Controlling the Tongue (Part 2)

I. Introduction

A. 5 Facts to MOTIVATE you to control YOUR Tongue SO THAT you will live godly IN YOUR WHOLE LIFE.
   1. Your tongue can CONDEMN you.
   2. Your tongue can CONTROL you.
   3. Your tongue can CORRUPT you.
   4. Your tongue cannot be TAMED by you.
   5. Your tongue can be used to BLESS AND CURSE by you.

B. Turn to our Passage...James 3:1

II. Review: Your tongue can CONDEMN you.

3:1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

A. James introduces SPEECH with teachers(v.1) -then moves to EVERYONE'S speech (v.2-12).

B. Tongue can condemn you – i.e. LEAD you to SIN and be JUDGED by GOD.

C. JAMES SAYS – KNOW the SERIOUSNESS involved in becoming a teacher.
   1. Why? Because of great potential to sin with your tongue.
      a) James: PUBLIC SINNING through TEACHING is greater than PRIVATE SINNING
      b) Affects MORE PEOPLE
   2. Don't rush into ministry where are teacher of God's Word.
   3. Context= discussing the Word of God. -Swift to hear Word of God and slow to speak it.
   4. Don't RUSH to be a TEACHER because there is A HIGH LIABILITY before God.
   5. If you teach falsely OR WRONGLY, you will be judged by God.

III. Review: Your tongue can CONTROL you.= Principle PLUS 3 Pictures / Illustrations

A. PRINCIPLE PART 1: IF you CONTROL sin with you SPEECH, you can CONTROL ALL other SINS!

B. For we all stumble in many ways.
   1. "stumble," = "sin." = Tongue is a major way we sin!

C. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man.
   1. If you don't ever STUMBLE with your mouth, you're perfect...and no one can be perfect.
   2. And if you get control of your tongue, you're demonstrating spiritual maturity.
   3. James is saying only spiritual mature people are able to control their tongue.
D. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well
1. If a person can master his tongue, he can master his evil tendencies throughout his whole body, and that means his person.
2. CONTROL the Tongue and YOU ARE ABLE to CONTROL ALL OTHER SIN IN YOUR LIFE!
   a) NOT perfection BUT MATURITY!
3. Greater to Lesser Argument
   a) Tongue = INSTANT EXPRESSION of the HEART.
      (1) CAN ALWAYS, ANYTIME, ANYWHERE SIN!
      (2) ALMOST every OTHER SIN takes CIRCUMSTANCES –BODY sins
      (3) THEFT, ADULTERY, EVIL ACTIONS…
      (4) Tongue is NEVER constrained!
   b) SO – If you can CONTROL the TONGUE which has no CIRCUMSTANTIAL CONSTRAINTS, - the greatest sinner in the body
      (1) THEN you can GAIN CONTROL over all of the LESSER opportunistic / circumstantial SINS!
   c) If I want bring my whole spiritual life into control,
      (1) I should work on my...what?...my tongue.
   d) Remember: not fully possible to TOTALLY have a holy tongue, BUT TO THE EXTENT that one controls his tongue, he will control his body.

E. SKIP DOWN to V.5
James 3:5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things.

F. COMPLETED PRINCIPLE : IF you CONTROL sin with you SPEECH, you can CONTROL ALL other SINS! BUT IF you DO NOT CONTROL your TONGUE, IT CAN LEAD to SIN CONTROLLING YOU!

1. “So” = based on the ILLUSTRATIONS, the tongue is SMALL but CAN CONTROL ALL OF YOU…
2. a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things
   a) a small part of the body,
      (1) End of Verse: tongue is compared to the match that starts the great forest fire!
      (2) V.3 Tongue is small bit that controls whole horse
      (3) V.4 Tongue is the rudder that controls the huge ship INSPITE of the strong winds
   b) and yet it boasts of great things
   c) Negative statement “boasts of great things”
      (1) BOASTING of ITS POWER over your ENTIRE LIFE!
      (2) IF you LET IT BE OUT-OF-CONTROL, YOUR ENTIRE LIFE CAN BECOME OUT-OF-CONTROL…
G. V.3-5 James gives us THREE illustrations.

