

## James 3.1-12 A World On Fire

### The Controlled Tongue Controls the Whole Man, v. 1-4

- I. Not many should become teachers. He is addressing the motive to become a teacher.
  - A. Why does he give this advice? Teachers will be held accountable with strict scrutiny. This warning was for the entire congregation, especially those who were misusing their tongue in slander and judgment showing partiality (Ch. 2; Rom. 2.17-23; Luke 12.48; Matt. 12.38-40).
    - A.1. For we all sin in many ways (WLC 149; 1 John 1.8). Teachers will more likely sin with their tongues, because they use it more often.
      - A.1.a) If you are able to control the tongue, which is true religion (1.26), the rest of the body will fall in line (Matt. 12.34; 15.18-19).
        - (A.1.a.1) The smallest piece of equipment on our body can be its guide.
          - (A.1.a.1.a) Application. Which one of us can claim that we have never slipped to slander, to lie or to boast? What can an uncontrolled tongue do?

### The Uncontrolled Tongue Destroys the Whole Man, v. 5-10a

- I. This small member boasts of great things and can be compared to a small fire.
  - A. Like the spark of a lighter. It's a small fire but it can burn down large forests. It is appointed among our members as a general of an army and is able to destroy everything in its path.
    - A.1. What does it do when it is uncontrolled? First, it *stains* the whole body in contrast to remaining *unstained* from the world as James calls them to in 1.27. Our sinful nature is on display by our speech.
    - A.2. Secondly, it sets on fire the course of life from birth to death. If our lives are the forests, the tongue is the small fire that burns it down and destroys it. Not only our own lives but the lives of others. Think of the destruction that a small rumor can cause.
      - A.2.a) How is this fire ignited? By hell (John 8.44).

B. Then, he gives an illustration of how animals are tamed but humans, who are made in God's likeness and image cannot tame the tongue, which is ironic (Rom. 3.10ff). **No human being can tame the tongue.**

- B.1. The evil of our tongues can hide itself like deadly poison even in pious speech.
  - B.1.a) We were made in the image and likeness of God, set apart from the rest of creation, especially by our speech and that is what we use to bless God and curse and destroy our neighbor, who is also made in his image.
    - (B.1.a.1) Application. We could be pious in worship and bless God and yet break all of God's commandments by misusing our tongue and cursing our brother or sister (2.10; Isa. 1.12). This could be used as a good spiritual indicator of where we are.

### The Controlled Tongue Bears Fruit of its Own Kind, v. 10b-12

- I. Application. My brothers, these things ought not to be so... We are those who claim to have the Spirit of God within; who claim God to be the rider of our horse or the pilot of our ship, who guides us.
- B. He gives three more illustrations to communicate that a tree will produce fruit, or a body of water will yield water of its own kind. What vine are your fruits attached to? Are you bearing fruit of being a child of God? It will be demonstrated by how you control your tongue.
  - B.1. How is it possible to control the tongue, which James says no one is able to?
    - B.1.a) Christ died for all sin, especially the sins of the tongue (Mark 3.28), unless you reject the good news of Christ. If we believe this, his seed is planted within and we will bear fruit of his kind (Matt. 7.16).
      - (B.1.a.1) A tongue that does not destroy or tear down but upbuilds and encourages (Eph. 4.29). Just like our Lord who spoke words of eternal life (John 6.68). This can only be done by yielding to Christ and His Spirit to work in us. See your need and turn to Christ.