

Taming the Tongue

- 1** Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.
- 2** We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.
- 3** When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.
- 4** 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.
- 5** 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.
- 6** 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.
- 7** All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man,
- 8** but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.
- 9** With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.
- 10** Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.
- 11** Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?
- 12** My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Good Morning, My Sisters and Brothers. I greet you this morning in the name of Jesus. Jesus, Son of a Living God. Jesus our Saviour! Jesus our example! If you have called on Jesus recently and He has answered you ought to want to praise Him. Praise Him for stopping cars as you slide through intersections. Praise Him for sending someone to speak a kind word. Praise Him for all the things He has done that you have not given Him credit or thanksgiving. Praise Him just because!

This is the 4th Sunday in February and the final lesson from the book of James for this season.

On the **1st Sunday** I asked:

**AM I A CHRISTIAN ALL THE TIME OR
DOES MY FAITH NEED TO GO TO REHAB?**

At the end of the sermon I challenged you to look in the mirror and honestly find **one area** where you needed rehab and begin to work on it.

On **2nd Sunday** I told you that I had some *isms*, some areas where I needed help. We worked with the theme:

MY ISMS NEED JESUS

and I concluded that sermon with:

6 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT SHOW FAVORITISM

**IT IS NOT WHAT JESUS TAUGHT
IT IS NOT WHAT JESUS DID
IT INSULTS THOSE MADE BY GOD IN THE IMAGE OF GOD
IT IS NOT CONSISTENT WITH THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT
IT SHOWS A LACK OF MERCY
IT IS SIN**

*But if you show favoritism, you sin and
are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.
For whoever keeps the whole law and
yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*

On **3rd Sunday** we talked about:

A FAITH THAT PLEASES GOD!

In that sermon I shared with you James three major arguments for faith and works.

- Faith must include appropriate works
- Faith must be accompanied by action
 - Faith without work is dead

I concluded that sermon by asking you if you had a faith that pleased God.

Today it is my prayer to pull all of this together so that you may have a blueprint to follow as you work to live a life that meets the challenge of the Great Commission.

As we focus on the 3rd chapter of James we see again where James, the author of the book bearing his name is speaking about the tongue. This is the most concise discussion, but the tongue is referenced in each of the 5 chapters (1:19,26; 2:12,14,16,18; 4:11,13, 15-16 and 5:12). James' concern with the tongue is so important that it has made me wonder how can we each begin to test and therefore measure how we use our tongue. Therefore with acknowledgment of the work of Daniel L. Akin¹ and Jim Drake² and their sermons from the James 3:1-12 passage I invite you take out your sermon notebook and prepare to take a pop quiz on the tongue.

Since a sermon needs a title to serve as a focal point would you label your paper?

IF MY TONGUE IS NOT SAVED NEITHER AM I

SHALL WE PRAY! Father God we come this morning to hear a word from heaven. Help us push aside all the baggage we brought to church this morning. Help us open our hearts, ears and minds to receive what has been prepared for us and confirmed with your written Word. Help us to be both hearers and doers of your Word. Abba, I ask that the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you. If you see me going astray or speaking words I should not please show me the way. In the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen and Amen.

¹ http://www.sbts.edu/media/publications/sbjt/sbjt_2000fall7.pdf

² [http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/test-4-the-tongue-test-jim-drake-sermon-on-doubt-](http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/test-4-the-tongue-test-jim-drake-sermon-on-doubt-113189.asp)

² <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/test-4-the-tongue-test-jim-drake-sermon-on-doubt-113189.asp>

IF MY TONGUE IS NOT SAVED NEITHER AM I

We could spend hours talking about the tongue.

- it is one of the smaller organs in the body
- it is not a single muscle but a group of muscles
- it is generally 2-4 inches long
- it is the source of bacteria
- it a breeding ground for bacteria that attacks teeth and gums
- it is located in your mouth where virus collect to make you ill

Yet all of this information is not what really makes the tongue so important. The tongue is "directly wed (linked)³ to the heart, and it is the heart that motivates and manipulates the tongue for good or evil, to bless or to curse".⁴ I think this is what Jesus is saying in Matthew 12:34-37

34 *You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.*
 35 *The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.*
 36 *But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.*
 37 *For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."*(NIV)

34 *"You have minds like a snake pit! How do you suppose what you say is worth anything when you are so foul-minded? It's your heart, not the dictionary, that gives meaning to your words.*
35 *A good person produces good deeds and words season after season. An evil person is a blight on the orchard.*
36 *Let me tell you something: Every one of these careless words is going to come back to haunt you. There will be a time of Reckoning. Words are powerful; take them seriously.*
37 *Words can be your salvation. Words can also be your damnation."*
(The Message)⁵

So now for the first test question:

Is your tongue condemning?

