

## **Pt 9 James Series (Faith Made Perfect) – Taming the Tongue**

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney 04-11-2018

### † James 3:1-12

- 1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.
- 2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.
- 3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.
- 4 Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.
- 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!
- 6 And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.
- 7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:
- 8 But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.
- 9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.
- 10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.
- 11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?
- 12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

Last week we finished up chapter two which dealt with faith and works. We saw that James was not teaching that works were necessary to earn salvation but that they were the fruit of salvation, and therefore if you had no works in your life then perhaps your faith is not genuine.

Tonight we start in chapter three with a whole different thought, although, I don't want you to forget that this entire book was written with the thought of faith being made perfect, so if we take the teaching of James as a whole, then we will find that everything is actually related to faith, even when it comes to our tongues, which is what we will be discussing tonight.

### 1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

The word “**masters**,” as used in our text is not used in the same way as we would use it when referring to the Lord as our Master, Authority, Sovereign, it is instead using it in the form of “**teachers**.”

There was a problem in James' day with a lot of people claiming to be teachers of God's Word. The position of “Rabbi” was a very high honor and a lot of people desired the attention a Rabbi would receive. But the truth is, not everyone that claims to be called to teach is God called. They are self-called. Some people just like the attention that they receive by teaching. I'll just tell you right now, I don't like the attention. If I had my way I would record all my messages and just send a CD in for people to listen to. But a lot of people bask in the attention.

James cautions against careless teaching because those that teach God's Word **will receive the greater condemnation**. He is not meaning they will be condemned to hell but rather that they will receive a more severe judgment because of what they have taught. That is why I am so cautious that I don't preach anything contrary to the Word of

God because I will answer for it. Let's not forget what Jesus said in **Luke 12:48: ...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required:...**

Preachers are to preach the full counsel of God, not a watered down, diluted Gospel. When Paul was defending his preaching to the elders at Ephesus he said this: **Acts 20:27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.**

That is also why he cautioned Timothy: **2 Timothy 4:2-3 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;**

### 2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.

Then James states a very truthful statement “*For in many things we offend all.*” In other words, we are all subject to stumble in many things. It is our human nature to stumble and mess up. Then he says this: **If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.** He is trying to stress the point that to not offend in word (God's Word) then it takes someone with spiritual maturity and with understanding of the Word of God in order not to offend or cause one to stumble.

Teaching God's Word is not to be taken lightly. If you are able to teach it without messing up, then James says “**the same *is* a perfect man.**” Of course, he doesn't mean perfect as in “sin-free,” but more in the sense that he has the needed Spiritual maturity to not offend in the Word of God.

**3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4 Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.**

Then James gives us some real-world examples; bits in horses' mouths, and ships on the sea. Both these things can be controlled. Horses by putting a bit in their mouth which would have ropes attached to it where the person driving it can control it. That's how my Papaw, Lorn Chesney, controlled his mules and his Clydesdale when he would plow up the garden.

And, of course, a ship, by using the helm (steering wheel) to guide the rudder that is mounted beneath the boat, you can control which way the ship goes.

Both these things that James described are large things that would seem impossible to tame but are tamed very easily. But then he puts those things in comparison with the tongue in the next verse:

### 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

Ah the tongue, such a little member of the body. You would think something so small would be insignificant and easily controlled. But not so! James says “**5b...and boasteth great things...**” And therein lies our problem...

You've probably heard that little saying, “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” What a lie! The tongue has caused wars to break out, marriages and friendships to end, families to be split up, bitter hatred between people, Churches to be divided, all because this little member in our mouth can't help but boast, rip, slander, and defile.

In your King James Bible, you will find the word “tongue” used 129 times. Very few of those times is it ever speaking about something good. Let me give you some examples:

Psalm 10:7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

Psalm 12:3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:

Psalm 50:19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.

Psalm 52:2 Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

Psalm 52:4 Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.

Psalm 109:2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.

Psalm 120:2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.

Proverbs 10:31 The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out.

