

# Lessons From James

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## The Peculiar Tongue

(Ja 3:1-12)

### INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning
  - a. Greeting...
2. Series of "Lessons From James."
  - a. Finished last week chapter 2.
    - i. We looked at Belief + Works = Faith.
  - b. Today we are going to look at **Ja 3:1-12** "The Peculiar Tongue."
3. The tongue is a peculiar member of the body...
  - a. As James points out it wields great might over our body as strange as that sounds.
  - b. It has the power to make our character strong or weak.
  - c. It has the ability to make us leaders or followers.
4. James makes two observations concerning this member.
  - a. He makes warning about its use as a proclaimer of God's Word.
  - b. He makes warning about its use as a proclaimer of our thoughts.

### I. The Tongues Use Proclaiming God's Word

- A. Not many of you should become teachers
  1. Notice some other translations.
    - i. "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren..."<sup>1</sup> (NASB95)
    - ii. "My brothers and sisters, most of you shouldn't want to be teachers..." (NIRV)
    - iii. "Be not many of you teachers, my brethren..." (ASV)
    - iv. "My brethren, be not many masters..." (KJV)
    - v. "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers..."
  2. This has led many to suggest that we should limit our teachers or that some are not to be teachers at all.
    - i. "It is a mistake to believe that EVERYONE should become a teacher at some point in their service to Christ!" (<http://goo.gl/vBlxN>)
    - ii. "The office is a noble one; but few are fit for it. Few govern the tongue well (Jam 3:2), and only such as can govern it are fit for the office; therefore, "teachers" ought not to be many." (Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments (Jas 3:1). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.)
  3. This idea that "some" should not be teachers of any kind is however ridiculous.
    - i. James never intended to tell people that they should not be teachers at all but rather that too many were teaching and not working hard to become a knowledgeable teacher.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptures are taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

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- a. Brother Coffman wrote, "In saying, "Be not many teachers," James did not seek to discourage any who might have been qualified for such work." (from Coffman's Bible Commentary, Copyright © 1971-1993 by ACU Press, Abilene Christian University. All rights reserved.)
      - b. Harper wrote, "His words were meant to remind us of our responsibilities, rather than to deter us from our duties." (Ibid)
    - ii. This is bared out in the context & content of James as a whole which is we are to be workers for the Lord not just proclaimers.
      - a. "The verb "be not," (me...ginesthe), a present middle imperative, with the negative, signifies, "stop becoming many teachers..." (A Commentary On The Epistle Of James by Woods, Guy N. pg. 154)
    - iii. Notice what brother Guy N. Woods said concerning this idea, "This prohibition is to be closely construed with the theme which characterizes the Epistle through most of chapters 2 and 3. Words are worthless without acts; faith apart from works is dead; blessings are to be bestowed upon those who hear and do, and not upon those who hear and do not. Even those whose work it is to use *words* are every to remember that a weighty responsibility attaches thereto, and they are not to rush into the teaching office without proper preparation and a due regard for the importance of the work in which they are to engage." (Ibid)
  4. We are all to be teachers of the gospel.
    - i. **Mk 16:15** "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."
    - ii. **Ac 8:4** "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word."
    - iii. **He 5:12** "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food."
  5. However we are not all to jump into public teaching of God's Word without due diligence.
    - i. Remember at this time worship was not structured like today (**I Co 14:1-33**).
    - ii. Any male that wanted was allowed to stand and teach/preach to the church as long as it was done in an orderly way.
    - iii. Thus the warning of not everybody becoming teachers.
- B. We who teach will be judged with greater strictness
1. God cannot stand those that teach false doctrine and thus divide the church.
    - i. **Pr 6:19** "A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren."
    - ii. **Ro 16:17** "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them."

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2. When one teaches they must do so with great respect for God's Word wanting to preach/teach the Bible and not personal doctrine.
  - i. **II Ti 2:15** "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
  - ii. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (ESV)
3. Why this, because there will be a greater condemnation.
  - i. I don't profess to know exactly what this means outside of what it says. In some way condemnation will be greater for the teacher than then non teacher.
  - ii. This is not the only verse we see this idea set forth.
    - a. **Mk 12:40** "who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."
    - b. **II Pt 2:20-22** "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.""

## II. The Tongues Use Proclaiming Our Character

- A. James sets forth three examples of the tongues influence
  1. He compares it to a bit in a horse's mouth.
  2. He compares it to a ship and its rudder.
  3. He compares it to a fire in a forest.
- B. The bit and rudder illustration
  1. Here the point is clear this small member "tongue" controls the body.
    - i. It sounds strange but how true it is.
      - a. **Mt 15:18** "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man."
    - ii. Our words help define our character.
      - a. "Actions speak louder than words."
        1. This is true for those that do not speak, but for those that do their words can ruin their actions.
        2. A person can do many a right thing and then spout off without thinking and change the opinion of many of their character.
      - b. Don't get me wrong actions are important but as far as I can see in scriptures they are equal in their importance.
  2. We must learn to control/bridle our tongues.
    - i. As James put it we control the tongue we control the body.

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- C. The fire and forest illustration
  - 1. A small fire can cause massive devastation.
    - i. Think of all the fires around here and around the nation. Many times started by a cigarette thrown out of a window or something careless like the such.
  - 2. Words can cause massive devastation.
    - i. Back biting.
    - ii. Gossip
    - iii. "Stick and stones will break my bones..."
      - a. We know this is inaccurate.
      - b. Many a statistic show how verbal abuse can lead to those being abuse to have major problems some even committing suicide.
  - 3. We must be slow to speak evaluating every single word.
- D. We must strive to tame the tongue
  - 1. Let it be said now that no one can tame the tongue without God's help.
    - i. It is only through God we can stifle Satan and sin.
      - a. **Ph 4:13** "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
  - 2. This can only be accomplished by...
    - i. Seeking God's help first.
      - a. **Ps 141:3** "Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips."
    - ii. Setting our minds on things not of this world.
      - a. **Co 3:2** "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."
    - iii. Using our "mind" to control our speech.
      - a. **Ja 1:19** "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"
      - b. **Pr 17:27** "Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding." (ESV)

## CONCLUSION

- 1. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, " No man has a prosperity so high or firm, but that two or three words can dishearten it; and there is no calamity which right words will not begin to redress."
- 2. Question: Are my words that which make my character pure and wholesome or wrecked and wearisome.
- 3. Invitation
  - a. God's Plan of Salvation
    - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
    - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
    - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
    - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
    - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
    - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**