

## **Jewels from James - Part Five**

**James 3:1-12**

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*“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. For we all often stumble and fall and offend in many things. And if anyone does not offend in speech (never says the wrong things), he is a fully developed character and a perfect man, able to control his whole body and to curb his entire nature. When we put bits in the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”*

### **INTRO**

#### **Speak With Care**

One of the measures of spiritual maturity is a believer's speech. James devoted a good part of his letter to attacking a careless and corrupt tongue. He appealed, however, not only for controlled tongues but also for controlled thoughts.

#### **The Tongue is Powerful** (verses 1-5)

Teaching obviously needs to be done, but those who teach must understand their responsibility as *“those who teach will be judged more strictly”* vs1. A teacher's condemnation is greater because, having professed to having a clear knowledge of duty, he is all the more bound to obey it.

James also included himself *“we all stumble in many ways”*

If a believer is *“never at fault in what he says”*, *“he is a perfect”* fulfilled, mature, complete person. He is able to *“keep his whole body in check”* vs. 2 Spiritual maturity requires a tamed tongue. The tongue may be small but it is influential

#### **Three illustrations make this point clear:**

The bit and the horse

The rudder and the ship

The spark and the forest

#### **The argument is clear:**

Just as little bits . . . turn grown horses

Small rudders guide large ships

And a small spark consumes an entire forest.

So the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. vs5. The tongue is little BUT . . . Very Powerful

### **The Tongue is Perverse** (verses 6-8)

The tongue is not only powerful, it's also perverse. It is small and influential but, worse, by far, it can be satanic and infectious.

### **Listen to the descriptions in verses 6 & 8**

*"The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell." Vs 6*

*"But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." Vs 8*

We all need to rethink the power of our words. How often have we said something that we wish we could take back? But it's too late!

### **The Tongue is Polluted** (verses 9-12)

A poet wrote the following:

*"A dog is loved by old and young, he wags his tail and not his tongue."*

A man wrote a famous tract called Come to Jesus. He went on to become a well known Christian. Later he got into a theological debate and wrote an article against his opponent, which bristled with sarcasm and sharp, cutting words. He showed it to a friend and asked his opinion.

The man read it and said: "Why don't you title it. 'Go to the Devil' by the man who wrote 'Come to Christ.'"

The man got the point and so should we. A tongue that both blesses and curses is as freakish as a fountain that has both sweet and bitter water coming from it, or a fig tree that grows olives.

**James' point is clear:** A believer's tongue should not be an instrument of inconsistency!

Small and influential: The tongue must be controlled!

Satanic and infectious: The tongue must be corralled!

Salty and inconsistent: The tongue must be cleansed!

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Here Are Some Practical Thoughts on Controlling the Tongue**

- Both our relationship to God and to man depend on us bringing the tongue under the lordship of Christ.
- Before speaking we should ask ourselves, is what I'm about to say honouring to God.

**In addition, we should ask:**

Is what I'm about to say edifying, encouraging; designed to build the other person up?

**Next Week:** James 3:13-18