

Controlling

James Chapter 3



Aim

- Controlling the Tongue
- Wisdom – Above v Below



3:1-8

Our Challenge: Controlling Our Tongue

Background: Ch 1v26-27

“Religion” GK Ceremonious in Worship. External characteristic!

Biggest Challenge of your Faith?

Your Tongue!! (Ch 3)

Is your religion in Vain?

James’ focus on tongue so far:

- 1v13 – “let no man say...”
- 1v19 – “slow to speak”
- 2v3 – “say unto him (rich)”
- 2v12 – “So speak and so do”
- 2v14 – “Say he have faith”
- 2v16 – “Say depart in peace”

James explains how the horse, one of the most powerful animals used by man, and the ship, one of man’s largest inventions, can both be controlled by something; what attribute do these things have in common? (chapter 3:5 provides a helpful hint).

- Smallest part
- Unseen part (observe only when in use)
- Part with greatest influence

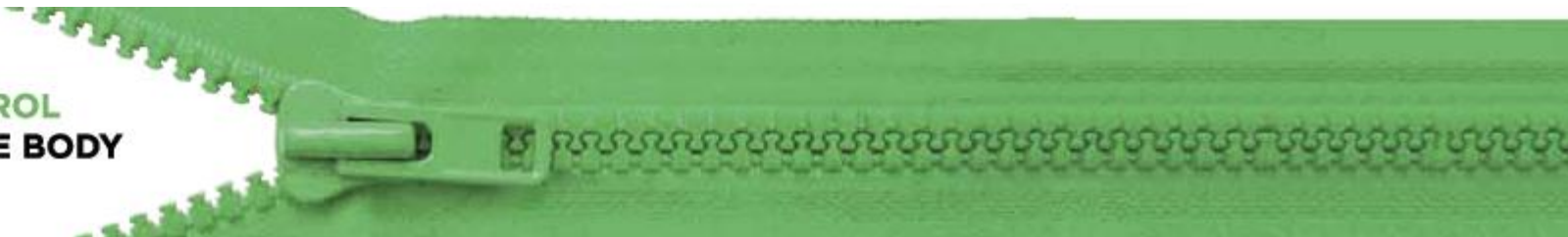
With this principle in mind, we can now understand the first two verses of chapter 3. Look up chapter 3:1 in the RSV to get a better idea of who James is talking about when he refers to “masters”. Who are these people?

- “Masters” = teachers, instructors
 - Teachers are a small part of ecclesia, but with disproportionate influence!

KEY ISSUE: God is concerned with:

1. The effect our words have on others (v3-7)
2. How we speak to/about others (v8-12)

TONGUE CONTROL
MASTER OF THE BODY



1. Affecting Others

Now, using the RSV and any other translation you may find helpful, fill in the summary below:

Just as the rudder can control the entire ship, and as a powerful horse can be controlled by a small bridle, so too one part can influence an entire body.
person group

Study Hint: Sometimes the best way to understand a part of the Bible is to read it in other translations, and then try to write it in your own words.

Do this for chapter 3:1 in the space below:

Our Tongue's Negative Influence on Others

- Num 13v25-33
- Josh 22v10-34
- Psa 106v32-33*
 - *Link to trial **Jam 1!**

Bro N Smart – “Any view of the obligations of true worship which did not involve moral self discipline was a limited and unprofitable one. The man who thought himself a true worshipper of God by reason of his scrupulous regard for ritual, and yet failed, for example, to exercise control over his unruly tongue, was deluding himself.”

3:1-8

Our Challenge: Controlling Our Tongue

James' Example

Why does James say *“knowing we shall receive the greater condemnation”*?

1. *“We”* – includes his failures v2
 - Models *“wisdom from above”* being *“pure”* (v17)
2. Leaders greater responsibility, greater judgement!
 - Matt 7v1-5, Luke 12v48
 - Korah, Dathan & Abiram (Num 16)
 - David (2 Sam 12)
 - Peter (Gal 2v11)

But why these three examples in particular? Complete the box below to see the lesson James has in mind:

	Tongue	Horse's Bit	Helm (rudder)
Location			
Size			
Purpose			

James 3:5 is the key verse for this passage; look it up in the RSV and write it out in the box below:

TONGUE CONTROL
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Controlling

But what else does scripture teach us about the tongue? Look up the following passages and summarise them in your own words:

Job 15:5

Prov 17:28

Isa 3:8 Jerusalem ruined because of tongue

Jer 9:3-9

Matt 12:36-37

Rom 3:13-14 Man can't be righteous! Rom 3v10-20

These might be useful marked into a little box at the bottom of James 3.

