



A Systematic Expository Study on the General Epistle of JAMES

Study 10: THE TONGUE AND OUR SPIRITUAL CONDITION

James 3:1,2.

True faith or the experience of genuine salvation is a matter of heart cleansing and transformation. Yet the Tongue is so connected with the heart that the real condition of the heart is known through the tongue. We live by our tongue. The tongue indicates the spiritual condition of the heart. Jesus said, "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). James recognises this important fact and he mentions the tongue or our speech in every chapter (James 1: 19,26; 2:12; 3:5,6; 4:11; 5:12). When Christ saves us, He cannot leave this important area of our lives untouched. He forgives, He cleanses the heart and transforms the tongue.

Research reveals that the average man speaks about 25,000 words a day, while the average woman speaks about 30,000 words a day. The average person spends one fifth of his entire life talking. Our speech and utterances give us away so easily and so quickly. People can easily evaluate the kind of person you are by listening to what you say.

DANGER OF RELIGIOUS TEACHERS

James 3:1; Malachi 2:11,12; Romans 2:20,21; Acts 15:24; Ezekiel 13:22; Isaiah 3:12; Jeremiah 28:15,16; Jude 10, 11; Revelation 2:14-16,20-23.

"My brethren, be not many master" - be not many teachers, preachers, counsellors, advisers. In the early church and in the contemporary church, many have the tendency of rushing into the teaching ministry without considering the great responsibility and danger associated with it. Many "desire to be teachers... understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" (1 Timothy 1:7). There were teachers who tried to teach before they themselves knew anything. Others ran into teaching without being sent by God, on the invitation of the false desires of the crowd (2 Timothy 4:3,4). There were teachers whose lives contradicted their instruction, who brought dishonour to God and to the Church by their lives. Teachers who distort the truth and teach man's ideas and opinions, not God's truth, will all "receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1). Teachers who fail in their responsibility and become false teachers will be severely judged by God. Thrusting yourself into a ministry without divine appointment and adequate preparation is dangerous and damning.

The instrument of the teacher is speech and his agent is the tongue. This great instrument of speech has the potential to lead the hearers to heaven or to hell. If the speech of an ordinary person, injuring an individual privately and temporarily will be judged, how much more will the public speech of a teacher that misleads many and damns their souls eternally be judged. To hurt an individual with our tongue earns us condemnation; to hurt and damn many people and cause them eternal suffering will earn us a "greater condemnation".

DEPRAVITY REVEALED THROUGH THE TONGUE

James 3:2a; Romans 3:10-14; Psalms 58:3; Isaiah 14:12-15; Matthew 12:34-36; Jude 12,13,15,16; Psalms 12:1-4; 52:1-7.

The bitter taste of the fruit of the tongue is derived from the root in the heart. Man is fallen, so his speech is rotten. Among the things that indicate the universal depravity of man is the tongue of man. The tongue can easily make a man to "offend all" "in many things". When James says, "for in many thing we offend all" he is not necessarily including himself or every redeemed person in the pronoun "we". He was referring to man in general. See his use of "we" in James 3:1,3,9. The tongue of the sinner, the unredeemed, offends much. The tongue makes many to offend, to stumble and sin.

Of all members of the body, the Bible speaks so much of this little member. Much sin is attributed to this member, "the tongue, a world of iniquity ... that defileth the whole body" (James 3:6).

In the Bible, we read of a **wicked** tongue, a **deceitful** tongue, a **lying** tongue, a **false** tongue, a **perverse** tongue, a **froward** tongue, a **filthy** tongue, a **corrupt** tongue, a **naughty** tongue, a **bitter** tongue, an **angry** tongue, a **crafty** tongue, a **flattering** tongue, a **slandorous** tongue, a **foolish** tongue, a **gossiping** tongue, a **backbiting** tongue, a **boasting** tongue, a **blaspheming** tongue, a **murmuring** tongue, a **cursing** tongue, a **contentious** tongue, a **vile** tongue, a **whispering** tongue,... (Note that tongue here is used for tongue, lips, mouth [speech]). It is so easy to sin and offend with the tongue. No wonder, God put your tongue in a cage, behind your teeth, walled in by your mouth! Someone has said that we should remember that the tongue is in a wet place and it can slip easily. Most problems in our life arise from the tongue.

DECLARATION OF OUR REDEMPTION THROUGH THE TONGUE

James 3:2b; Matthew 12:33,35,37; Isaiah 6:5-7; 50:4; James 3:13; Ephesians 4:21-25,29, 1 Corinthians 9:2 7.

Transformation in the heart puts a new vocabulary in the mouth. The greatest evidence of our redemption is the new language on our tongue. A daily gracious speech is an undeniable testimony to our new life in Christ. If Christ is truly in our heart, He will be seen clearly in our speech. He "did no sin, neither was guile (deceit) found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). When He saves us from sin, He removes deceit, lying or falsehood from our mouth. "When He was reviled, (He) reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not" (1 Peter 2:23). We live in a sinful world, with many around us misusing their tongue. Christ in us controls our tongue and makes us different from the world. If a person can master his tongue (by grace and God's enabling), he can also master all the other members of the body. His grace is able to make us victorious, mature, complete, perfect!

*If you are blessed by these bible study outlines, we' d like to hear from you.
You can email the pastor@deeperlife-liverpool.org.uk with your comments.*