1. Forest Fire: Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!
   a) Metaphor- THAT LITTLE TONGUE can lead to your WHOLE LIFE BEING OUT-OF-CONTROL!

2. Horse: James 3:3 Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they may obey us, we direct their entire body as well.
   a) Control the tongue with a bit and You can direct the whole body.
   b) NOTE: By controlling the tongue, the whole life is DIRECTED TO A USEFUL PURPOSE.

3. Ships: V.4… James 3:4 Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.
   a) APPLICATION!- get control of the little tongue, you can move everything else.

4. US: Power applied at the speech--is sufficient/ enough to control the whole person.

5. James: control tongue because of its power to control you!

IV. NEW: Your tongue can CORRUPT you.

James 3:5-6 5So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! 6And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

A. In v.2-5, he was simply saying the tongue controls.
   1. Neutral Control – not presented good or bad in v.2-5a
      a) just a controlling member.
   2. Dominates person and is the key to their behavior.
   3. Because of its power to control, it must be controlled.

B. Now: because of its power to control is a tremendously dangerous thing.
   1. Negative tone dominates James’ words as he talks about the power of the tongue and its danger.

C. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!
   1. “SEE” ="Behold! LOOK!” = a CHANGE to negative
      a) = Exclamation at the danger of the tongue.
   2. The contrast is staggering.
      a) Fire has an amazing capacity.
         (1) We imply the fire multiplies itself BUT
         (2) Really the FUEL multiples the FIRE.
         (3) AND the FIRE is DESTRUCTIVE.
      b) Water cannot multiply.
         (1) If you have a cup of water and you pour it out, it won't become a flood. It can't.
c) Imagery vivid to ORIGINAL AUDIENCE because in dry brush of Palestine, -just like California (terrain identical)

3. Look at Scripture concerning FUEL…
   a) Prov 26:20 For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.
      (1) “whisperer” = the wood that fuels the fire.
   b) Proverbs 26:21 Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.
      (1) The word "kindle" means to burn up.
      (2) The picture again of gossip and slander and contention being a fire that devastates.

4. Look at Scripture concerning destruction of fire:
   a) Prov. 16:27 A worthless man digs up evil, While his words are like scorching fire.
      (1) Everything his fiery mouth touches is set on fire and the fire spreads.
   b) Psalm 52:2 Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit.
   c) The tongue is a fire that kindles and burns.
      Psalm 57:4 My soul is among lions; I must lie among those who breathe forth fire, Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows And their tongue a sharp sword.
      Job 19:2 “How long will you torment me And crush me with words? (to Bildad)

5. God’s judgment on the tongue:
   Psalm 52:3-5 You love evil more than good, Falsehood more than speaking what is right. 4You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue. 5But God will break you down forever; He will snatch you up and tear you away from your tent, And uproot you from the land of the living.
      (1) God will judge those whose tongues do damage.

6. Quote: The devastating power of a tongue to start a rumor, to spread a malignant lie, evil in its intent, it's a wildfire that cannot be stopped.

7. God’s remedy:
   Proverbs 10:19 When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, But he who restrains his lips is wise.
      (1) Don't be the fuel that keeps the fire going.

D. James 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

1. Strongest statement in Scripture on danger of speech

2. Summary then 4 parts of an expanding circle

3. Summary: And the tongue is a fire,
   a) Bottom line:
      (1) TONGUE DESTROYS,
(2) IS DANGEROUS – has to be controlled LIKE FIRE must be CONTROLLED.

