



A Systematic Expository Study on the General Epistle of JAMES

Study 13: THE DUPLICITY OF AN UNTAMED TONGUE

James 3:9-12

God through His word has been teaching us on the use of the tongue. Language is the expression of man's thoughts and a revelation as to whether he is dominated by self or by the Scripture and the Spirit of God. Duplicity and a double-talking tongue reveal an inconsistent personality. The sinner may have some good desires but his deeds are evil. If he is religious he may seem to bless God in one moment but the next moment he curses men who are made in the image of God. He professes love to God while he manifests hatred and anger to men. The religious sinner is a man full of moral/ spiritual contradictions.

Such a contradiction in character and conduct is not seen in nature or even in the animals. A fountain does not **"send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter."** Neither does **"the fig tree bear olive berries"**, nor **"a fountain both yield salt water and fresh"**. This unnatural condition and the moral confusion find solution on when we fully come to Christ and He touches and transforms us to become new creatures. **"Make the tree good, and his fruit good."** **"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things"** (Matthew 12:33,35). Converted and transformed by grace, we are free from double-mindedness, double-talk, double-dealing, double standard or duplicity of any kind. When the inner life is cleansed and controlled by the Holy Spirit, the Christian's speech will be disciplined, truthful, edifying and pleasing to God.

CONTRADICTIONS IN MAN'S CHARACTER

James 3:9; Titus 1:16; Psalm 62:4; Matthew 26:35,74; Isaiah 29:13; Psalm 50:16-22, 2 Samuel 16:5,8; I John 4:20,21.

Blessing and cursing from the same mouth! Good and evil from the same man! Sweetness and bitterness from the same heart! Help and hurt from the same hand! Love and hatred from the same person! Life and death from the same tongue! Light and darkness in the same place! Healing medicine and poison in the same bottle! Man, without Christ, without grace, is a bundle of contradictions and confusion.

This contradiction in man is not only in the speech of the sinner but in his character and life in general. In his actions, attitude, and behaviour, there is something of an appearance of goodness and much of evil. As the book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, paints the Talkative, "He was a saint abroad and a devil at home". There are many who are gentle to outsiders but harsh and cruel within their families. Apparently gracious abroad, but malicious and constantly irritable at home! We are only hypocrites when we have fair speech at one time, and foul speech at the very next time - fair speech among church members, foul speech among friends and neighbours.

It is a clear evidence of sin and carnality within when the tongue is seen to bless God and curse our fellow men. To say **"blessed be God"** or **"God bless you"** so piously and religiously and then to abuse, insult, criticise, condemn and curse men in conversation or in prayer is only to reveal ourselves as sinners who do not really know God. If we are children of God, as we bless God, we ought, with the same tongue, to bless **"men who are made after the similitude (image) of God"**.

CARNALITY AND MORAL CONFUSION

James 3:10, 11; 1 Corinthians 3:3; Jeremiah 2:20,21; 7:4-11; 1 Timothy 5:12,13,15; 2 Kings 17:33,41; Genesis 27:18-20; Micah 3:11.

"My brethren, these things ought not so to be." The same instrument should not be devoted to opposite employments; the same plate or bowl cannot be used in the toilet and on the table to serve food. The same mouth should not be put to vile and virtuous use, put to opposite and contradictory uses. Yet it is true of many individuals that at one time they praise their Maker and then, with the same tongue slander, revile and curse men. Unsaved men often allow blessing and blasphemy to come from the same lips. Can this happen on a consistent basis with Christians? If such contradiction or moral

confusion is our normal behaviour, then we are carnal and backslidden. **"Are ye not carnal" if ye "walk as men"?** If we behave and act as men who do not know the Lord, it means we are backslidden and are not in a state of grace.

Grace in the heart makes the tongue speak differently from the men of the world who are not under Christ's control. The grace of God makes us **"live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world"** (Titus 2:11,12).

THE CONCLUSION OF THE MASTER, CHRIST

James 3:12, 10b; Matthew 7:16-20; 12:33; Luke 6:43-45; Romans 11:16; Isaiah 5:1-6; Exodus 15:23-25; 2 Kings 2:19-22.

James used striking illustrations to teach and instruct believers, **"my brethren"**, on the right use of the tongue. His illustrations had earlier been used by Christ Himself. In Christ's parables and illustrations, He used natural things to explain and emphasise spiritual things. Christ had said **"Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit ... A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit"** (Matthew 7:17,18). He even used such illustration in relation to the use of the tongue, just as James did in our passage of study. **"Either make the tree good and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt ... for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"** (Matthew 12:33,34). The conclusion of both Christ and James is clear. Evil speech cannot and will not, and must not proceed out of a saved and cleansed heart. Christians prove that there is grace in the heart when their **"speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt"** (Colossians 4:6). Does Christ live in your heart? Show it by your life and by your speech. Act and speak like Christ.

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