



Control of the Tongue

Bible doctrine must never be taught while out of fellowship. Spiritual maturity is needed to handle the tongue. James 3:1-2.

“Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.” (James 3:1-2, NASB)

In James 3:3-7, we have four illustrations using analogies regarding control of the tongue. The horse is a believer who follows his mouth. The ship is a believer who must control his mouth, which he cannot do, so he needs a pilot. The forest fire is a believer who has a small tongue, but is a big boaster. The wild animals are the believers’ tongues that cannot be domesticated.

“Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.” (James 3:3-7, NASB)

In James 3:9-10, we have the paradox of the tongue. In James 3:9, “With it” should be translated “By means of” and refers to the believer’s tongue. It is possible to habitually bless Jesus Christ and God the Father by means of the tongue. “With it” is used again and means we also use the tongue to curse or malign others, to slander, to dislike and thus to run down, to criticize, to gossip.

“With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.” (James 3:9-10, NASB)

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (Genesis 1:27, NASB)

“Who have been made in the likeness of God” makes reference to Genesis 1:27 and means in the immaterial part of man, the self-consciousness: I am, moral reasoning power: I ought to, and self-determination: I will (volition). The believer uses their tongue to bless others and to curse others. It’s all a matter of volition. “My brethren, these things ought not to be this way” is an idiom and means believers should stop the cursing! The divine solution is spiritual growth and an inner renewing of our thinking. Rom 12:2.

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2, NASB)

In James 3:11-12, four illustrations from nature are used to make the point that the believer cannot be maligning and blessing in the breath, in the same string of words. The answer anticipated in each of the illustrations is, “of course not.” The believer will use their volition to choose to either malign others in a state of carnality or to bless others in a state of spirituality. If God doesn’t allow nature to do two



opposing things simultaneously, He doesn't allow believers to do it. These illustrations allude to the absolutes of spirituality and carnality. See categories on [Spirituality](#) and [Carnality](#).

"Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh." (James 3:11-12, NASB)

We can control the tongue to the glory of God. James 1:26; Col. 4:6.

"If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless." (James 1:26, NASB)

"Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person." (Colossians 4:6, NASB)

The tongue is a powerful part of the body that can be used for good or evil. 1 Thess. 2:4; Eph. 4:15; 1 Cor. 2:4.

"but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts." (1 Thessalonians 2:4, NASB)

"but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ," (Ephesians 4:15, NASB)

"and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," (1 Corinthians 2:4, NASB)

The purpose of the tongue is to glorify God. Isaiah 28:10-11; 1 Cor. 14:21-22.

"For He says, 'Order on order, order on order, Line on line, line on line, A little here, a little there.' Indeed, He will speak to this people Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue," (Isaiah 28:10-11, NASB)

"In the Law it is written, 'BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME,' says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe." (1 Corinthians 14:21-22, NASB)

In James 3:17, we see how to control the tongue. "But the wisdom" is σοφία (sophia) and refers to divine wisdom, applicable wisdom from the Word of God. This is the answer to your "foot in mouth" disease!

"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy." (James 3:17, NASB)

"Is first pure" is ἁγνός (hagnos) means pure from defilement, not contaminated. This is referring to Bible doctrine, the thinking of Jesus Christ, that is pure in its content. The tongue is impure and can either cause blessing or cursing. The more doctrine you have in your frame of reference, the more control you have over your tongue. 1 Cor. 2:16.

"For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16, NASB)

Bible doctrine is "peaceable" and produces a genuine inner soul peace, a relaxed mental attitude and that is the only place it comes from! Peace movements throughout human history have never produced true



peace in the soul. Such movements ignore the sin nature of the human race and only tear down the stability of the nation.

To learn Bible doctrine one must be a believer in Jesus Christ. They must be born-again. Then, you must take in Bible doctrine daily to renew your thinking and thereby grow spiritually. 2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 12:2.

“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16, NASB)

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2, NASB)

In James 3:17, “gentle” refers to Bible doctrine which makes one fair and equitable and emotionally stable. Bible doctrine is “reasonable” with doctrinal categories easily understood if you are born again and filled with the Spirit. Bible doctrine makes you grace oriented or “full of mercy” which means you don’t have any illusions about yourself. You don’t have to be pampered, petted, or patted.

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.” (James 3:17, NASB)

Bible doctrine produces divine good production or “good fruits.” A spiritually mature believer produces a maximum of divine good which glorifies God to the maximum. Bible doctrine knocks out wrangling, indecisiveness, nit-picking, and maligning. This makes the believer “unwavering” or without partiality. Bible doctrine stops the believer from being phony and becomes “without hypocrisy.” So, the answer to the control of the tongue is getting Bible doctrine on a daily basis.