4. 4 PARTS to show how the tongue is a fire.

a) (1) the very world of iniquity
   (1) = the tongue is an sin system.
   (2) An unrighteous hostile rebelling part of our self.
   (3) It is the focal point of sin within man.
   (4) So, first of all, in itself and by itself, it is a system of sin.
   (5) Next this begins to expand.

b) (2) the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body
   (1) "body"= the whole person.
   (2) "defiles" = spots, stains, pollutes
      (a) It's like smoke from a fire, stains everything that doesn't burn.
      (b) It chars, blackens, leaves its mark.
   (3) Tongue in itself is a system of evil and then it defiles the whole person.
   (4) Implication
      (a) NOT that it CONSUMES / DESTROYS, leaves nothing
      (b) RATHER RUINS/AFFECTS whole person
      (c) = a filthy tongue results in a filthy person.
      (d) = Mark 7:20-23
         20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.  21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, … deceit, … slander, and foolishness.  
         23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."
      (e) And even the other sins can have relationship with the tongue.
   (5) A person is morally blackened by one brush of the tongue.

c) (3) , and sets on fire the course of our life, and
   (1) "It is setting--present tense--on fire the circle of life."
   (2) The thought is expanding.
      (a) First is the system of wickedness.
      (b) Second, it stains the whole person.
      (c) Now it sets ablaze, and the Greek is, "the wheel of creation"
         (i) = wheel with spokes going out
      (d) It not only stains you, but it touches everything you touch.
      (e) It goes beyond the person to touch every other person in the circle of your life.
      (f) People know you by how you talk, right?
         (i) Tongue reaches beyond your mouth to stain your person.
         (ii) It reaches beyond your person to touch the whole network of people that are touched by you.
      (g) Author: “Gossip, that repulsive thing, rumors, slander, false accusations, lies, evil speech can stain and pollute and destroy a
whole family, a whole group of people, a school, a church, a community."

d) (4) and is set on fire by hell.
   (1) most devastating statement on the danger of the tongue.
   (2) Present tense, it is habitually being lit--as it were--by hell.
   (3) "hell" =Gehenna.
      (a) It is only used in all the New Testament in the gospels with this one exception, this is the only time it appears outside gospels
      (b) The Lord used it at least ten times recorded and He always used the word Gehenna to refer to the eternal place of burning where damned souls will go.
      (c) It is the place where
         (i) the fire never goes out,
         (ii) where the worm never dies,
         (iii) where the thirst is never quenched.
         (iv) eternally burning place.
   (4) But what does the word "Gehenna" mean?
      (a) translated "hell"
      (b) Literally: "It is set on fire by Gehenna."
      (c) South-southwest of Jerusalem, a deep valley that goes straight down from a cliff, a deep low valley that is known as the "Valley of Hinnom."
      (d) Gehenna = Valley of Hinnom.
      (e) =Greek word for the Hebrew "Valley of Hinnom," ge-hinnom.
   (5) place.
      (a) In 2 Kings 23:10- King Josiah—
         (i) brought a great revival,
         (ii) bringing the people of Israel back to God?
      (b) One of the things he did was abolish idolatry.
      (c) One = human sacrifice.
      (d) Worshipers of Moloch, were worshiping this false idol by offering their children in a fire to be burned, literally human sacrifices.
      (e) When Josiah became the king in Judah, he went and stopped all the worshipers of Moloch from burning their children alive.
      (f) By the way, the god Moloch was a bull, a bull which had outstretched arms and those outstretched arms were containing a fire and the little children were laid upon the arms of Moloch and burned in human sacrifice.
   (6) Josiah stopped those sacrifices -they occurred in the Valley of Hinnom.
      (a) From earliest, Valley of Hinnom was a place of burning, a stench of the flesh of little children.
(b) Jews hated the place - Became the city dump.
   (i)  Garbage, refuse, dead bodies of animals and criminals…
(7) burned this garbage, SO MUCH -the fire burned all the time.
   (a) Sickening stench,
   (b) became known as "Gehenna of Fire" because the fire never went out.
(8) Therefore METAPHORICALLY - Gehenna became a fitting symbol of future hell of the ungodly
(9) ever-burning fire / crawling worms …
(10) Term became synonymous with Satan himself!
(11) it is set on fire by hell itself.
   (a) =behind it all is Satan.
   (b) = tool of Satan to pollute your whole person, to corrupt your whole circle of life and it all comes right out of the pit of hell and it all leads right back to the pit of hell.

