



Faith Tested by the Tongue

DECEMBER 7, 2011

Tom McCullough/PO Box 503, Granville, Ohio 43023/tom.mccullough@capitolcom.org /www.capitolcom.org/ohio

The Epistle of James' (AD 45-50) likely author was James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ, the leader of the Jerusalem church, the leader of the Council of Jerusalem and a humble man. While James is addressing the twelve tribes that had scattered to all parts of the world and attempts to be encouraging to the believing Jews who were struggling with trials and tribulations, he confronts the issue of the testing and fruit of a faithful Christian's walk and the wise Godly righteous reactions of him when grounded in total faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. James shares that a living faith is tested by the control of the tongue. (James 3: 1-12 NASB)

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. (cf. 3:1-2)

The teacher has a greater responsibility. James shares that all people stumble and fall short of the Christian walk; yet stumbling, making errors, or carelessly handling of God's Word as a teacher brings stricter judgment. Given the high status and power of the teacher in the society and church of that day, James, a teacher, was providing a warning that not many are called to be teachers and to place one's self in the teacher position requires greater responsibility. Inaccurate teaching in the church brought about the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) of which James was the leader and subsequently directed clarity of salvation by grace through faith to Jews and Gentiles. This warning was and is not meant to discourage teachers but rather to warn any potential teacher toward the seriousness of the teaching role. The more opportunities that believers have to give out the Word of God the greater are their responsibilities. James provides two examples of the power of the tongue.

Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at 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. (cf. 3:3-4)

The tongue can provide direction. Like the examples of the bit and the rudder providing direction to something much larger, the tongue of the teacher and those giving information can provide direction or affect the lives of others by their use of words. James provides a warning and an example about the use of the tongue.

So 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! 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. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. (cf. 3:5-8)

The tongue can provide destruction. Similar to the example of a small fire setting a great forest afire, James shares that while the tongue is a small part of the body; it can cause great destruction and pain to others and self. Additionally, it will lead a person to sin and eternal separation from God. Additionally, while man may master control over many things, no one reaches total control over his tongue. The tongue will reflect a person's faith through his words.

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

The tongue can provide blessing and cursing. Like the examples of the fountain and the fig tree, the tongue will reflect the faith that resides within a person. Paul said *"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;"* (Rm 10:9). There is a living faith linkage between the believer's speech (tongue) and belief (heart/motive). A living, growing and Spirit-filled faith will reflect a tongue and speech that provides fruit that honors, serves and glorifies God.

For Your Consideration:

- As a "teacher" to family, friends and co-workers, do you give serious consideration to the words that you use?
- Like the ship's rudder, is your tongue directing you to God's destination harbor?
- Is your faith a living faith that provides fruit through words that bless others and honor, serve and glorify God?

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS (SESSION OR HEARING DAYS) AT 7:30AM, STATEHOUSE ROOM 44

STATE STAFF AND LOBBYISTS: WEDNESDAYS AT 12:10PM, STATEHOUSE ROOM 44