

James 3:1-12, Taming the Tongue

Read James 3:1-12

V. 1 – The early believers who James was addressing did not have established local churches to aid in their maturity. Having been scattered because of persecution (Acts 8:1-3) newly saved believers were eager to become teachers.

- **Why do you think James gives this warning?**
- **Look up: Hebrews 4:12**

V. 2 - James states: “we all stumble”, and as a result we fail God in various ways (i.e., sin). One of the frequent ways that we sin is with our tongues (deceit, lying, corrupt or filthy talk, anger, flattery, slander, gossip, blasphemy, and boasting). The tongue is powerful, and difficult to control. This is why James says that anyone who can control it is able to bridle the whole body.

I said, "I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence."

– Psalm 39:1

In chapter 2, James discussed “Faith and Deeds”. Explain the correlation to his instructions here in chapter 3 on controlling our speech?

Not only is it important to choose the right words at the right time, but also _____ (James 1:19).

Of the seven "detestable" sins, note how many are related to sins of the tongue? - Proverbs 6:16-19

V. 3-5 - Just as these other small things can control things that are hundreds of times larger, so it is with the tongue. A tongue may be small, but it greatly affects our whole life.

What does the Bible tell us about the power of our words, both in content and motive? - Proverbs 26:20-21

V. 6 - The way we use our tongue affects the entire course of our life.

Explain how Newton’s third law of motion is applicable: “For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.”

James traces the destructive nature of the tongue back to its source; "hell". (Greek word: *geennes*; the symbol of the ever-burning fire that awaits the ungodly – Hebrew word: *ge hinnom*).

What did Jesus say in Matthew 15:11 makes a man “unclean”?

V. 7 & 8 - Consider the time, physical strength and patience it takes to break a wild stallion, or the training it takes to handle a poisonous viper without succumbing to a deadly bite. What do these verses declare about the tongue and its potential?

A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction.

– Proverbs 16:23

V. 9 & 10 – Why is it especially horrible to curse or verbally abuse a human being? For those in earshot, how does this affect our testimony to the lost; to the newly saved; to the mature in Christ; and to God our Father?

V. 11 - How is this like what happens to our praises if curses or derogatory remarks also come from our mouths?

V. 12 – If we truly know the love of Christ, understand His loving desire that all should come to a saving knowledge of Him, and we are honestly seeking to be ambassadors of His message... can we do both (praise/curse)?

Read and discuss Ephesians 4:29-32