

CHAPTER VI

THE FOOLISH TEACHER

James 3:1-12

Introduction

In 1:16, 26 James said "Be swift to hear, slow to speak." In a sense, the balance of chapter one develops the thought of how to hear. Now, James takes up the subject of speaking.

James refers to the speakers as teachers and as the "truly wise." Both are obviously the same, the first portion (1-12) being an admonition against foolish speaking by the teacher, and the second portion (13-18) being an admonition to be a wise speaker (teacher, from the context) and to speak the things of wisdom. The rule of wisdom is in this chapter coupled with the warning against foolish speaking.

In the warnings of the first twelve verses, some might be prone to conclude that to avoid teaching would be to avoid the pitfalls herein mentioned. Let us remember what James has been emphasizing all along—that faith without works is profitless, and that our faith is not completed until it is coupled with works. The admonition is not to do nothing, for this again would be faith without works. James, however, is saying that *what* we do is of some importance also! Faith coupled with foolish works, and foolish words will bring the wrong kind of fruit.

Faith coupled with the wrong kind of works is again a means of missing out on justification. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5:19-21). James has already warned against doing no works. Now, he warns against doing the wrong kind of works; and in particular, saying the wrong kind of words. Even as Paul says, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10), so James speaks, "Who is wise and understanding among you? let

3:1-2

JAMES

him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom.”
(Jas. 3:13).

Outline

Think soberly as you assume this responsibility of teaching, for we are not only judged by whether or not we are working, but we are judged by what we work, also. There is real temptation in teaching, for the tongue is often wild and uncontrolled, doing very extensive damage.

THE FOOLISH TEACHER

TEMPTATION IN TEACHING 3:1-2

A BIG THING IN A LITTLE PACKAGE 3:3-5a

WILD AND UNCONTROLLED 3:5b-8

WHERE IT ALL BEGINS 3:9-12

TEMPTATION IN TEACHING

Text 3:1-2

1. Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment.
2. For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also.

Queries

177. How can we ever overcome the shortage of teachers if we heed James' warning not to be many teachers?
178. Is James speaking to teachers, or to all Christians here?
179. What does the King James version say instead of "teachers," and what does the word mean?
180. How does v. 1 compare with Matthew 12:37?
181. In what sense may the person of v. 1 be called a "master"?
182. Why the prohibition against the choice of being a teacher?
183. What is implied by the expression "knowing"?

184. Is hell hotter for a sinning teacher than for a sinning non-teacher?
185. Is James saying we all offend someone many times, or that we all sin? (use several different reasons).
186. Does the stumbling with words of v. 2 include the non-teacher?
187. What is your description of the "perfect man" of v. 2? (compare with 1:4).
188. What is the contrast between the beginning and ending of v. 2?
189. What is meant by the expression "heavier judgment"?
190. What portion of v. 2 compares with James 1:4?
191. In what way is bridling the body linked to bridling the tongue?

Paraphrases

- A. 3:1. Don't carelessly assume the responsibility of teaching, dear brothers in Christ, for with the blessings comes also the responsibility for erroneous teaching.
 2. Most prominent among the many sins we all perform is the sin of carelessness in the usage of words. If we control our words, we demonstrate our ability to completely control the whole man—including the deeds of the flesh!
- B.*3:1. Dear brothers, don't be too eager to tell others their faults, for we all make many mistakes; and when we teachers, who should know better, do wrong, our punishment will be greater than it would be for others;
 2. If anyone can control his tongue, it proves that he has perfect control over himself in every other way.

Summary

Before teaching, think soberly. We teach with our tongue and it is more difficult than the body to control.

Comment

"Do not many of you become teachers" would at first glance seem to restrict the great commission. Matthew 28 and other parallel passages request the apostles and the church through the

apostles to teach the Word of God that "they might observe (do) all things . . ." A more careful examination of the context of James 3 reveals that the teacher and the wise man are treated as if they were substantially identical. Far from prohibiting either teaching or wisdom, James is saying the two must be carefully coupled. For a foolish and careless man to assume the position of teacher, would be dangerous to his soul as for a small child to play with dynamite. Other people would also be involved in the careless teaching or the dynamite, and the responsibility is multiplied.

