

The 7 Hardest Things You Will Ever Do

Tame Your Tongue

James 3:2-12

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Dr. Steve Horn

Text Introduction: Today we begin a brand new series of study on some of the more difficult areas of the Christian life. You might very well find that they are “the hardest things you will ever do” in your spiritual life. Right at the top of that list is the ability to control our tongue. Unfortunately, there is not a 3-step plan that will allow you to control your tongue. Often there does not exist enough time to stop and think what we are going to say before we speak. As in other parts of our life we must learn spiritual principles to deal with spiritual problems.

Our text today is from the book of James. James, the author, is believed to be the brother of Jesus. Most believe that this book was the first NT book to be written. Interesting, then, isn't it, that from the earliest conception of the Church there is the need to address this matter of the tongue.

Text: ² for we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a mature man who is also able to control his whole body.

³ Now when we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we also guide the whole animal. ⁴ And consider ships: though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵ So too, though the tongue is a small part [of the body], it boasts great things. Consider how large a forest a small fire ignites. ⁶ And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among the parts of our [bodies]; it pollutes the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is set on fire by hell.

⁷ For every creature—animal or bird, reptile or fish—is tamed and has been tamed by man, ⁸ but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who are made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things should not be this way. ¹¹ Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? ¹² Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers, or a grapevine [produce] figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.

Introduction: Who counts these things, I will never know, but multiple sources suggest that the average human speaks between 18,000 and 25,000 words. That means that each of us speak about a 54 page book every day. That means 66 800 page books a year. If we said anything worth selling to be read, we all could be quite rich, I suppose. Oh, but how those words can get us in trouble.

And, it's not just the words we say, now it's the words we write in e-mails, on blogs, on facebook, and in tweets.

We come to this subject of “Taming our Tongues.” I have seen quite a number of lists of things to think about before we speak. **Here's the problem: Who thinks before they speak?** In the heat of the moment, who is going to pause and go over the list?

However, as Christians, we are to be transformed. Not just in some areas, but in all areas.

Taming our tongues is not a three-step process, but the text does give us some principles to consider.

I. The tongue is among the clearest indicators of our maturity as a Christian.

We like to be able to say that this is my one sin area or “That is just the way that I am.” However, the tongue is going to show our maturity.

II. The tongue is among the greatest examples of how sin affects the whole body.

A. The Analogies Presented—horse, boat, fire—All make the same point—Size might be small in comparison to what the object controls, but the smaller object controls the larger object.

On October 8, 1871, a small fire started in a barn at the O’Leary’s house. By the time all was done, hundreds were dead and 4 square miles in Chicago had burned.

B. The Progression Implied—We hang on to a sin area, we tolerate it, we rationalize it, but all the while we are setting on fire our entire bodies.

Here’s the progression. If we let negative talk flow from our mouths, we are going to be negative people. If we let worrisome talk proceed from our mouths, we are going to be worried people. If we let bitter talk proceed, we will become bitter. If we allow ourselves to talk about someone, sooner or later, that is how we are going to really feel about that individual.

C. The Source of Sin Identified—Satan Himself.

III. The tongue is among the greatest illustrations of how we have dealt wrongly with our sin problem.

2 Realities:

1. I cannot tame my tongue on my own.
2. When I get my heart right, I will get my tongue in control.

Conclusion:

*Galatians 5:16 Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the deeds of the flesh. **How do I do that?***

1. Spend time daily in His Presence.
2. Pray for Conviction.
3. Respond in Repentance.