

1. All too often in the Christian Church people who are not qualified to teach foist themselves on the church as teachers. Teachers must take great care in the use of their tongue. A true teacher edifies the Church with the Gospel. He does not misuse his tongue. He who controls his tongue perfectly, controls his whole body perfectly. Read vs. 1-2 of our text.
2. This leads James into a discussion of the abysmal sinfulness of human nature which evidences itself in sins of the tongue. One version translates Rom. 3:13-14 this way: "Their talk is foul and filthy like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are loaded with lies. Everything they say has in it the sting and poison of deadly snakes. Their tongues are full of cursing and bitterness." This speaks of all people. Jer. 17:9 reads: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can understand it?" Luther translates Ps. 19:13 "Who can understand how often he sins?" Our confessions stress the fact that the sinfulness of human nature is so deep that we simply believe what Scripture says about it. We cannot comprehend or understand it.
3. One translation renders vs. 2 thus: "Everyone of us does something wrong, over and over again." That is a somber thought. All of us sin much daily. All of us need to listen to this text.
4. Vss. 3-4 contain two illustrations which contain the same truth: A small thing controls and guides the whole body. For this illustration he uses the bit in the horse's mouth and the rudder of a ship. Then in vs. 5 we expected James to say: "Likewise the tongue is a small member and guides the whole body." But he does not. He says: "Likewise the tongue is a small member AND BOASTS OF GREAT THINGS." In other words, instead of being a good guide it is self-serving. It simply boasts which is very destructive. Then, to make his point here, James uses another illustration, fire. He says: "Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. Is he saying this of you? Of course he is. Think of what devastation your tongue has caused.
5. Think of the fall of man. Satan used his tongue to cause doubt: "Did God really say that?" That caused Eve to lie: "No, He didn't say that but He said this." Then Satan used his tongue to make a false promise. When they had fallen, God sought them. Adam lied: "My wife made me do it." Then Eve lied: "The serpent made me do it." Read Jn. 8:12-59, Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees. Jesus speaks truth throughout. Never once do they speak the truth. Finally Jesus says to them in vs. 44: "You are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and a father of it." The sins of the tongue polluted the nature of Adam and Eve and all men. So polluted with lies were the Pharisees that Jesus finally said to them: "Because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me."
6. In vs. 7 of our text James speaks about man's ability to tame and control the animal world. At Gen. 1:28 God gave man superiority over the animal world. This control has suffered somewhat because of the fall into sin but man is still cunning enough to control the animal world.
7. Then in vs. 8 he makes this awesome statement: BUT THE TONGUE CAN NO MAN TAME. It is full of deadly poison. Then in vss. 9-12 James shows that the tongue acts contrary to nature. Fountains cannot produce two kinds of water. Trees and bushes cannot produce two kinds of fruit or produce. But the tongue blesses God and curses man. Then he sadly says: "Brothers, this should not happen."
8. By faith in Christ a man becomes a new creation. He dies to sin. By faith in Christ he praises God and blesses people. Slava Bogu!

Theme: CONTROL YOUR TONGUE

Introduction: There was no deceit in Jesus' mouth (Is. 53:9; I Pet. 2:22). He IS truth. Jn. 14:6. His Word is truth. Jn. 17:17. But of all sinful human beings Rom. 3:13-14 says: "Their talk is foul and filthy like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are loaded with lies. Everything they say has in it the sting and poison of deadly snakes. Their tongues are full of cursing and bitterness." That is the way we are unless we listen to the Word of God.

I-No Man Can Tame The Tongue Vs. 8

A-It is an unruly evil and full of poison. The fall of man into sin in the Garden of Eden made Satan the owner and father of mankind rather than God. Eoh. 2:2 says that before people are converted they live according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the children of disobedience. In Jn. 8 Jesus told the Pharisees that they were children of the devil, the father of the lie and murder. Jer. 17:9 says: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can understand it?" Gen. 8:21 says "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." And Rom. 8:7: "The fleshly mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God; nor indeed can be."

B-It is very destructive.

1-Though very small it is very destructive. Like the bit in a horse's mouth it is small but can control the whole body. Like the rudder of a ship it is small in comparison to the ship, but it controls the whole body. What does it accomplish? A horse, led well, works hard and accomplishes much. A ship, correctly steered, serves people and nations. But by comparison the tongue is very different. It is more like a fire (vs. 6). A very small flame can destroy a large forest. It can destroy the entire course of a man's life because it is set on fire by the fires of hell. This is a gruesome picture which James gives us of the tongue but it is true. Think of the awesome destruction which King Saul brought on himself through his tongue. Think of how Judas destroyed himself with his tongue. Think of what Jesus' enemies did to Him by the wrong use of their tongues.

2-No man can tame the tongue. Vss. 7-8. Even though man lost some of his control over nature because of his sin he still can bring all creatures on land and sea under his control. Even the whale and the elephant is brought under his control. But no man can tame the tongue Vs. 9 shows us why that is so. With the tongue we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse man, who have been made in the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth comes blessing and cursing. That is contrary to nature. Springs don't give two types of water. Trees don't bear two types of fruit.

II-God Can Cause A Man To Bridle His Tongue and Control His Body. Vs. 2

A-Especially the Christian teacher needs to bridle his tongue. James mentions that teachers will receive a stricter judgment from God. Therefore, a teacher must be able to control his tongue and all his members. That is what caused him to speak about sins of the tongue. At Tit. 1:8 Paul mentions that a pastor or teacher must have self-control. That implies tongue-control. When St. Paul preached to Felix he spoke of "righteousness, self-control and the coming judgment." Acts 24:25. When a man becomes a believing Christian he has the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ. To that person God gives self-control over his entire self. He can live with the expectation that God will accept him on judgment day. Self-control is a fruit of faith. Gal. 5:23.

B-But we are not all teachers. Can the average Christian have self-control too? Yes he can. St. Paul says: "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation." I Cor. 5:17. He continues: "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Even James grants that we all stumble in many things. Vs. 2. But we are forgiven and have the gift of self-control. Let us use the tongue to praise and bless.