

3:1> Μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε, άδελφοί μου, είδότες ὅτι μεῖζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα. <3:2> πολλὰ γάρ πταίομεν ἄπαντες. εἴ τις ἐν λόγφ οὐ πταίει, οδτος τέλειος ανήρ δυνατός χαλιναγωγῆσαι καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα. <3:3> εἰ δὲ τῶν ίππων τούς χαλινούς είς τὰ στόματα βάλλομεν εἰς τὸ πείθεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν, καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα αὐτῶν μετάγομεν. <3:4> ίδοὺ καὶ τὰ πλοῖα τηλικαῦτα ὄντα καὶ ὑπὸ ἀνέμων σκληρῶν έλαυνόμενα, μετάγεται ύπὸ έλαγίστου πηδαλίου ὅπου ἡ όρμη τοῦ εὐθύνοντος βου-΄λεται, <3:5> οὕτως καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα μικρὸν μέλος ἐστὶν καὶ μεγάλα αὐχεῖ.

Ίδοὺ ἡλίκον πῦρ ἡλίκην ύλην ἀνάπτει <3:6> καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα πῦρ ό κόσμος τῆς άδικίας ή γλῶσσα καθισταται ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν, ή σπιλοῦσα ὅλον τὸ σῶμα καὶ φλογίζουσα τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως καί ογιζομένη ύπὸ τῆς γεέννης. <3:7> πᾶσα γὰρ φύσις θηρίων τε καὶ πετεινῶν, ἐρπετῶν τε καὶ έναλίων δαμάζεται καὶ δεδάμασται τῆ φύσει τῆ ἀνθρωπίνη, <3:8> τὴν δὲ γλῶσσαν ούδεὶς δαμάσαι δύναται άνθρώπων, άκατάστατον κακόν, μεστὴ ἰοῦ θανατηφόρου. <3:9> ἐν αὐτῆ εὐλογοῦμεν τὸν κύριον καὶ πατέρα καὶ ἐν αὐτῆ καταρώμεθα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς καθ' ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ γεγονότας, <3:10> ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ στόματος ἐξέρχεται εὐλογία καὶ κατάρα. ού χρή, άδελφοί μου, ταῦτα ούτως γίνεσθαι. <3:11> μήτι ή πηγή ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ὀπῆς βρυει τὸ γλυκὺ καὶ τὸ πικρόν; <3:12> μὴ δύναται, ἀδελφοί μου, συκη έλαίας ποιησαι η ἄμπελος σῦκα; οὔτε ἁλυκὸν γλυκύ ποιῆσαι ὕδωρ.

The Letter of James **Bible Study Session 7**

James 3:1-12

Hoffnung für Alle

¹Liebe Brüder und Schwestern! Es sollten sich nicht so viele in der Gemeinde danach drängen, andere im Glauben zu unterweisen. Denn ihr wisst ja: Wer andere lehrt, wird von Gott nach besonders strengen Maßstäben beurteilt. ²Und machen wir nicht alle immer wieder Fehler? Wem es freilich gelingt, nie ein verkehrtes Wort zu sagen, den kann man als vollkommen bezeichnen. Denn wer seine Zunge im Zaum hält, der kann auch seinen ganzen Körper beherrschen. 3So legen wir zum Beispiel den Pferden das Zaumzeug ins Maul und beherrschen sie damit. 4Und selbst die großen Schiffe, die nur von starken Winden vorangetrieben werden können, lenkt der Steuermann mit einem kleinen Ruder, wohin er will. 5Genauso ist es mit unserer Zunge. So klein sie auch ist, so groß ist ihre Wirkung!

