

The Tongue: Part 2
James 3:4-12
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February 26th, 2023

Teaching Notes

Last week we had the tongue part 1 w/bit and bridles.

A rider uses the small bit to control a giant horse.
And sometimes, the horse doesn't like the bit and bridle because it is not applied properly, the horse is hurt, or just stubborn.

Today is the tongue pt 2.

James has a couple more analogies for us...

First it was the bit and bridle with the horse...

1. the tongue is small but powerful
2. It needs to be controlled
3. We use wisdom and the Word to control our tongue

Today there are 4: ships, fire, animals, and water.

James 3:4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

Why does he talk about ships?

The horse and bridle is a pretty good example.

Ships are large - horses are large.
Rudders are small - bits are small.
What's the difference?!

The difference between the horse & the ship is...

...The ship is fully exposed to the elements.

...The ship is "driven by a fierce wind".

It is in the raging sea, and it is at the mercy of the wind.

There were no motorboats— You could row your boat...
...but if you were going to go anywhere fast...
... it was going to be from the power of the wind.

Have you been out on a sail boat?

Maybe the wind is whipping and the boat is flying.
Or the wind is dead and the boat is languishing.

There could be giant swells and the ship is tossed up and down.
Or there could be no swells and the ship is as calm as can be.

But here is why I like this analogy from James...

No matter the outward circumstances the pilot is still turning it wherever HE desires.

The wind and waves have **power** over the ship...
...but they don't have **control** over the ship— the captain does.

A good captain knows how to use the wind to his advantage.

A good captain can tack and turn and control that little rudder.

1. Your circumstances don't control your tongue.

James is telling us we have control no matter the circumstances.
...No one can make us do anything with our words.

We say what we want, when we want to.

We choose our words, we form our words, we speak our words.

It is easier to blame other people or circumstances for our words.

- Well, you made me mad.
- Well, she cut me off.
- Well, he was so stupid.
- Well, they had it coming.

James says the ship is controlled by the pilot.

There is fierce, driving winds, and there are stormy situations...
...But you still have choices.

We can't allow our circumstances to be an excuse for a poor choice of words.

2. Let the Captain of your soul take control.

When we blame our circumstances, we demean our captain.

REMEMBER: It's not just trying harder to control your mouth...
...it is yielding control of your heart and trusting Jesus.

If we as Christians are just about behavior modification...

...what is the difference between every other religion?

If all we do is teach our kids or new believers or anyone...
...to just watch their mouth...

...how are we different from anyone else?

How is it different than when God gave the Jews...
... the commandments and they thought...
...**sure, ya, ok, we will get right on that!**

Preach the gospel to yourself.

We are sinners saved by grace through faith.

By faith, we confess and repent and look to Christ...
...He is our savior and our strength.

By faith we...

1. Know His will and see our failure
2. Feel the shame and confess our sin
3. Receive forgiveness and open our hearts

As Christians, our ships have a Captain...

...and our lives have a Lord...

...And He is transforming us from the inside out.

So...what is our part? 4 practical steps

1. **Make sure Jesus has the boat key**...He controls my heart
2. **Be careful to dock in safe harbors**...
...sit, stand and walk with the wise and in wisdom.
3. **Keep the ship clean**...
...be sensitive to confess and repent on an ongoing basis.
4. **Watch who comes aboard**...
...be aware of the influences you allow in your life.

The Spirit of God is working in us and making us more like Him.

We are in process, being sanctified day by day.

The next analogy James uses for the tongue is **fire**...

5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

Once again it is little, but powerful.
It is small but has great effect.

But this analogy is different.

A horse and ship can be controlled and bring benefit.

This analogy is all about damage.

A forest fire is dangerous & damaging all the way around.

...A terrible wild fire starts with a just a spark.

3. Some words only spread damage.

Most things don't expand by themselves.

If you spill water it doesn't grow larger than what is in the cup.

