

James 3:1-12 – The Christian Tongue Disease

Robertson, TSK, Lexicon, Henry, Geneva, JFB, Reinecker, Gray, PNT, Family, Poole, Gaebelein, Stott, Moo, Ellsworth, Vincent, Adamson, Calvin Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: The tongue carries many diseases. And one of the deadliest diseases of the **tongue is censoriousness**. This disease is significantly more damaging than Covid-19 or pancreatic cancer. It kills 100% of the people it infects, barring a miracle. It spreads to others and kills them too. Worst of all, it robs God of the glory that belongs to him. You will hear about this disease today.

Our headings are:

You must not have a Censorious tongue

A Censorious tongue will destroy you

A Censorious tongue shows you lack faith

Our goals are: **That you will reflect your Christian faith by exercising tight controls on your tongue so that it will not be used for destruction but for building others up in the faith.**

You must not have a censorious tongue

1 My brethren, **let not many of you (like these) become teachers**, knowing that we shall receive a **stricter judgment**.

1. Apostle James addressed his people by calling them “brothers,” covenant brothers.

This means he was addressing issues in the church.

2. Now what did Apostle James mean by saying that not many should become teachers?

Aren't Christians to desire good gifts as teaching? Apostle Paul said it is a **good desire to be pastor or elder**.

1 Timothy 3:1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

3. What the Apostle James meant has to be determined by the context. What was the context?

He was speaking of **teachers who were condemning and ignoring the poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners**. He said people like these should not be teachers because they were **quick to condemn for small things (or non-issues)** but were ignorant of the weak people's situation.

Apostle James wanted these “teachers” to know that the poor, the widow, the orphan, the foreigner, might not have been guilty of sin or laziness. It simply may have had “hard providences” and they should not be harshly judged. These so-called “teachers” spoke ignorantly and condemned the poor!

This was an old warning of the Lord Jesus:

Matthew 7:1 "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

These teachers should not have condemned others for small matters...even while ignoring the boulders in their eyes.

These teachers were suffering from the mouth disease: censoriousness!

So Apostle James was not saying, “Don't be teachers,” **but “Don't be ignorant teachers who can't control your mouths.”**

4. Those bad teachers who could not control their mouths were in great danger and could expect a grater judgment!

Because of their **higher position, they could do more damage and so their judgment was severer.**

2 For **we all stumble in many things**. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

5. Apostle James further warned against censoriousness, knowing all men made errors-including these “judgy-teachers.”

1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

To put it clearly: Apostle James was saying these teachers needed to put a bridle in their own mouths!

6. Lessons:

a. The church cannot have too many teachers. If the Lord lays on your heart to serve in this way, prepare for it and let the church confirm it. We need faithful men to preach the Gospel so men are saved and sanctified.

b. Sins of the tongue are some of the easiest sins to commit. You don't have to work hard to sin. It doesn't cost you money. So it is easy to do. All men, women, boys, and girls, commit this sin!

d. Show your faith by giving your brothers – especially poor or suffering ones - the benefit of the doubt. Don't be too rigid about their small sins – the tiny specks in their eyes. You may not know the circumstances of their lives. And remember your big boulders in your eyes!

c. If you spend more time thinking of your own mistakes and weaknesses in life (the boulders in your own eye), you would more likely to be patient with others and help the weak when they struggle with sin or are needy.

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

A censorious tongue will destroy you

3 Indeed, we **put bits in horses' mouths** that they may obey us, and we **turn their whole body**. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are **turned by a very small rudder** wherever the pilot desires. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member and **boasts great things**. See how great **a forest a little fire kindles!** 6 And the tongue is a fire, **a world of iniquity**. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is **set on fire by hell**.

1. Apostle James then declared by illustrations that the tongue is dangerous and could destroy the whole person.

a. The tongue is like a bit in a horse's mouth that controls the whole body of this large strong animal.

b. The tongue is like a small rudder on a ship that controls the whole ship, even against the fiercest winds and waves.

As the bit and the rudder, the tongue is a little member of the body, but boasts a lot. We get the word "megalomaniac" from this. So the tongue needs to be muzzled or it would cause destruction.

Psalms 39:1 I said, "I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle..."

c. The tongue is like a little fire that grows into a forest fire and destroys a great forest.

Remember the "gender reveal" party that destroyed thousands of acres of land and killed a couple of people recently?

