

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
James: A Sermonic Call Unto Practical Godliness
Part VI: Godliness In Relation To Our Speech, James 3:1-18
A. Our Need To Check Our Speech Itself
(James 3:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. James 3:6 claims "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity . . . it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell," strong words about the effects of sinful speech!
- B. Thus, we believers must rely on the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-23) to check our speech against sinning in the pursuit of godliness, a directive James powerfully admonishes us to do in James 3:1-12 (as follows):

II. Our Need To Check Our Speech Itself, James 3:1-12.

- A. To avoid sinning in our speech, James urged that not all of us be eager to be teachers, for we teachers will be held more accountable by God for our speech due to the damaging effects of sinful speech, James 3:1.
- B. We might be surprised at James' admonition regarding Christian teachers, but he noted that all believers, including Christian teachers, "stumble in many ways" in their speech! (James 3:2a NIV)
- C. If there is a teacher who is faultless in what he says, he is mature, able to check his whole body, or able to control every aspect of his conduct in every way, James 3:2b NIV!
- D. To confirm his point, James illustrated how powerfully speech affects others around us, James 3:3-4:
 - 1. Our speech is like a bit in the horse's mouth that affects the direction of its whole body, James 3:3.
 - 2. Our speech is like a ship's rudder that directs wherever the entire ship is to go, James 3:4.
 - 3. Even so, our speech can boast great things in sin, producing disastrous results, James 3:5, 6-12:
 - a. Sinful, especially boastful, speech is like a fire that destroys everything in its path, James 3:5-6a.
 - b. Sinful, especially boastful, speech defiles the whole body, setting on fire the whole course of nature and it is set on fire of hell itself, James 3:5a, 6b, c. This latter claim shows that even a teacher can say that which leads others to make the wrong decision regarding faith in Christ, and that he can thus be instrumental in misguiding people to the point that they go to hell!
 - c. Sinful, especially boastful, speech is an untamed, unruly evil, full of deadly poison in contrast to all sorts of animals, birds, and even serpents and things in the sea that can be tamed, James 3:5a, 7-8.
 - d. Evidence of this untamed aspect of sinful, especially boastful speech, is the fact that we use it both to bless God the Father while also cursing men who are made after the image of God, James 3:5a, 9.
 - e. Thus, out of the same mouth comes blessings and cursings, something that ought not to occur, 3:10.
 - f. To describe how wrong it is for one's speech both to bless and curse, James noted even a fountain does not send out sweet and salt water (James 3:11 NIV): as a fig tree does not yield olive berries, nor does a vine yield figs, so a fountain cannot yield both bitter and fresh water (Jas. 3:12a,b NIV).
 - g. The lesson is clear: it is absolutely improper for our mouths to edify and then sinfully to tear down, so it is imperative that we realize the great potential destructiveness of our speech, and check it!
- E. A lesson on controlling our speech that can so easily and powerfully be very destructive needs to include the powerful means by which this must occur, and Galatians 5:16-23 describes that means as follows:
 - 1. All of us mortal Christians, believers in these temporal bodies, have sin natures, 1 John 1:8, so we all can and have sinned as believers (1 John 1:10), and that must include sins of the tongue, cf. James 3:1.
 - 2. Indeed, our sin natures produce sinful speech, for Galatians 5:19-21 describes *at least some* of these sins as hatred, discord, fits of rage, dissensions, factions, and the like.
 - 3. *However, as the believer relies on the Holy Spirit, he produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23), no room for sinful speech!*
 - 4. *Thus, we must rely on the Holy Spirit for victory in bridling our speech, that it remain godly!*

Lesson: Our speech powerfully affects others around us either for good or for evil, and with the presence of the sin nature, we all -- including especially us Christian teachers -- risk doing a great amount of evil if we do not check our speech. May we then check it by relying on the Holy Spirit!

Application: May we walk by the Holy Spirit and reign in our speech for the good of all around us!