Ein kleiner Funke setzt einen ganzen Wald in Brand. 6Mit einem solchen Feuer lässt sich auch die Zunge vergleichen. Sie kann eine ganze Welt voller Ungerechtigkeit und Bosheit sein. Sie vergiftet uns und unser Leben, sie steckt ganze unsere Umgebung in Brand, und sie selbst ist vom Feuer der Hölle entzün-⁷Die Menschen haben es gelernt, wilde Tiere, Vögel, Schlangen und Fische zu zähmen und unter ihre Gewalt zu bringen. 8Aber seine Zunge kann kein Mensch zähmen. Ungebändigt verbreitet sie ihr tödliches Gift. 9Mit unserer Zunge loben wir Gott, unseren Herrn und Vater, und mit derselben Zunge verfluchen wir unsere Mitmenschen, doch nach Gottes Ebenbild geschaffen sind. 10 Segen und Fluch kommen aus ein und demselben Mund. Aber genau das, meine lieben Brüder und Schwestern, darf es bei euch nicht geben! 11Fließt denn aus einer Quelle gleichzeitig frisches und ungenießbares Wasser? 12Kann man Oliven von Feigenbäumen pflücken oder Feigen vom Weinstock? Ebenso wenig kann man aus einer salzigen Quelle frisches Wasser schöpfen.

NRSV

1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2 For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. 4 Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet 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 exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, 8 but no one can tame the tongue — a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

Study By **Lorin L Cranford**

NLT

1 Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged by God with greater strictness. 2 We all make many mistakes, but those who control their tongues can also control themselves in every other way. 3 We can make a large horse turn around and go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. 4 And a tiny rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot wants it to go, even though the winds are strong. 5 So also, the tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do.

A tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. 6 And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness that can ruin your whole life. It can turn the entire course of your life into a blazing flame of destruction, for it is set on fire by hell itself. 7 People can tame all kinds of animals and birds and reptiles and fish, 8 but no one can tame the tongue. It is an uncontrollable evil, full of deadly poison. 9 Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it breaks out into curses against those who have been made in the image of God. 10 And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! 11 Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? 12 Can you pick olives from a fig tree or figs from a grapevine? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty pool.

The Study of the Text:1

Context of our passage:

	-	STRUCTURAL OUTLINE OF TEXT		
		Of James ²		
PRAE	SCRIPTIO	1.1		
BODY	(1-194 1.2-5.	20	
	Facing Trials	1-15	1.2-12	
	God and Temptation	16-24	1.13-18	
	The Word and Piety	25-37	1.19-27	
	Faith and Partiality	38-55	2.1-13	
	Faith and Works	56-72	2.14-26	
	Controlling the Tongue	73-93	3.1-12	
	True and False Wisdom	94-102	3.13-18	
	Solving Divisions	103-133	4.1-10	
	Criticism	134-140	4.11-12	
	Leaving God Out	141-146	4.13-17	
	Danger in Wealth	147-161	5.1-6	
	Persevering under Trial	162-171	5.7-11	
	Swearing	172-174	5.12	
	Reaching Out to God	175-193	5.13-18	
	Reclaiming the Wayward	194	5.19-20	

In the mosaic pattern of thought expression in James, our passage jumps unexpectedly to the subject of speaking, and speaking especially in the context of teaching in the community of believers. A slight anticipation of this subject comes in 1:19³ with a stress on being slow to speak and in 1:26⁴ with the emphasis upon controlling one's tongue. To be certain, speech in a variety of forms will surface as a topic of discussion in James several times: 1:19; 1:26; 3:1-12; 4:11-12; 5:12. In ancient Jewish wisdom tradition, discussions of speech were common, and James reflects that tradition.

Exegesis of the Text:

1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

The internal flow of thought in vv. 1-12 can be charted out as follows:

(73) 3.1	Let not many of you become teachers,	The tongue's power, vv. 1-5a
•	my brothers	•
•	because you know	•
•	that we will receive a stricter judgment.	:
3.2	Now	•
(74)	we all stumble many times.	
•	if one does not stumble in what he says,	•
• (75)	this one is a mature man,	•
	able to bridle even his entire body.	•
3.3	Now	•
•	if we put bits into horses' mouths	
•	so they will obey us,	•
(76)	we also guide their entire body.	
• (, 5)	To also galas alon situle boay.	•

¹With each study we will ask two basic questions. **First,** what was the most likely meaning that the first readers of this text understood? This is called the 'historical meaning' of the text. That must be determined, because it becomes the foundation for the **second** question, "What does the text mean to us today?" For any application meaning of the text for modern life to be valid it must grow out of the historical meaning of the text. Otherwise, the perceived meaning becomes false and easily leads to wrong belief, as well as false understanding of scripture.