A man who uses his tongue constantly is in much more temptation to use it carelessly and thoughtlessly than a man whose occupation seldom demands the use of his tongue. It would seem that the novice should (and usually does) approach the task of teaching with fear and trembling; with long and careful preparation and great concern lest he mishandle the tremendous opportunity and responsibility before him. Yet the temptation to the one who teaches constantly might be to speak with haste; or to slight his preparation. Erroneous concepts might be taught before they are thought. One instructor of teachers was heard to say to a large assembly of teachers, "There isn't a person in this room that will not be teaching heresy in some form or another within the next two years."

Over eagerness to be teachers might tempt some to assume the responsibility carelessly. Sober preparation is as necessary in teaching as for a doctor approaching an operation. Although teaching is commissioned by Jesus, and without it Christianity could not grow, its execution is so influential upon others that some men might be tempted to view it as a great social and political opportunity rather than a sobering responsibility. James cautions against over eagerness to be teachers in view of the great responsibility involved and the dangerous weapon used. Although the tongue is used to win souls for Christ, and to teach the saints to observe all things in Christ, the tongue can also be misused. It is as potent when misused as when used correctly. A great portion of chapter three is used to impress the reader with the enormity of the power of the tongue.

Thank God for my tongue. But God help me that I use such a magnificent power against sin and unrighteousness and not against man and the work of God. God help me to see the true nature of the enemy; the principalities and powers of evil, and may my tongue ever bring forth praise unto God and help unto man. If by

teaching I may be enabled to influence people for Christ, then God grant that I take the responsibility soberly and with great care! For wisdom I pray that I might know how.

"Then I'll never be a teacher," you may affirm.

But let me remind any who think to avoid condemnation through avoiding responsibility: God instructed the older women to teach the younger. God instructed the elders to be "apt to teach." God instructed parents to teach their children, and condemned parents who did not do so. Although the "rabbi" (teacher) referred to here can be a teacher resident in a congregation, or a travelling missionary, James in no way indicates that the teacher is an officer within the church. Rather, he is one who takes on a work and a responsibility. To try to avoid entirely the responsibility of teaching might in some ways be comparable to the person who says, "I fear to become a Christian lest I should backslide and my later state as a sinner be worse than my present state as a sinner."

A BIG THING IN A LITTLE PACKAGE

Text 3:3-5a

- 3:3. Now if we put the horses bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also.
4. Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, whither the impulse of the steersman willeth.
- 5a. So the tongue also is a little member and boasteth great things.

Queries

192. The application of the illustration in v. 3 is not stated. What is the application?
193. How can the horses bridle be compared to human speech?
194. Why the "also" of v. 4?
195. Was the illustration of a very large ship applicable to the average person at the time this was written?
196. How do the "rough winds" lend force to the illustration?
197. What verb of v. 4 is identical to v. 3?
198. What is the meaning of "impulse"?
199. How can the ship's rudder be compared to human speech?

200. What is the import of the word "so"?

201. What "great things" are here accomplished by the tongue?

Paraphrases

A. 3:3. A small bridle in a horse's mouth has such great power over the horse that with it we can turn his whole body.

4. Note how the same thing also applies to the steering of large ocean vessels. It is a very small rudder that turns the huge ship around, even in the face of strong winds.

5a. In the same way the tongue is a small part of the body, but it can accomplish very great things all out of proportion to its size.

B.*3:3. We can make a large horse turn around and go wherever we want by means of a small bit in his mouth.

4. And a tiny rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot wants it to go, even though the wind is strong.

5a. So also the tongue is a small thing, but what terrible results it can cause.

Summary

Our tongue comes in a little package but it can do big things.

Comment

James evidently had the horse illustration in mind when he used the term "bridge" in v. 2. Little girls, in particular, seem to like horses. Perhaps there are psychological reasons. The horse's body is very muscular and magnificent in comparison to the little girl's frail body. Yet all this power and magnificence can be controlled by a little girl with reins in her hands.

Such a simple illustration makes the point quite clear. When we have controlled the direction of the horse's mouth, we have controlled the direction of his entire body. There is no need to make the application to the tongue and our own bodies, for any creature who could speak could also understand the meaning.

