

Ruling the Tongue

“If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.”
James 3:2

I. The WARNING

- A. James gives an excellent warning and most thorough description of the tongue (3:1-12).
- B. The nature of speech is such that excellent discipline here indicates a perfect man (3:2).
- C. Horses and ships are very large objects controlled precisely by very small parts (3:3-5).
 - 1. The tongue is a small part, but it is capable of having very great affects (3:5).
 - 2. Consider that a destructive forest fire begins with a single spark or flame (3:5).
- D. The tongue is like a fire in its small beginnings and very destructive nature (3:6).
 - 1. As a forest fire tends toward destruction and a world of iniquity toward temptation and destruction, so the tongue is capable of ruining the entire person.
 - 2. An uncontrolled tongue sets our flesh in action to run its natural, evil course.
 - 3. The source of the fire in our tongues is from hell itself in its evil nature.
- E. Every creature both great and small has been tamed by men, but not the tongue (3:7-8).
 - 1. No man can fully rule his tongue, because it is an unruly (without rule) evil.
 - 2. It is full of deadly poison – its affects on men are the issues of life and death.
- F. The hypocritical duplicity of our tongues is a most wicked and contrary evil (3:9-12).
 - 1. A tongue that curses and blesses is speaking from an evil heart (Matthew 12:34).
 - 2. And such duplicity in treating God’s saints does not show godliness (I John 4:20).
 - 3. True rule of our tongue will result in consistent and godly speech at all times.

II. The POWER

- A. You can love your tongue for its power of either life or death (Pro 18:21; 13:2-3; 21:23).
 - 1. Trouble and destruction are in the power of the tongue (Pr 12:13; 17:20 18:6-7).
 - 2. Peace and prosperity are in the tongue’s power (Psalm 34:12-13; I Peter 3:10).
- B. Pretensions to religion are a vain show, if you do not bridle your tongue (James 1:26).
- C. Men imagine that their tongues are their own to be used as they choose (Psalm 12:1-4).
- D. The tongue is not easy to bridle – it burns like a fire to be used (Ps 39:1-3; Job 13:19).
- E. The chief element lacking in this and other vices is often temperance, not knowledge.

III. The POISON

- A. When Isaiah saw the exalted Lord, he was foremost convicted of his speech (Is 6:1-8).
- B. Sarcastic ridicule, especially to children, is poison (Job 5:21; Pr 12:18; Ep 6:4; Col 3:21).
- C. Foolish talking and jesting is not convenient and a way of life today (Eph 5:4; Pr 26:19).
- D. Boasting of what we have, have done, or will do is evil (Ps 12:3; Pr 27:2; Jas 4:13-16).
- E. Whispering and slandering destroys men (Ps 101:5; Pro 11:13; 16:27-28; 25:9; 26:22,22).
- F. Cursing others is a sin (Proverbs 11:12; 20:20; James 3:9-10; Matthew 5:21-22).
- G. Flattery to secure your benefit is wrong (Ps 5:9; 12:3; Pr 6:24; 7:5,21-23; 26:28; 29:5).
 - 1. Praising for good is a godly kindness (I Co 11:2; Pr 31:28-31; Ro 16:1; Phil 2:20).
 - 2. But praising to secure favor or good from another person is flattery and sin.
 - 3. But praising to enhance your own image and reputation is flattery and sin.
 - 4. But praising to engage in flirting with the opposite sex is flattery and sin.
- H. Disrespect to those in authority is a great evil (Deut 27:16; II Kings 2:23-24; II Pet 2:10).
- I. Deceit is a major source of evil in speech (Psalm 10:7; 120:2; Prov 6:16-29; 12:22).
- J. Contention and debate are unacceptable (Prov 18:6; Rom 1:29; II Cor 12:20; Phil 2:14).
- K. Complaining and murmuring are sinful things (Psalm 106:24-25; I Cor 10:10; Phil 2:14).

- L. Filthy communication of sexual or other matters is sin (Colossians 3:8; Eph 4:29; 5:4).
- M. False witness in court or any other situation is vile (Deut 5:20; 19:16-21; Prov 6:16-19).
- N. Making vows but not keeping them is presumptuous sin (Ec 5:1-7; Ps 15:4; Mat 5:33-37).
- O. Sowing discord with talking or murmuring is sin God hates (Prov 6:16-19; 16:28; 22:10).

IV. The GLORY

- A. The tongue has fantastic potential for good both to God and man when used righteously.
- B. The tongue is a glory if praising God (Ps 16:9 cp Ac 2:26; Ps 30:12; 108:1; Heb 13:15).
- C. The Lord keeps a book of remembrance of those who speak often about Him (Mal 3:16).
- D. Being a tree of life to others requires the wise use of your tongue (Prov 11:30 cp 15:4).
 - 1. The value of a wise tongue can be compared to precious stones (Pr 10:20; 20:15).
 - 2. Just men have tongues that speak acceptably and wisely (Ps 37:30; Pr 10:31-32).
 - 3. Our tongues are the means by which we can be a tree of life (Proverbs 15:2,4,7).
 - 4. A righteous man feeds many by his words (Prov 10:21). Are you known for this?
 - 5. Rebuke is better than flattery even to the object of correction (Prov 27:5; 28:23).
- E. Graciousness should mark our speech (Ps 45:2; Prov 16:13; 22:11; Eccl 10:12; Luk 4:22).
- F. Proper words for the occasion are a beautiful thing to observe (Prov 15:23; 24:26; 25:11).
- G. Persuasion lies in the ability to suffer long and speak softly (Proverbs 15:1; 25:15).

V. The RULES

- A. The tongue is an unruly member, so any rule for controlling it must be received soberly.
- B. God knows and judges. Words are known (Psalm 139:4) and judged (Matt 12:36-37).
- C. Pray for discretion. Ask God to help you bridle your tongue (Psalm 17:3; 141:3).
- D. Be slow to speak. Haste in speech is foolish (James 1:19; Prov 15:28; 18:13; Eccl 5:2).
- E. Let your words be few. Many words mark a fool (Prov 10:19; 17:27-28; Ecc 5:3; 10:14).
- F. Cover salt with grace. Gracious lips mark wise men (Pro 22:11; 31:26; Ep 4:29; Col 4:6).