But-A tiny spark grows and will burn forever if it has the fuel.

...So too, the damage a tongue can do is limitless.

The words that you say can live on and on and on.

They can be turned around in our minds forever.

They can be shared with one person and another and another.

"A lie can travel around the world and back again while the truth is lacing up its boots."—Mark Twain

Online comments can live forever.

Lies can find a life of their own.

Rumors can go on and on.

Gossip can spread like a fire.

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

James says 4 powerful things here...

- It is a world of iniquity.
- It defiles the whole body
- It sets on fire the course of nature
- It is set on fire by hell

It is "A world of iniquity"

Iniquity: a violation of the right or duty that mankind is under obligation to do. Also a wicked act and immoral conduct or practice. These are harmful or offensive to society and, especially to God.

Your tongue has a whole expanse of wicked and immoral conduct that violates the duty of mankind.

There is no limit to the godless, immoral things people can say.

2.It defiles the body.

To defile in this sense is to leave a spot or blemish.

Have you ever stained your clothes?

If you have a spot on your undershirt or your socks...

...most people won't see that...

...a big spot on your shirt, and it ruins your whole outfit.

Your mouth is right out there for everyone to see, it leaves a spot on your whole body.

3. It sets on fire the course nature

This is a really interesting phrase.

Speaking of destruction throughout the course or direction of life.

Marriage, friendship, family, work damaged in a few choice words

4. Set on fire by hell

The spark that brings the damage is from hell itself.

Satan has come to steal kill and destroy and if he can use our mouths all the better for him.

Jesus told the Pharisees that they were of their father the devil and then offered this description... **“When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”**

Here is the thing about wild fires or forest fires...

1. Climate matters

....The hotter and drier it is the worse it can be.

If your situation is hot and dry, your words do more damage and are harder to get back.

Live a bountiful life of love and kindness.

Speak with more grace...

...and the damage of harmful words die quicker.

2. Left alone they keep burning California's worst fire was not quite 500,000 acres. Siberian fire was 55 million acres.

We said our mouths need to be controlled, but our words also need to be addressed.

Don't ignore hurtful words.

Use kind, clear words to confront and apologize...

...as needed for restoration.

3. Damage takes a long time to repair if ever

Fire damage takes a long time to repair...

...and some things never recover.

Especially in hot and dry conditions it is going to take a lot to repair what our words have damaged.

Without life it is impossible...a dead post or a living tree.

His last couple of points deal with animals and water.

7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

We have learned how to train all sorts of animals.
Pigs and dogs and tigers and killer whales.
All of these animals can be tamed and controlled by mankind.

Men and women without God can train their tongue.
They can teach their tongue better reactions and word choice.

But they ultimately cannot tame it...
...It can turn around and bite you in an instant.

Men cannot tame the tongue...but...

4. God can change the heart.

**He needs to take out the poison from inside.
He needs to change the character inside.**

And now James closes with water and consistency.

What comes out should be consistent.

9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. **10** Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. **11** Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening? **12** Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

People should know what they are going to get talking to us.
We shouldn't produce something different than who we are.

Christians should produce blessing...

...Edification, what is good for the hearer.

5. Bringing blessing is the hope.

When you find the cursing...

When you find the saltiness...

Know it, feel the shame, confess it, be forgiven, and let God work.

May we all continue to be aware and grow in this area...

... by allowing God to control our mouths...

... so that consistently, no matter the circumstance...

...damage is decreased and thankfulness, truth...

...and blessing abounds from our mouths.

Discussion Questions

Do you think most people realize the power of their words? Why or why not?

Overall, do you lean towards behavior modification or heart change? Why or why not?

Would you be willing to share a challenge you have or you have seen with words? Did the circumstances matter? Can you apply anything from the message to this kind of situation?

What are ways a relationship “climate” becomes hot and dry?

What kind of words do you appreciate and find that build you up and bring blessing?
How can you practice that same thing?