Our action, however, is often as though we did not understand. We so glibly and carelessly use the tongue, as if it were of no consequence whatsoever. It seems such an inconsequential matter to

boost our own size in our minds by cutting our fellow man "down to size" with our tongues. Little do we seem to realize that when our tongue takes a base and destructive direction, that our soul is taking the same direction. We act as if we had no knowledge—thinking that our tongue can be filthy and full of corruption yet ourselves remain pure and angelic. Do we really get the point of James' illustration? When you find the direction in which a man's tongue is pointing, you have found the direction in which the man himself points!

"Behold," that is, take note of this second illustration that the point will be well-driven home. "Behold" the same thought is avidly and clearly demonstrated by a fresh illustration. "Behold" the furniture of the same room in the house, but through a different window. On land and sea we have the same truth illustrated. No man can plead ignorance. No man can rightly claim the teaching is too complex nor the doctrine too philosophical. We stand naked and ashamed in the clear light of our own understanding. But this is not a sight we can glimpse and immediately flee. The Holy Spirit will not allow us. The simplicity of the truth dramatizes its importance. Even as the demons believe and shudder, we are forced to understand and tremble.

The great ship of the sea that holds so many people is not a strange thing to Biblical times. Jonah himself was with a large number of sailors on an ocean-going vessel in a storm. Likewise Paul was caught in a storm in the midst of the Mediterranean Sea. There were 276 persons on this boat. (Acts 27:37). So James speaks of a "great" ship turned about by a very small rudder, much like a paddle that protruded from a porthole from the rear of the vessel. Some of the larger boats had twin rudders that were coupled together, and two men could turn the large vessel about. How many tons, or hundreds of tons, could be turned with a twenty-five pound rudder? The illustration now begins to overwhelm us as we apply it to the power of the tongue!

Note also that the large ship is turned about at the impulse of the steersman. The rudder is not a wild thing of its own, thrashing about helter skelter and sending the boat every which way. There is a steersman who directs the boat according to his desire, his inclination, or impulse. "So the tongue" says James! The whole object of this discourse would be pointless if man were unable to do any-

thing about his own tongue. "These things ought not so to be" says James.

Can we imagine one day standing before Jehovah in the judgment and saying "Lord, please excuse me for I couldn't help it. I was thinking noble and clean thoughts while my tongue lashed forth within my mouth forming its filthy and trashy discourses. I listened in horror as I heard my tongue destroy the reputation and undermine the work of the very men I loved. I close my mouth with all my power, but the powerful tongue cries forth knocking teeth on its way to spill venom all about me."

No, when James is speaking of the tongue and all its power, he is also speaking of the desire of the steersman who directs it. I can't blame the rudder, for I'm on the other end!

The "little member" of the body . . . the tongue, weighs far less than a pound! Yet its power is so great that it not only turns about my whole body, but it can turn about the bodies of countless others. Families have been broken by a single tongue. Churches have been split and died because of the venom of a single tongue. Rehoboam's loose tongue split a kingdom and started a war!

Jotham told of the bramble (in his fable) who with its tongue boasted great things, promising to devour those who refused to take refuge under its shade. The bramble boasted great things, but it was an idle boast. The tongue can also boast of its power, but rest assured it is not an idle boast! Lest we would think it is really not so bad, the Holy Spirit leads us to consider the terrible destructive forces that can be unleashed. Even as the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, much more so can the tongue unleash a world of iniquity. Though it comes in a little package, it works a very big thing!

WILD AND UNCONTROLLED

Text 3:5b-8

- 5b. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!
6. And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell.
7. For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed and hath been tamed by mankind.