Man can't be perfectly righteous – His tongue reveals his evil heart (Jer 17v9)!

Jam 3v2 – “*same is a perfect man*” = only 1 perfect man, Christ controlled tongue

Jam 3v8 – “*No man can tame*” (Except Christ – Isa 50v4, 61v1-3)

The Tongue

- Key = Matt 12v33-37
Prov 10v18-21.
- HEART “speaks”
- Reveals our MOTIVES
- Reveals quality of FAITH

James' Discriptions of the Tongue...

- Fire – how great a forest (many = ecclesia) is set ablaze by small (one) fire
- Poison – uncontrollable evil, world of iniquity (injustice, wrongfulness)

FIRE!

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Jam 3v5: *“How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!”* (RSV).

3:9-12 Inconsistency Of The Tongue: Lessons From Nature

How can you tell if your tongue will influence for good?

- Prov 12v17-19
- Prov 16v21-24, 27-28
- 2 Tim 2v23-26
- Does it burn someone?
- Will it poison?
- Is it negative? An “evil report”?
- Is it going to bring good?
- Would Christ have said this?
- Is it CONSISTENT with God?

James was obviously a keen observer of the world around him, and he chose examples from things in daily life: animals, ships, forests, plants. Like James, we ought to learn from the simple, every day lessons God has put around us.

After reading the above section out of James, explain in your own words each symbol James uses and how it relates to the lesson James is teaching:



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LESSONS FROM NATURE
GOOD TREE = GOOD FRUIT

Matt 12v33-37

The Fountain (James 3:11)

What was happening to it?

What does scripture say a fountain is supposed to be like? (see John 4:14; 7:37-38 but principally James 3:11)

3:9-12

Inconsistency Of The Tongue: Lessons From Nature

The Fig Tree (James 3:12)

What do you expect a fig tree to produce?

What is James trying to teach from this fact?

What lesson does scripture teach from the use of the fig tree? (see Joel 2:22; Matt 21:19 and Matt 24:32)

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LESSONS FROM NATURE
GOOD TREE = GOOD FRUIT



The Vine (James 3:12)

What do you expect a vine to produce?

What is James trying to teach from this fact?

What lesson does scripture teach from the use of a vine? (see Gen 40:10; Ezek 19:10)

James' lesson from this section is simple. Just as a fig tree produces figs, and the vine produces grapes, so a Godly heart will produce Godly speech. We can't claim to have a Godly mind but then speak and act differently!

James shows that nature is consistent - we ought to be also.



3:13-18

Our Challenge: Think Like God

KEY: James 3v9-10

“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

**Where is James quoting from?
Why?**

If the tongue itself cannot be completely tamed – or permanently subdued – we must learn instead to control it. At the start of the chapter, James showed in each of his four examples (chapter 3:3-5) that there was a force that influenced a small object which in turn controlled a much larger one.

3. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body.

4. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great and are driven by fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the helmsman pleases.

5. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a wood a little fire kindleth!

Gen 1v26-27 – *“Image & Likeness”*

“Dominion over fish, fowl, cattle, creeping” =

CR **Jam 3v7**

Animals have “wisdom” from below (carnal)
Made in God’s image, we must strive to show
“wisdom from above”

**TONGUE CONTROL
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**LESSONS FROM NATURE
GOOD TREE = GOOD FRUIT**



**THINK LIKE GOD
...AND YOU CONTROL
YOUR TONGUE**

Using these verses, consider and complete the diagram below:

Rider

Mind

Kindling

Rudder



So then, if the mind can control the tongue, we must learn to think like God does!