V. Your tongue cannot be TAMED by you.

3:7-8 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 8But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

A. Wow – this is getting ugly!
   1. Saw that your tongue is capable of controlling you.
   2. Even saw that your tongue can CORRUPT your entire life and surroundings – wheel of creation concept.
   3. Whereas EVERY SPECIES of WILD ANIMAL CAN BE TAMED -You CANNOT TAME YOUR TONGUE
      a) Before – it is a FIRE – NOW =RESTLESS EVIL, FULL of DEADLY POISON!
   4. It wants to control, not be controlled.

B. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.
   1. James says God gave man the power to control animals,
   2. Go back to Genesis chapter 2.
   3. And even after the Fall, God reiterated to Noah that he'd be able to get all the animals in the ark.
      a) When God said you're going to bring them in two by two, God gave Noah the ability to control those animals to make sure they got in there two by two.
   4. And today, man still dominates, man still is able to tame animals.
   5. every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea
      a) Covers all forms of animals
         (1) Walking / crawling – beasts and birds, reptiles
         (2) Flying - birds
(3) Swimming – creatures of the sea
b) "beasts" = always used of 4-legged, wild animals,
c) never used of domesticated animals.

6. is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.
   a) "tamed" = present tense, continuously being subdued
   b) "and has been tamed" = for all human history
   c) James is being emphatic here to make his point
   d) =Never a time when the animals could not be tamed.

7. “tamed by the human race.” = mankind
   a) Nice, IN GENERAL, men have been able to do this.
   b) Don’t have to be the “best of men” to tame animals

8. James has set us up –
   a) Complete package with no holes in it – now wiggle room to get out
      (1) ALL animals
      (2) ALL history
      (3) ALL men
   b) You can say WITHOUT HESITATION, EXCEPTION, that the animal kingdom is TAME-ABLE!
   c) THEN HE SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT ON THE TONGUE

C. V.8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.
1. But no one can tame the tongue.
   a) “BUT” = STARK CONTRAST
   b) “can tame”
      (1) v.7 “tame” Focused on the SKILL of taming an animal
      (2) v.8 NOW two verbs – tame and the power to tame
         (a) Related to “dunamis”
            (i) Means able to, have to power to
            (ii) Dunamis is ancestor of “dynamite”
      (3) James – FORGET THE SKILL PART - YOU DON’T HAVE THE POWER to TAME your TONGUE -
      (4) Root cause – not enough power!
      (5) Tongue is that bad!

2. no one = unfortunate abbreviation!
   a) Literally = “no one OF MANKIND”
   b) No one among men can tame the tongue.
   c) JAMES DOESN'T SAY IT CAN'T BE TAMED,
      (1) he says man can't tame it.
      (2) There's a difference!
      (3) Who can tame it? God can by His power.
3. James now tells us why MEN cannot tame their tongues…

4. *it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.*
   a) It's always ready to break out.
      (1) It fights against restraint.
      (2) It doesn't want to be held back.
   b) *"Restless evil" is the same word translated unstable in James 1:8.*
   c) *and full of deadly poison.*
      (1) It is not only like a caged animal, a monster of inconsistency wanting to break out of its restraint, but when it breaks out, it carries a death dealing venom, like a snake’s tongue.
      (2) Rom 3:13 says the poison of asps is under their lips.
      (3) Psalm 140:3 They sharpen their tongues as a serpent; Poison of a viper is under their lips.
      (4) Psalm 64:1-10
      
      Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint; Preserve my life from dread of the enemy.  
      2Hide me from the secret counsel of evildoers, From the tumult of those who do iniquity.  
      3Who have sharpened their tongue like a sword. They aimed bitter speech as their arrow,  
      4To shoot from concealment at the blameless; Suddenly they shoot at him, and do not fear.  
      5They hold fast to themselves an evil purpose; They talk of laying snares secretly; They say, “Who can see them?”  
      6They devise injustices, saying, “We are ready with a well-conceived plot”; For the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep.  
      7But God will shoot at them with an arrow; Suddenly they will be wounded.  
      8So they will make [their tongue a stumbling for themselves]. All who see them will shake the head.  
      (a) God's going to turn their tongues against them.  
      (b) BUT their tongues are like arrows, spears and swords.
      (c) The tongue is an murderer.

