

Practical Christianity

The Tongue

James 3.1-12

[There is a mean member in our Church and today I intend to name names and call out the meanest member of our Church. So as not to give this scoundrel away I will refer to him in the neuter sense. This member is so mean that it is able to destroy people's lives in but a moment of time. It can render a lifetime of accomplishment useless in but a moment destroying every bit of self esteem its victims might have had. It is so mean it can set one's life on fire consuming all of one's personal value in a blaze as hot as brimstone. It is vicious, often ruthless and feared by almost everyone in this place tonight. Do you know who the meanest member of our Church is? You'll know by the time we finish reading our text tonight.]

[Read Text]

[Who is the meanest member of our Church? Well it is clearly the smallest member of our Church and that is your tongue!]

[This whole text deals with the development of Mature Conversation. We need to get our words under control so our conversation will be godly and graceful. The Bible says,]

[Colossians 4:6 ⁶ Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.]

[It seems in our day that too many people just want to give people a piece of their mind, but would your piece of mind be godly and gracious.]

In this study we discover,

A. The Influence of the Tongue (vs 1-5) [- What can your tongue do? What is the power of our words? James uses three illustrations to reveal just how powerful this meanest member of our Church really is. How powerful is your tongue?]

["The Tongue can direct. The Tongue can destroy. The Tongue can delight."]

Three Illustrations For The Tongue:

1. The Bit (vs 2- 3) [-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. - A little piece of metal in a horse's mouth controls the whole horse. All of the mighty power of the horse is controlled by that little bit in the horse's mouth.]

[Just a bit of a word can control the whole destiny of a man.]

[Isn't it amazing that a little bit can control such a powerful animal? **What does it take to control your words? Do you know that your words are far more powerful than a horse in all his strength?**]

2. **The Rudder (vs 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.* - A little rudder can turn a very large ship. The rudder can bring a ship into the safety of the harbor. A Rudder is incredibly important for a ship.]

Practical Christianity
The Tongue
James 3.1-12

A. **The Influence of the Tongue**
1. **The Bit**

[**Illustration: The Bismark**, Fortress of the Germany Navy, with a special hull armour that could fend off a normal torpedo. Because of its special hull the Bismark was a terror to the British fleet.]

[On May 21, 1941, the "unsinkable" German battleship, the Bismarck, was sighted in the North Atlantic. Immediately planes and ships from the Royal British Navy sped to the scene with orders to sink her at all costs. As the Bismark headed toward the German-controlled French coast where it would be safe from attack, to the astonishment of all, the massive battleship suddenly swung around and reentered the area where the British ships were massed in greatest strength. At the same time, she began to steer an erratic zigzag course, which made it much easier for the British to overtake her. You see, a torpedo had damaged her rudder and without its control the "unsinkable" Bismarck was soon sunk. That little rudder was critical to that massive ship and was her undoing.]

[Likewise this smallest member of our Church, the tongue is critical to the well being of our fellowship and can be our undoing. This meanest member of our Church can destroy the effectiveness of the body of Christ. Don't underestimate the importance of this little member.]

3. **The Spark (vs 5)** [- *Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, **how great a matter a little fire kindleth!*** - A spark is all that is needed to start a large consuming fire.]

[Mrs. O'leary (1871), in Chicago was milking her cow when her cow kicked over a lantern and started a fire. In that fire 17,450 building were destroyed and more than 250 people died.]

[**Fire can warm or fire can burn** - Words can bless and words can burn.]

B. **The Iniquity of the Tongue (vs 6-8)** [- Four Things.]

1. **The Tongue Defiles Like A Broken Dripping Sewer (vs 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.*** - **Beware of the gutter mouth.**]

[**Defiles** - σπιλοῦσα (Gk) - a spot, stain. To defile, spot, stain (James 3:6; Jude 1:23).^{1[1]}
Many understand that this expresses a spot as in to soil.]

[This means to spot as in becoming soiled, perhaps like a broken dripping sewer. Who would want to be around raw sewage? Hence, our words can be like raw sewage.]

Practical Christianity
The Tongue
James 3.1-12

A. The Influence of the Tongue

B. The Iniquity of the Tongue

1. The Tongues Defiles Like a Broken Dripping Sewer
- 2.

2. **The Tongue Destroys Like A Hellish Fire (vs 6; Prov 16.27-18)** [- **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.** - **Beware of the arson tongue.** Gossip is like this.]

Prov 16.27

[**Proverbs 16:27-28**²⁷ An ungodly man diggeth up evil: **and in his lips there is as a burning fire.**²⁸ A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.]

3. **The Tongue Devours Like A Wild Beast (vs 7; Gal 5.15)** [- **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:** - **Beware of the biting tongue.** Christian cannibalism.]

Gal 5.15

[**Galatians 5:15**¹⁵ But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.]

4. **The Tongue Deadens Like A Vile Poison (vs 8; Prov 18.21)** [- *But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, **full of deadly poison.*** - **Beware of the darts of the tongue.** This speaks of our words acting like poisonous arrows.]

Prov 18.21

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

- C. The Inconsistency Of The Tongue (vs 9-12)** [- *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.* - The type of inconsistency spoken of in our text is impossible in the natural world. What is impossible in the natural world ought not to be found in the spiritual world.]

1. **The Contradiction of the tongue (vs 9-12)** [- The type of inconsistency spoken of in this text is impossible in the natural world. What is impossible in the natural world ought

^{1[1]}Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). *The complete word study dictionary : New Testament* (electronic ed.) (G4695). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

not to be in the spiritual world.]

["We go from the Gloria to the gossip, from the creed to the criticism."]

[There once was a little girl who was sitting on her daddy's lap and hugging his neck. While she was hugging his neck she saw her little brother across the room and stuck out her tongue at him. Her mother saw it from the other room and chided the girl by saying, "get your arms off of your daddy's neck. You can't love your father will sticking your tongue out at your father's son." This is the lesson James is teaching us.]

Practical Christianity
The Tongue
James 3.1-12

- A. The Influence of the Tongue**
- B. The Iniquity of the Tongue**
- C. The Inconsistency of the Tongue**
 - 1. The Contradiction of the Tongue

[To curse a man does not mean to cuss a man. You can curse a man with criticism, gossip, and slander.]

["If you love God then let it be shown in your speech toward other men."]

2. **The Conclusion Of The Tongue (vs 8; Matt 12.34; Luke 6.45) [- *But the tongue can no man tame*; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. - You cannot control your tongue on your own.]**

Matt 12.34

["You might as well try to control gun powder in hell, as to try and control your tongue apart from God."]

[Where do your words come from? - Our words pour out of our heart.]

*[Matthew 12:34³⁴ O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? **for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.**]*

*[Luke 6:45⁴⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart **bringeth forth that which is good**; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: **for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.**]*

["What's in the root of the tree will show in the fruit of the tree."]

["What's in the well will show in the water."]

[The Holy Spirit is our only hope to control our words. The only way for you to control your words is for you to be saved and filled with the Holy Spirit.]

["While there is a bit in the horses mouth there is someone who holds the bridle."]

["While there is a rudder on the ship, there is someone who holds the helm."]
[Adrian Rogers]

CrossRoads Baptist, Sunday, Sept 18, 2022

CrossRoads Baptist, Sunday Evening, Feb 8, 2009