

Illustrations, con't:

"Look at the ships also:" (v.4)

"So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things." (v.5)

Spiritual maturity develops through right response to trials, is enhanced by right response to the Word, and is evidenced by the right use of the tongue.

Sunday, May 18, 2025
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PROVEN—The Letter of James
A Faith That's Practical, Prudent, and Patient
No. 14 | Taming the Tongue, pt. 1
James 3:1-5a

Review:

James writes, in the early years of the church, to help believers understand the dynamics of a proven faith—a faith that's practical, prudent, and patient in and through all of one's life, which includes:

Responding to Trials (1:2-15)

Responding to the Word (1:16-27)

Holding faith in Jesus Christ in a way that's consistent with true faith (2:1-26)

Not showing partiality (2:1-13)

Not diminishing works (2:14-26)

Showing faith by works...

...by taming the tongue **(3:1-12)**

Introduction:

*How can I know my claim to (have) faith is real?
How important are works to my claim to (have) faith?*

Showing Faith by Works...

No. 14

... by Taming the Tongue, pt. 1

^{ESV} **James 3:1-5a** Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ² For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴ Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life,^[a] and set on fire by hell.^[b] ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers,^[c] these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

A Caution for Teachers:

“Not many of you should become teachers...” (v.1)

“...judged with greater strictness” (v.1)

James' Main Encouragement:

“For we all stumble in many ways.” (v.2)

“And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.” (v.2)

“Those who reach a point in their life where they rarely stumble in their speech are mature indeed, because it is the epitome of maturity to have self-control even over that most difficult aspect of life to control. Thus, the point is not that a person who controls the tongue is totally and perfectly blameless, or that such a one has achieved total moral perfection. That would either contradict the previous clause (“we all stumble”) or be purely hypothetical [which does us no good]. James’s meaning is that such a person has truly ‘grown up’ in faith, behaving in accordance with adulthood, in distinction from children, or childish adults who have yet to achieve self-mastery.”

~ Dan G. McCartney

Illustrations:

“...bits into the mouths of horses” (v.3)