²Taken from Lorin L. Cranford, <u>A Study Manual of James: Greek Text</u> (Fort Worth: Scripta Publications, Inc., 1988), 285. **Statements** indicate core thought expressions in the text as a basis for schematizing the rhetorical structure of the text. These are found in the Study Manual and also at the James Study internet site.

³NRSV: "You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger;"

*NRSV: "If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless."

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Note.
                      although very large
                                  and
                               driven by fierce winds,
(77)
          the ships are also guided
                      by the smallest of rudders
                      wherever the will of the pilot chooses;
                      so also
(78)
          the tongue is a small member
               and

    boasts great things.

          Notice how a small fire kindles a huge forest;
                                                                                   The tongue's power to destroy, vv. 5b-12
(80)
    3.6
              and
(81)
         the tongue is a fire.
          An iniquitous world the tongue proves itself among our members,
(82)
                                      which stains the entire body
                                                 and
                                            sets on fire the wheel of our life,
                                                 and
                                            is itself set on fire
                                                      by Gehenna.
               For
(83)
          every kind of wild animal...is being tamed
                                and
                             bird
                                 and
                             reptile
                                 and
                             sea creature
               and
(84)
                             -----has been tamed
                                                  by mankind.
               but
(85)
          the tongue no one of men can tame;
              an unruly evil,
              full of deadly poison.
               With it
(86)
          we praise the Lord
                          and Father,
               and
                with it
(87)
          we curse men,
                       who are created in God's image;
    3.10
            out of the same mouth
(88)
          comes praise
                     and
                 curse.
               My brothers,
(89)
          these things ought not to be!
                                Out of the same opening
(90)
          the spring certainly does not pour forth both sweet and bitter water, does it?
               My brothers.
(91)
          a fig tree is not able to produce olives, is it?
               Or
(92)
          a grapevine figs?
(93)
          can a salt spring produce fresh water.
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Summary:

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A couple of rhetorical issues are present in this pericope. Let's see if we can unpack them and then make clear sense out of what the text is trying to say.

First, the issue of statement 73 needs to be treated. One possibility is to see this as the topic sentence for the entire passage. If so taken, then the passage has to be understood as a warning to those in the community of faith

who would strive to be teaching leaders. Thus the scope of the passage is limited to a category of leaders in the Christian community, rather than to the community at large. Another option, taken by many commentators today, is to see statements 73 through 75 as comprising the initial expression of the passage. In this approach, statements 74 and 75 are taken as setting forth a thesis position, namely the disproportionate power of the tongue. Statement 73 underscores the importance of this for a prominent group inside the community of faith, that is, the teachers who use their tongue more than others in the group. Thus, they stand as perhaps most vulnerable to failure with the tongue. We will explore in the questions below these options, and try to come to a conclusion about the best one then.

Second, statements 76 through 93 clearly make the point of the huge power of the tongue. These statements fall into two groupings, and are introduced by comparisons to the natural world: the bit in the horse's mouth (76), the ship's rudder (77), and the spark igniting a forest fire (80). The first group (statements 76 - 79) makes the point of the disproportionate power of the tongue in comparison of its small size to the mass of the whole body. But the two analogies used for this -- the bit and the rudder -- merely affirm this huge influence, which can go either positive or negative directions.

The second section (statements 80-93) continues the emphasis on disproportionate power, but underscores the destructive tendency of this power. The third metaphor, the spark of fire, introduces this section in statement 80, and is quickly applied to the tongue in the following statements. Two emphases are present: (1) the destructive nature of the tongue (statements 81-83); (2) the uncontrollable hypocrisy of the tongue (statements 84-93). Once more dramatic analogies from the natural world are used to highlight these two points: the taming of animals (83-85); the consistency of product in the natural world (86-93), including the spring, the fig tree, and the grapevine.

What does the text mean to us today?				
1)	How should the ancient concept of 'teacher' in early Christianity impact a contemporary understanding of 'teacher' inside your church?			
0)	Miles the order of the description of a substitution of the order of t			
2)	What implication(s) does the idea of eschatological judgment in 3:1b have for Christians today?			
3)	How well do you control your tongue? And what does controlling the tongue mean?			