
- **Blessing and cursing**
- **Ought not...strong prohibition at the front of the phrase!**
- **Incomprehensible that such incongruence could be happening**
- **Supposition that it is occurring among those desire to be teachers!**



Verse 11

- **Out of the same fountain**
- **Springs forth sweet and bitter**
- **Perhaps fresh and brackish**
- **Or salty source above water outlet has contaminated the fresh water**



Verse 12

- **Impossibility of fig tree producing olives**
- **Impossibility of [grape] vines producing figs**
- **Nor can a salt spring produce fresh water**
- **Illustration of sulphur water—artesian well**
- **Ends these contrasts, setting the reader/hearer up for the next section on heavenly wisdom**



Principles of the Tongue

- **1. Teachers have great responsibility in what they say**
- **2. Bridling the tongue is crucial in personal spiritual growth**
- **3. The more we bridle our tongue the stronger our words will be!**
- **4. The more responsible we are the more we have to bridle!**



Principles of the Tongue

- **5. Even though the tongue is small and powerful, it can be controlled**
- **6. One of the most destructive evil forces in the world is an unbridled tongue**
- **7. One of the worst problems with the tongue is its boastfulness and haughty pronouncements**
- **8. No way that blessings and curses should come out of the same mouth**