

Series – Part 13: How to Live as a Christian:

Tame Your Tongue!

James 3:1-12 ESV

Sunday, July 21 at 9:00; Monday, July 22 at 7 PM

9th Sunday After Pentecost / 8th After Trinity – 2013

Our Summer Schedule for July & August:

Sundays: DS 9; Refreshments 10:10; BC&SS 10:30; Mondays: DS 7 PM

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, our present position *as the saved people of God* did not come about by our doing; instead, **it is by God's doing that we are in Christ Jesus** (1 Cor. 1:30)!

Now, *as we enter James chapter 3*, we focus on how we – **as ones who trust in Jesus alone as Savior** – *should and should not speak, not to be saved but because we are saved!*

1. Those with a Greater Influence, are Held to a Higher Standard:

- a. Bible teachers should do their best to accurately handle God's Word of truth: ¹ **Not many of you should become [Bible] teachers, my brothers** *[no inclusion of sisters – as in 2:15]*, **for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.** // Teachers can *♦rightly teach their students for their benefit* OR *♦wrongly teach them for their harm*. Wrong teaching is serious: **"If anyone is preaching [thus teaching] to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed [thus separated from Christ, see Rom 9:3]"** (Gal 1:8 ESV). So what is meant by **"judged with**

greater strictness"? **"Both a stricter standard of judgment and a harsher punishment."** (LSB, 2140)

- b. Why is verse 1 true? ² **For we all stumble in many ways** *[so even good teachers will stumble; that is why all students should follow Acts 17:11]*. **And if anyone [τις] does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle [restrain] his whole body.** // Bible teachers and all believers are called to *careful and proper speech* (Pro 10:19; Eph 4:29; Jam 1:19, 26), yet no one can proceed *without sin* (Ecc 7:20). We all stand in *constant need* of God's forgiveness thru Jesus!

2. Examples of Small Things which Affect Large Things:

- a. Rider > bit > horse: ³ **If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.**
- b. Pilot > rudder > ship: ⁴ **Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.**
- c. Heart > tongue > person: ^{5a} **So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.**
- d. Person > match > forest fire: ^{5b} **How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!**

God has given people the ability to use *some very small things* to affect *some very large things!* Our tongues are very small, but very powerful; **may God help us to tame them!**

3. **The Tongue is Powerful to Sin:**

- a. Opposed to God: ⁶ **And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness** [compare 1:27, 4:4]. **The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.** // Think about our communication with others; ☹we were tempted, ☹we sinned, and ☹our lives were miserable!
- b. More destructive than every kind: ⁷ **For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.** // God said to Adam & Eve: “...rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen 1:28 NAS). People have tamed every animal, but, still, *we cannot tame the tongue!*

4. **Examples of Contrasts:**

- a. Bless and curse: ⁹ **With it [the tongue] we [James includes himself] bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, ~~these~~ [those] things ought not to be so.** // Why? Because God has given us heart transplants; so our hearts should no longer be controlled by hell but by heaven – *by the Spirit through the Word!* **“The righteous...should...reflect what God has made them to be.”** (LSB, 2141)

- b. Fresh water and salt water: ¹¹ **Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water** [μήτι – often left untranslated, expects a negative answer]? // Definitely not!
- c. Figs and olives: ^{12a} **Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs** [μή – expects a negative answer]? // Definitely not!
- d. Salt water and fresh water: ^{12b} **Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.**

“Creation itself cannot be two different things at once; neither can a person who is re-created by God serve Him and curse others at the same time.” (LSB, 2141) Those of the world tend to speak like the sinful world, but those who are **of Christ** tend to **honor Him and bless others!**

Conclusion: Let’s remember and apply God’s Word:

1. Why are Bible teachers held to a higher standard?
2. In a *spiritual* sense, what controls the tongue?

Let us pray together: Dear Jesus, since we have been purified from all of our sins by Your precious blood, may our speech always *please You* and *bless others!* Amen!

Read, Understand, and Apply God’s Holy Word!		
Verse and Key Word – James 3 ESV	Greek and Transliteration	Meaning of Key Word
⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.	γλῶσσα glossa	tongue: an organ of speech

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