

A Disciplined Tongue

Key Verse: *“But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”*
—James 3:8

Selected Scripture:
James 3:1-12

wisely wrote, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” (Prov. 18:21) In our lesson, James says that though the tongue is a “little member,” it often “boasteth great things.” Like a small rudder on a large ship, the tongue can steer us in whatever direction, good or evil, towards which it is directed. (James 3:4,5) Experience has taught us that it is easier to control most any other part of our fallen flesh than the tongue.

The ambitions and passions of the fallen nature will often manifest themselves through the tongue, as a willing servant. If such be the case, James tells us that the tongue is “a world of iniquity,” and “defileth the whole body.” (vs. 6) It, therefore, requires constant vigilance, wisdom, and care on the part of the follower of Christ to govern this powerful member of his body, and bring it into subjection. Taming the tongue must begin inwardly, in our hearts and minds. This work begins with our desire to be “transformed by the renewing” of our mind. (Rom. 12:2) The new mind is, in reality, the “mind of Christ.” (I Cor. 2:16) Thus, the apostle admonishes us:

THE TONGUE IS ONE OF the most powerful and influential members of the human body. When used properly, it can be one of the most wonderful tools that God has given us. Improper use of the tongue, however, can result in every form of evil imaginable. Solomon

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 2:5

Jesus stated, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Matt. 12:34) Since the tongue is the agent which speaks according to the sentiments of the heart, it is vital that we examine closely our inward motives which manifest themselves in words. The importance of having a proper heart condition is shown to us in many Scriptures. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” “Create in me a new heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things.” “The end of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience.”—Prov. 4:23; Ps. 51:10; Ps. 139:23,24; Matt. 12:35; I Tim. 1:5

Our Key Verse states that the tongue can be tamed by “no man,” that is, not by human efforts. In our fallen human frame, James continues, we may speak “blessing and cursing” out of the same mouth. “These things ought not so to be.” (James 3:9,10) It is only by the diligent examination, and correction when necessary, of our hearts and thoughts, that we can, with God’s help, learn to speak only that which is helpful and uplifting. Even in this, however, we can only obtain partial victory on this side of the veil, due to the weakness of our flesh.

Let it be our daily vow to follow these words: “I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”—Ps. 39:1; 19:14

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