VI. Your tongue can be used to BLESS AND CURSE by you

James 3:9-12  
9With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;  
10from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.  
11Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?  
12Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

A. The tongue is a hypocrite. Both bless and curse!
   1. say one thing one time - another thing another time.

B. 9With it we bless our Lord and Father,
   1. Jews - whenever they mention the name of God they always followed it with these words "Blessed be He, Blessed be He."
   2. And so with their tongue they were ever and always blessing God.
      Three times a day they had to repeat the Shemoneh Esreh,
      a) =18 prayers called Eulogies
b) every one said three times a day
c) Each ended "Blessed be Thou, O God."

3. Customary for the Jew with his tongue to be blessing God all the time.
4. Psalms are full of such blessing.

C. and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;
1. "curse" means to wish evil on someone.

D. who have been made in the likeness of God;
1. Man, like God is rational, personal, moral, self-conscious, has a will, a conscience, reason.
2. Man can know, man can love, man can act on the basis of rational thought and motive and intent.
3. HOW CAN MAN BLESS THE GOD AND CURSE MAN WHEN MAN IS MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD?
4. James – there is an EVIL IRRATIONALITY HERE!

E. ^10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing.
1. Summary and Repetition
2. Emphasis – SAME mouth!

F. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.
1. Houston, we have problem! It isn't right.
2. Strong negative used only here in NT.
3. God has saved us and when God saved us He transformed us and when He transformed us, He gave us a capacity for new speech and He expects us to speak that way.
4. It's an impossible compromise to tolerate.

G. James illustrates the obvious with three pictures.
1. ^11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?
   a) NO. Qtn expects a NO answer!
   b) "send out" = burst for, gush
   c) Notice – "same opening" TIES above to "same mouth"
2. ^12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs?
   a) NO! IMPOSSIBLE!
   b) LET NATURE TEACH US THE OBVIOUS!
3. Nor can salt water produce fresh.
   a) No more questions! Conclusion: NO!
4. Switch to the heart instead of water…
   a) Transformed heart (fresh water) cannot produce bitter water
   b) AND an unsaved heart cannot produce fresh water.
   c) The taste tells its source!

H. So he's right back to where he started.
1. True Christians will be revealed in their speech.
2. And if you're a true Christian, it will be seen by your speech.

I. **Note - James is being black-and-white.**

1. These are TRUISMS.
   a) Truism that salt water can't come out of a fresh fountain.
   b) And it is a truism in your life that if you have been transformed by Christ, your speech will show it.
   c) A fig must have a fig tree at its source.
   d) A grape must have a vine at its source.
   e) An olive must have an olive tree at its source.
   f) Salt water has salt as its source.
   g) Fresh water has sweet water as its source.
   h) Bitter words come from a bitter heart.
   i) Critical words come from a critical heart.
   j) True believers will be revealed in their speech AND must be revealed in their speech.

J. **Built-in TENSION**

1. As a Christian, this is how it will be.
2. As a Christian, this is how it must be.
3. It is true, AND calls us to be sure that it is true.

Luke 6:43-45 43“For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. 44“For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. 45“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

a) James merely echoing the very words of Jesus!

K. **The true believer is known by his speech.**

L. **A true believer speaks with a tongue that is under control. BUT we all sin...**

1. Peter could say, “**Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you**” (Matthew 26:35),
   a) Yet denied Jesus with oaths and curses (Mt 26:69–75)
2. John who said, “Little children, love one another,”
   a) =one who had once wished to call down fire from heaven in order to blast a Samaritan village out of existence (Luke 9:51–56).
3. Apostles tongues could say very different things.

M. **to desire a good life on this earth control your tongue!**

1 Peter 3:10 For, “**THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.**

N. **So - we will control our tongues. –AND we must.**
VII. CONCLUSION

A. We ALL need to CONSTANTLY watch our tongue.
   1. Your tongue can CONDEMN you.
   2. Your tongue can CONTROL you.
   3. Your tongue can CORRUPT you.
   4. Your tongue cannot be TAMED by you.
   5. Your tongue can be used to BLESS AND CURSE by you.