As a small fire destroys the whole forests, so the small tongue can corrupt the whole body.

Proverbs 16:27 An ungodly man digs up evil, And it is on his lips like a burning fire.

2. The tongue is so dangerous it is characterized as a "world of iniquity."

This is why one misused tongue can cause great amounts of troubles! ("World" here means "great" or "large.")

A word often caused a war!

3. The tongue is set on fire by hell (Gehenna), meaning it comes from the Devil.

The tongue is one of the most **common tools of the Devil**. No wonder Satan loves to fan those flames so it can destroy more. The Devil himself is called a liar...one who misuses his tongue.

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. **He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth**, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for **he is a liar and the father of it**.

7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But **no man can tame the tongue**. It is an unruly evil, **full of deadly poison**.

4. The tongue is untamable and ungovernable.

Lions, camels, horses, whales, and elephants have been tamed by man, but no man has been able to tame the tongue.

Poisonous snakes have been tamed and made to dance, but no man can tame the tongue.

Tigers can be slowly trained to do tricks after they are tamed, but no man can tame the tongue.

God gave man dominion over all these things at creation...and over himself... but the tongue went wild.

Genesis 1:28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; **have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**"

So what are some of those deadly poisons that flow from the human tongue: malice, envy, anger, and slander...

The tongue can murder a man's reputation. The tongue can start a war. The tongue can alter the destiny of nations.

5. Lessons:

a. Don't allow your tongue to cause you to sin. Let your lips be a closed door when you tongue wants to go out of control.

Ecclesiastes 5:6 **Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin**, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?

Use your lips to lock up your tongue when it is going wild and speaking hurtful words.

b. Only God can tame the tongue. Only a heart change through the Savior Jesus Christ can make a man learn control of his tongue.

c. When you restrain your tongue you show great virtue. You show Christ is in you. You bring praise to God for the work of the Lord Jesus.

A censorious tongue shows you lack faith (or have weak faith)

9 With it **we bless our God** and Father, and with it **we curse men**, who have been made in the similitude **of God**. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. **My brethren**, these things ought not to be so.

1. When a man used his tongue to praise God, but also cursed man with it, it evidenced a non-existent or weak faith.

A Christian shouldn't call on God and then chase off the poor. If a man sang praises to God and then sent his needy neighbor away with well-wishes instead of bread, he lacked faith or had weak faith. God **called out this type of fake-Christianity before.**

Psalms 62:4 They only consult to cast him down from his high position; They delight in lies; **They bless with their mouth, But they curse inwardly.**

Why was this sin of praising God and then pushing away the poor so bad? It was very bad because both the one who pushed the poor away and that poor man who was pushed away were made in the image of God. The hypocrisy was quite alarming.

1 John 4:20 If someone says, **"I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar;** for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

2. Apostle James then illustrated proofs that the one who praised God but cursed men lacked real saving faith in Jesus.

He illustrated the lack of faith in a number of ways:

- a. A spring can't send forth fresh water and bitter water from the same opening.
- b. A fig tree cannot bear olives.
- c. A grape vine cannot bear figs.

So a man who truly desired to praise God **would not condemn a poor man and push him away!**

3. Lessons:

a. The man who uses his tongue to praise God and then uses it for putting down others doesn't know the true God.

b. Look for friends or spouses who don't spend time being censorious to the poor and weak, while pretending to be godly. They don't know the real Savior. Their faith has to be seen in their lives. Jesus must be seen...not just heard...in their daily lives.

Conclusion:

There were many in Apostle James' day who had infected tongues. Those infected tongue caused much destruction among the covenant people of God. Those infected tongues proved that many did not really have faith in God.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Let your words be full of praise of God and let your life be full of patience with the weak and needy.

2. To do these 2 things, your faith has to be strong! For your faith to be strong, you have to know and believe who you were, what Christ did for you on the blood cross, and who you are today.

3. To help others who are trapped in a "I love Jesus," philosophy, but have an "I don't care for Jesus? people," lifestyle, lead them to the cross.

Finally: While an uncontrolled infected tongue naturally leads to death and hell, there is a cure for it. The blood of Jesus washes away all sins. If you ask God to count Jesus' blood that was shed on the cross as your blood, you won't have to die and spend eternity in hell. If you do, you will not only be saved but you will be a blessing to others and bring glory to God.