

James 3:1-12 Inside Love Outside Praise



It seems natural for kids to poke out their tongues and so as a parent you are constantly telling them not to poke their tongues out. Then you take them to the doctor and his tells them to poke their tongue out. It must be confusing for them.

You can find out a lot of your physical health from your tongue. James says you can find out about your spiritual health from your tongue.

The theme for James is:- Living on the outside what you know on the inside.

Last week we were told you that we are saved by faith but saving faith is never alone it always produces works. James has been highlighting what some of those crucial works are.

Like helping those in need.

This week he talks about another – THE TONGUE.

1. Teachers and everyone look out

Read: 3:1

Teachers will be judged more strictly.

As we'll see James goes on to say that the tongue is a powerful tool. The tool of the trade for teachers is the tongue. A bit like saying hammers are powerful so be careful. Immediately you'd think builders look out. The tool of the trade for builders is the hammer.

But keep reading verse 2.

It's as though he thinks but hang on a second we all have tongues and so we are all in the same boat. None of us can escape because we all have tongues. Tongues that make mistakes.

It's as though he's saying stand up if you'd never said the wrong thing. And expects no one to stand up.

Like when a woman was caught in adultery and people are about to stone her and Jesus says let him who has never sinned throw the first stone.

The tongue and what we say is so part of who we are that if we keep it under control we'll have our whole body under control.

Perfect doesn't mean sinless but mature.

Don't you wish some times that you could suck back in the words you have said?
Or suck out the words that you have heard?

James goes on to make another point about the tongue with a few illustrations.

2. The tongue is small but powerful.

Read: 3-5

James is the master of illustrations. Here's 2 simple illustrations. We all know what he is talking about.

The bit in the horse of the mouth. The small rudder used to control the direction of the boat. These things have power out of proportion to their size. The tongue has influence out of proportion to its size. The tongue can set the future direction of our lives.

The tongue is in the head behind double security. The double doors of the lips. The cage of the teeth. It still manages to get out. Unlike others parts of your body like your hands you hardly notice it coming. When a hand is coming to hurt you see it come and can defend yourself. It's not that easy with the tongue. Before you know it it is stung you. It has inflicted pain without anything defend yourself.

The tongue is powerful because the tongue produces words and words are powerful. God spoke a word and the universe was created. God spoke a word and humanity was created. It is by the word of truth, the Gospel that we are given new birth. We are made Christians. The tongue maybe small but it is powerful.

James isn't raising the tongue to talk about the good it can do but the bad it can do.

3. The tongue can destroy

Read: 6

Again we have illustrations from James.

It is like a fire.

In January 94 there were fires in Sydney. The fires came up the street where I grew up. We prepared for the fire to come to our house. It did come up one side of the street and it did cross the street. A house up the road did catch on fire. It was frightening how quickly the fire moved and the damage it did.

If we do not use our tongues with great caution, we are like spiritual arsonists, lighting careless fires that cause widespread destruction.

It is like a world. It corrupts the whole person. It sets the whole course of our lives on fire. It is set on fire by hell. Look at v.8

The force of the tongue is that it impacts the whole person. The course of the tongue is that it directs the future of life. The source of the tongue is hell itself. It can stain your whole life. It can ruin a reputation.

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." That's only half true. Sticks and stones do hurt but so do words.

James is speaking about the tongue. We all have tongues. He is talking about my tongue. He is talking about your tongue. He is doing a tongue examination. He's giving us a diagnosis and the news is not good. If we are honest with ourselves we'll know the diagnosis is true.

4. The tongue cannot be controlled

Read: 7

We as humans can tame animals.

You can go to Seaworld and see the sea lions tamed doing and doing tricks.

No one can tame the tongue. No person can tame the tongue.

It is a restless evil.

Should this lead to give up trying to control what we say? Of course not.

Controlling the tongue is not keeping silent. That can be an indicator of wisdom. We are to be quick to listen and slow to speak but we are expecting to speak. Evidence of control over the tongue is what comes out of my mouth. What words the tongue speaks.

How about thinking about your mind as an iPhone. There is an application you can download of good things to say. You take a moment to go there to find something to say rather than spewing out the first thing that comes to mind.

5. We have fork tongues

Read it: 9-10

We bless God. And we curse men.

We praise God on Sunday and we curse men through the week. It may start over lunch as you have roast preacher. Or as we drive along and someone cuts off and we curse them. Or we slander someone. Or we gossip. Or we lie.

I can be in my office reading the Bible and praying and then I come out and say a harsh word to the girls as the last thing I say to them as they leave for the day.

We speak and spit Venom – hate – death.

We also speak and breathe Oxygen – love – life.

THIS SHOULD NOT BE.

Read verses 11-12

Like produces like. As Jesus says out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. Bad things don't produce good things. Only a renewed heart can produce pure speech. The tongue is a barometer of our hearts.

Imagine that all of us here today were carrying into church a razor-sharp, two-edged sword. It would be a miracle if we got through the morning without anyone getting cut! The fact is, we all have a razor-sharp, two-edged sword—in our mouths!

Last week we saw that it is impossible to say you are a Christian and think you don't have to show it in the way you live.

This week James is saying you cannot think you are a Christian and say whatever you want.

He says more than that. He is saying we are living as if that's what we believe. That we do speak as if it didn't matter.

Jesus said (Matt. 12:36-37), "I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Jesus was not teaching justification by works. But, like James, He was teaching that our works reveal whether our faith is genuine faith. Our words either validate that we are true believers or reveal that we do not know God. If we sin with our speech, we need to ask God's forgiveness and also the forgiveness of the one we sinned against. Genuine believers have this sense of being accountable for their speech.

Are you hearing God speaking to you? Are you hearing James saying that you have failed in how you've used your tongue? Do you recognize and feel your sin? So you grieve over your sin? Jesus says blessed are those who mourn ie mourn over sin. Do you shed tears over your sin? The Christian life begins by knowing you are a sinner. The Christian life continues by knowing you are a sinner.

Do you know that you have no where to run. You have no where to hide from God.

You must flee to him in Jesus. Jesus and his death for you. The only place where you can find any help for your sin. Forgiveness and help for a new life.

The word of truth has been implanted in you – accept it. Why? Not for tips for life. Not for the how to manual of life. But so the word fills your heart. Feeds your heart. Shapes your mind.

If this happens your life will change. Your tongue will change.