



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Taming The Tongue (James 3:1-11)

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Leaders carry a great responsibility for what they say and do. Speech seems far more difficult to control than is action.

INTRODUCTION

Consider the damage that has been done by the irresponsible words of a teacher, preacher, reporter, or other figure in the spotlight. What can you do to help prevent your words from causing havoc among the public or at minimum, handicapping your career?

STRIVING TO CONTROL YOUR TONGUE

James 3:2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.¹

James illustrates how a bit, placed in the mouth of a horse makes them obey us, even turning the whole animal at our will. In the same way a relatively small rudder turns a huge ship (James 3:3-4). Athletes dedicate years of work to train their body for a relatively few performances. Our challenge is to control the small muscle that is called a tongue. Have you watched someone make a simple statement that impacted their career or changed human events?

EXPLOSIVE WORDS

James 3:5-6 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.²

Words are powerful! James warns that the passion of words can be the same as a source of ignition of a forest fire. Hitler seized on the vulnerabilities of the German people with his speeches, rising from prisoner to Chancellor in ten short years. The British had appeased Hitler and were about to be conquered along with the rest of Europe. In 1940, the Brits elected Winston Churchill to leadership. His powerful words instilled hope, enabling them to withstand until America joined in the battle to stop an evil empire.

Mankind's speech continues to be a scourge upon individual lives and all humanity. Jesus proclaimed that evil thoughts come from the heart (Matthew 15:19).

A HEART FIX IS NEEDED

James 3:8-11 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?³

Striving to control your tongue is helpful, but futile. What is in your heart will slip out and cause harm to you or others (Matthew 12:34). Our words are the most accurate picture of what is in our heart (Matthew 15:18-19). **For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander** (Matthew 12:19). Jesus points out that all levels of sin start with evil thoughts. Paul gives us an antidote: **But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth** (Colossians 3:8). The fix is a transformed heart, one empowered by the Spirit of God. King David, a man after God's heart (1 Samuel 13:14), gave testimony of God's ability to renew the heart of one who seeks Him: **The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes** (Psalm 19:7-8). What instances and occasions are there where you can practice controlling the tongue by softening your heart or adjusting your attitude?

A PRAYER

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me (Psalm 51:10-12).

¹ The Holy Bible, New International Version. (Biblica, Inc.) 2011.

² Ibid

³ Ibid