3:13-18

Our Challenge: Think Like God

In verses 13-18, James now shows how we can fill our mind with one of two types of wisdom: either "earthly" or "from above".

In the box below, list out the attributes in order from chapter 3:17. Then, using the examples and the verses provided, show how the wisdom from beneath is always the opposite to the wisdom from above:

James 3:17		James 3	
Pure		Defiling	v6
Peaceable		Strife	v14
Gentle		Deadly, destructive	v6,8
Easily Entreated		Unruly	v8
Full of Mercy		Curse others	v9
Full of Good Fruit		Every evil work	v16
Without Partiality		Inconsistent	v10
Without hypocrisy		At the same place sweet and bitter	v11

TONGUE CONTROL
MASTER OF THE BODY



LESSONS FROM NATURE
GOOD TREE = GOOD FRUIT



THINK LIKE GOD
...AND YOU CONTROL
YOUR TONGUE

God's Wisdom from Above

1. **Pure** – A clean (motive). Pure intent! Sincere & Truthful.
 - No personal agendas or beams in eye (Matt 7v5).
 - Humble self and first cut off sin in your own life (Matt 18v3-10)
 - *“Cleanse your hands ye sinners”* (Jam 4v7)
 - Contrasted to Partiality and Hypocrisy (two faced) + strife in your hearts (Jam 3v14)
2. **Peaceable** – Method of approach. Seeks to set at one again, reconcile.
 - Thayer “bringing peace with it” – Intention ALWAYS to save Matt 18v11! CR Jam 3v18
 - God of peace would want us to be like Him (Eph 2v14-15, Phil 4v9)
 - Contrasted to bitter envy and strife
3. **Gentle** – Our temperament & how we behave. Tread carefully, slowly.
 - Gently receives a little child in Christ's name, does not offend (Matt 18v3-10)
 - *“Let them show ...good behaviour with meekness”* (3v13) CR 2 Tim 2v24-26
 - *“Soft answer turn away wrath”* (Pro 15v1)
 - Contrasted to earthly, sensual and devilish
4. **Easily Entreated** – How we interact: Yielding, ready to give/find common ground
 - Not arrogant or “sticking to our guns”, rather, open to reason and persuadable
 - If another sins, go privately & seek to entreat and be entreated (Matt 18v15-17)
 - Contrast to strife & confusion (disorder)

God's Wisdom from Above

5. Full of Mercy – How we respond to others.

- Ready to show compassion & forgive - don't bring up past faults!
- FULL – *“Lord how often should I forgive my brother?” ... “Seventy times seven”!*
- Lord heard the servant, *“moved with compassion & released/forgave”* (Matt 18v27)

6. Full of Good Fruits – Our actions that accompany our approach

- Does our body language, tone of voice, who we speak to show *“good fruits”*?
- Shepherd made the lost his first priority – left 99 to find 1 (Matt 18v12-14)
- Demonstrates that the motive & approach is Godly – tree know by fruits (Matt 7)
- Contrast without partiality & hypocrisy

7. Without Partiality & Hypocrisy – practice this approach to ALL with SINCERITY!

- Servant accepted mercy but did not practice it to others, demonstrated prejudice to another. Hypocritically showing remorse to King, but acted different away from him! (Matt 18v32-33).

8. Sown in Peace by Peacemakers – all encompassing mindset of the one

- Sow – defines the diligent activity of the individual in all aspects to produce something
- Defining foundation of the person's entire activity
- *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God”* (Matt 5v9)

The Chapter 3 Challenge:

Get a group of two or three of your friends, and PRACTISE true religion:

- > Try for one month to **never** talk about anyone negatively. If it comes up with friends, change the topic!
- > "How great a matter a little fire kindleth" - try to have this effect in a **positive** way; be excited, motivated and cheerful. Try to spread this attitude like a roaring fire.
- > Where do we get our wisdom? Read one Proverb a day for the next month. Remember one lesson and try to apply it that day. (There are 31 days in a month and 31 chapters in Proverbs - perfect!)
- > Stop for a moment and review your Facebook account and those of your friends. Do the words promote self, talk about others, promote strife? If so, delete your account or make a real effort to change this.

Challenge themed around James 3:5,15-17