Proverbs 17:4 A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Proverbs 21:6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

Proverbs 26:28 A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

Isaiah 59:3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

Jeremiah 9:5 And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.

Jeremiah 9:8 Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.

James 1:26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

So, there is a great reason James is warning us about our tongues. They can do a lot of damage. That's why James went on to say in **verse 5c ...Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!**

We all know that it only takes a small fire to start a raging inferno. Several years ago I had a huge brush pile in the backyard at our house over on Bud Hawkins Rd. We had cut down several cedar trees and had thrown a lot of brush and limbs and grass on that pile for about 2-years. Well, I decided one summer day that I was going to burn that brush pile. It has been very hot and dry for a while and that stuff was ready to burn. I found a quart mason jar and filled it full of gasoline and I poured it on the brush pile. Then I took a single match and struck it and threw it on that pile. Friends, I'm telling you it was like the earth opened up and hell come shooting out of there! It burned my eyebrows off, my eyelashes and all of my arm hair too. In a matter of seconds, I had a raging inferno. Large embers started floating up into the sky and landing in the woods beside our property. The siding on our garage began to buckle. You would've thought a volcano had erupted in our backyard.

Let me tell you, I don't know if James had ever done that before but he sure knew what would happen if you did! It was **great matter that a little fire kindleth!**

**6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.**

Just like my brush fire, your tongue can start an out of control fire of hell in a matter of seconds. All it takes is one little slip of the tongue to defile the whole body. One of the scariest things is where James says: "**and setteth on fire the course of nature**" In other words, the damage that the tongue makes actually changes the set course of nature. The things that would have occurred had someone not sinned with their tongue, will no longer occur because they have changed the course of nature.

Let me explain it with this hypothetical example:

There was a pastor of a Church, he was a good man. One evening he got a phone call from a man that called him from a bar. The man said he was in trouble and drunk and

didn't know who else to turn to, would the pastor please come there and help him and take him home? The pastor jumped in his car, drove to the bar and went and got the man. He had to help him walk through the parking lot to his car so they were stumbling and staggering the whole way to get there. About that time Mrs. Busybody was driving by and looked over toward the bar and there was the pastor and that man locked together staggering to the car. She got on her phone and began calling. She called the head deacon's wife and said, "I just saw the pastor down at Joe's Bar, drunk as a skunk staggering through the parking lot." Then it was like wildfire. Calls and texts began flying that the pastor was a drunk. Nobody ever bothered to even find out the truth. The people all got together and decided they would run the pastor off. The next day they went to him and told him not to come back. He tried to explain but no one was listening.

Devastated, the pastor gathered his belongings and moved his family away, never to preach again. Word had gotten out that he was a drunk. He and his family got out of church and his teenage boy began running around with the wrong crowd. They got a call one night that their son had overdosed on drugs and was dead. The pressure was too much on the family and the pastor and his wife divorced. The pastor ended up taking his own life because of all the misery he had been through.

And it all started because Mrs. Busybody could not control her tongue. It was full of the iniquities of hell. **The fire that she lit set on fire the course of nature.**

**7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.**

Again, James is providing more real-world examples; beasts, birds, serpents, things in the sea, all these can be tamed by man, but man can't tame his own tongue!

**9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. 11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.**

Then James says something that ought to make each and every person sit up and take notice. We see that this tongue in our mouth has the ability to bless and curse. On Sunday's we are praising God and shouting Hallelujah and on Monday's grumbling and talking about people.

James says that "**these things ought not so to be.**" Then he provides examples to prove his point: He compares our tongue to a fountain: The same fountain doesn't produce both sweet and bitter water. No more than a fig tree doesn't bear olive berries, it bears figs. And a fountain can't yield both salt and fresh water because it is not natural. It is the same thing that Jesus taught in the Gospel of **Matthew 12:33-37 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. 34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. 36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. 37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.**

Therefore; if we are Christians our tongues shouldn't be both blessing and cursing because it isn't natural and not only that but our Lord says that we will be justified or condemned by our words, meaning our words reveal the true condition of our hearts.

---

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version