

CONTROLLING THE TONGUE

INTRO: How important is our speech? Is the sin of the ninth commandment a respectable sin? James in this chapter goes on to speak of faith that demonstrates itself in works. He speaks of the tongue in every chapter. What a power there is in the tongue, either for good or evil. Therefore this power must be controlled! How?

I. **THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS LITTLE MEMBER**

- A. A good creation.
1. We have been created in the image of God. In humans there is a creaturely reflection of God's perfections.
 2. God speaks, and so do we. God speaks to himself in the communion of the Trinity. God speaks to man.
 3. So also we speak. We speak to God. We speak to one another. This makes communion possible.
 4. Created in the image of God, in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, we know, love and serve God.
 5. The office of prophet is carried out with the tongue, speaking to God and speaking about God!
 6. Speech distinguishes us from the animals: we express thoughts in articulate language and writing.
- B. The illustrations used.
1. Power in little things: a little instrument applied at the right time can effect great results.
 2. The ***illustration of a bit in the horse's mouth.***
 3. By this little piece of metal, the energy and strength of a great horse or horses can be harnessed to great service.
 4. So the tongue controlled by the Lord Jesus, can be a great blessing.
 5. The ***illustration of a rudder on a ship.***
 6. A great ship, driven by fierce winds and slapped with great waves can be controlled by a small rudder that is controlled
 7. The vessel laden with passengers and cargo is brought safely to port. The destiny of all controlled by a small rudder.
 8. So the tongue though small, is powerful enough to guide and control the destiny of others: guiding with counsel.
- C. The power to do good.
1. God by his Word created the world, and by the same Word upholds and governs all things.
 2. The preached Word is the seed of regeneration, and by his Word he builds and governs his church.
 3. By speech we praise God, proclaim the gospel, enjoy communion of the saints as we comfort, admonish and train.
 4. What a power for good: in the home, in our Christian schools, in the church, in the midst of sinful world.

II. **THE EXTENT AND DEPTH OF ITS UNRIGHTEOUSNESS**

- A. The fall into sin.
1. Since we are by nature sinners, our speech also is sinful. Satan used sinful speech to lure Adam and Eve into sin.
 2. Satan instigates evil thoughts that are expressed in our speech. The tongue boasts great things: pride in the heart.
 3. The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison, an evil power within. That tongue hurts us and others in its speech.
 4. Lord's Day 43 calls the sins of the tongue "the proper works of the devil".
 5. Although a little member, don't underestimate the extent of its destructive powers!
- B. The illustrations used.
1. The ***illustration of fire.***
 2. Just a little spark from a match, a lighted cigarette, or a camp fire can burn down thousands of acres of forest.
 3. The ***illustration of the snake.***
 4. The poison under its tongue can quickly maim or kill.
- C. The power to do so much harm.
1. Prov. 16:27 "An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire."
 2. This is true not only for the ungodly, but as believers with a sinful nature. Our tongues rather than blessing, curse.
 3. The poison to lead astray with heresy, speech given in hatred or anger, mocking, enticing to evil, impure jokes...
 4. How easily we bring shame to God. How easily we bring trouble to our marriages, divide families, hurt the young.
 5. What does our speech reveal about us in our daily conversations or social media?
 6. What does our speech do for the glory of God or the building up or leading others to Christ?

III. **THE WISDOM THAT ALONE WILL SAVE US FROM THE SINS OF THE TONGUE**

- A. "No man can tame." (vs. 8)
1. What an important lesson to learn! Whether an aged saint or young person: Job, Peter, Paul
 2. Our tongues are powerful and uncontrollable except by grace.
 3. We must not lean upon our own understanding but be taught of God.
- B. It is the Lord who does the impossible:
1. While man is not able to tame the tongue, there is One who can. The Lord is able to control a lying blaspheming tongue.
 2. We need to ask the Lord to create in us a clean heart, to sanctify our lips and tongue, to make us a blessing.
 3. Can a fountain bring forth sweet water and bitter water?
- C. The tree that makes bitter waters sweet.
1. "Moses cut down a tree and threw it into the bitter waters, making them sweet to drink.
 2. So the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ removes the bitterness of our tongues.
 3. The fire of Pentecost enabled a Peter to make known the wonderful works of God instead of denying and cursing God
 4. How we need the Holy Spirit to guide our hearts and tongues to be instruments of blessing (Eph. 5:4).
- D. Our prayer:
1. Ps. 51: 6-13
 2. Ps. 19:14
 3. Ps. 34:1