³ my addition to the quote

⁴ http://www.sbts.edu/media/publications/sbjt/sbjt_2000fall7.pdf

⁵ w.biblestudytools.com/matthew/12.html

1 *Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*

Often I have said from this pulpit, in Sunday School and Adult Bible Study that we may be the best Christian someone else ever meets. We may serve as the example by which a person judges all other Christians. Last week I heard another way to say this: “we may be the only Bible someone else ever reads”. The point I am trying to make is all of us are teachers. Someone is looking at you and me and learning from us. I would have argued with anyone that told me I was teaching Jamie to be selfish, but I did. Shortly after the Christmas holidays we were all having dinner and Jamie had lots of French fries left on his plate so I suggested that he share them with his grandfather and Jamie said I don’t want to share them, but Jamie I said you are suppose to share. Jamie replied, you don’t share, you hid your cookies from Granddaddy.

Is your tongue condemning?

Are the lessons you teach uplifting and encouraging? Or are they offensive and condemning? James says that because we teach with our tongues, we’re responsible for those lessons. And when those lessons are offensive—we will receive greater condemnation. The greater the influence, the greater the condemnation. If by the words you use, people are not pointed to Christ, they will be pointed to condemnation. That’s the test. Does your tongue lead people to Christ or to condemnation? There’s really no in between.⁶

Is your tongue controlling?

James uses the examples of a bit in a horse’s mouth and rudder on a ship to explain how something very small can control something very large. The same is true of our tongues. The average human tongue is about 2.5 - 3 ounces and yet it controls the speech of an entire human

⁶ http://www.sermoncentral.com/print_friendly.asp?SermonID=113189

body. And just as your tongue controls your body what you say with your tongue can control someone else. Our job as Christians is not to control others, not to make others do it our way. Our job, our responsibility is to teach and preach and model and lead others to Christ by our words and our example. Not by threats, manipulation, spinning of the scripture or demands, but by love. **In other words you need to ask question number two: Is your tongue under God's control? Or is your tongue under your control?**

Is your tongue consuming?

Next James uses the example of fire to talk about the tongue.

- 6** *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.*

So, how is the tongue like that?

Spark: "Hey, did you hear about so-and-so?"

Kindling: "No, what did you hear?"

Fire: Well, so-and-so said that..."

*It might be a little fire, but what does verse 5 say? "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" I have seen lives destroyed by idle talk. I have seen homes destroyed by idle talk. I have seen churches destroyed by idle talk. And so have you. How do you prevent it? Extinguish the spark. "Did you hear about so-and-so?" When you hear that, ask yourself **four** questions.*

- *Is the subject verified as being true or is it just a rumor?*
- *Does the person being talked about know they're being talked about?*
- *Is your conversation for their benefit or just your curiosity?*
- *Does continuing the conversation glorify Christ or does it just tickle your ears?*⁷

A tongue can be consuming like a wildfire. Or a tongue can please God and extinguish the tiniest of sparks.

Is the fire in your tongue consuming or converting?

It only takes a spark, To get a fire going
And soon all those around, Can warm up in the glowing

⁷ http://www.sermoncentral.com/print_friendly.asp?SermonID=113189

That's how it is with God's love, Once you've experienced it
 You'll spread His love, to everyone
 You'll want to pass it on⁸

Question number 4

Is your tongue compromising?

- 9** With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.
- 10** Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

Just a couple of examples of what I mean:

Stopping to bless your food before eating
 Cussing the wait staff for poor service

Praying and asking God to increase the membership
 Ignoring the people God sends because they are part of your ISMS

Saying exactly what you feel about the singing, the teaching,
 the preaching, the Leadership
 Denying it when asked about it or asked to work to improve it

How can we use our tongue to eat the bread and drink the cup
 of communion and use that same tongue to eat and drink to
 excess those things which are harmful to our bodies

A tongue pleasing to God is not compromising. It is consistent in its love, its speech and its example

Is your tongue compromising?

And now for the fifth and last question

Is your tongue corrupting?

Wicked	Deceitful	Perverse	Filthy
Corrupt	Flattering	Slandorous	Gossiping
Blasphemous	Foolish	Boasting	Complaining
Cursing	Sensual	Vile	Contemptuous

⁸ <http://st-takla.org/Lyrics-Spiritual-Songs/English-Coptic-Hymns-Texts/7-Christian-n-Gospel-Lyrics-O-P-Q-R/Pass-It-On.html>

The most corrupting language is the kind of language that bites; the kind of language that hurts. The kind that rips open the heart of the one it is aimed at.

1. is your tongue condemning. (1-2)
2. is your tongue controlling (3-5a)
3. is your tongue consuming (5b-6)
4. is your tongue corrupting (7-8)
5. is your tongue compromising (9-12)

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