

TITLE: James (Lesson 17)

TEXT: James 3:5-8

INTRO: "The tongue is like a fire; when it is under control, it is a blessing; when it is out of control, it is devastating. It can be a cure, or it can be a curse." *J. Vernon McGee*

I. (vs. 5) The tongue can have devastating effects!

A. It matters not that it is little.

NOTE: We have already considered the "bits in the horses' mouths" and "a very small helm" (rudder) that controls a great ship.

B. It can boast of "great things".

NOTE: Speech that is boastful and provocative. Prov. 12:18

C. It can spark a great fire.

NOTE: Fire reportedly started in the O'Leary barn in Chicago October 8th, 1871.

II. (vs. 6) "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity"

A. Like fire the effects of the tongue quickly get out of control.

B. "it defileth the whole body"

C. "and setteth on fire the course of nature"

NOTE: "The expression was used in ancient times to indicate 'the ups and downs in life,' as well as one's entire human existence." *Life Application Bible Commentary*

1. The tongue has the means to destroy a lifetime of good.

NOTE: The present participle used in this verse "expresses continuous or repeated action." The tongue keeps on inflaming our passions!

D. "and it is set on fire of hell."

NOTE: Flames of anger, hate, prejudice, slander, jealousy, and envy. **hell (Geenna)**: This was originally the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the garbage and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned. It was known for constantly burning.

1. The devil's tool.

NOTE: The Bible and history is replete with examples of the evil use of the tongue.

III. (vs. 7-8) Man cannot tame his own tongue!

A. He has been able to tame all kinds of animals.

NOTE: Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:1-9

B. And yet *unaided* no man can control his tongue.

C. "it is an unruly evil"

NOTE: **unruly (Akataschetos)**: that can not be restrained. The tongue is constantly capable of evil, ready to lash out.

D. "full of deadly poison."

NOTE: Ps. 140:1-3

CONCLUSION: Only God has the power to tame the tongue. Has your tongue been redeemed? See Rom. 12:1-2 "Only a regenerate tongue in a redeemed body, a tongue that God has tamed, can be used for Him." (*McGee*) Someone said: "What is in the well of the heart will come out through the bucket of the mouth."