8. But the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison.

Queries

202. Note how the small flame has its destructive power because of its ability to grow. It could not grow without someone to "feed" it.
203. Why is the tongue called a fire? (It obviously is not a fire.)
204. How inclusive is the expression "world of iniquity"?
205. Just how difficult would it be to undo the human harm done by destructive criticism of another?
206. Would there ever be a justification for destructive criticism (as opposed to constructive criticism?)
207. What is the apparent contrast between v. 6a and I Tim. 6:10?
208. Is the tongue by "nature" a world of iniquity among our members, or is it so only because we make it to be so? (i.e. is it poisonous by nature like a snake, or only when we choose to make it so?)
209. If we make the tongue poisonous—how then is it more dangerous than the other members of the body?
210. What thoughts does the expression "wheel of nature" bring to your mind?
211. The "hell" of v. 6 means what? (Look up Gehenna in a good Bible dictionary: see also Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 1:25).
212. If you could think of a kind of animal that cannot be tamed (can you?), would it nullify this Scripture?
213. Compare this Scripture with Mk. 5:4 the only other use of this word "tamed."
214. What is the marginal reading in your Bible of "mankind"?
215. How can v. 7 be true when some sea creatures are just now being discovered?
216. Compare v. 7 with Gen. 1:26. Does Rom. 3:7 show an evolution in the control and ability of man over man's ability in Gen. 1:26?
217. Does James actually indicate that every wild animal can be tamed—or is tamed by man? (read carefully).
218. If the tongue cannot be tamed, why give us this admonition about taming it?

219. There apparently is a possibility of having control over one's own tongue. Does the part that "no man can tame it" eliminate the possibility that I can wilfully control my own tongue?
220. What of divine help on this matter of tongue control?
221. Between verses 2 and 12 there are eight illustrations used concerning the tongue. See if you can list them all!
222. In what way is a tongue like a wild beast? . . . unlike a wild beast?
223. Why refer to the "restless" nature of the evil?

Paraphrases

- A. 5b. Think now how a single match can start a huge forest fire.
 6. And the tongue is made to be just as potent! This tiny member contains the capacity to ignite the world with sin; and begins by spoiling the whole body even to setting in motion the cycle of birth by which all kinds of related destructions are brought forth. Its flame is unleashed by Gehenna itself.
 7. Man has been able to train and control every type of creature, other than himself, including those that swim, crawl, fly and walk.
 8. But another man's tongue can no man tame. It is tireless in its activity and is an inexhaustible source of death-dealing wickedness.
- B.*5b. A great forest can be set on fire by one tiny spark.
 6. And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness and poisons every part of the body. And the tongue is set on fire by hell itself, and can turn our whole lives into a blazing flame of destruction and disaster.
 7. Men have trained, or can train, every kind of animal or bird that lives and every kind of snake and fish,
 8. But no human being can tame the tongue. It is always ready to pour out its deadly poison.

Summary

This little tongue can set all nature on fire of hell, and when unleashed is beyond all mankind's ability to tame.

Comments

What size fire kindles what size forest? The flame in a tiny match does not possess the heat and destructive force to consume a forest, but it can give birth to such a destructive force! Little forces are sometime triggers for tremendous destructive powers. A single push on a button can set off an atomic bomb!

However, not every button sets off atomic bombs. They must be so constructed and connected to have such a potential. Likewise the tongue is created with connections to our minds and to the ears of others. Thus it is so constructed that it can transfer concepts from one mind to another, and can set off processes of thought and imaginations in all those who hear. For its tasks of communication, praise, and witnessing it is so constructed. Thus the testimony of God is spread abroad. Men hear of salvation wrought by the blood of Christ and sing praises unto His name; thus hearts are warmed and filled with the Spirit of God.

The small match that has the potential of igniting a heating stove and warming the occupants also has the potential of igniting the house and consuming the occupants. So the tongue which has the capacity of warming men's hearts with the Spirit of God may work havoc and destruction with the spirit of the devil. With fire, given by God for a blessing, comes also the responsibility for its proper use. With the tongue, given by God for a blessing, comes also the same responsibility.

The "world of iniquity" among our members, though evidently not the sum total of all wickedness, does have that appearance. What sin among man does not engage the tongue? Does not the adulterer and the fornicator at first solicit and woo with the tongue? Does not the murderer usually lie and deceive with the tongue? Is not division and strife among the members of the body of Christ all but impossible without the power of the tongue?

Yes, the tongue's engagement in sin might also lead us to believe that it is the sum total of all sin. Yet the tongue has no guilt within itself. It is just a tool, an instrument for our use that has the capacity to reveal the spirit of the inner man. Among all the other instruments of our bodies available to the inner man, there is not one with the potency of the tongue. The wicked capacity of the tongue is so great we have the very expressive hyperbole that the tongue is

a "world of iniquity." Every evil feeling, every sinful thought, as well as every sinful act, escapes the world of abstract subjective privacy to become an objective reality visible to all others through the tongue. Even as the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, so the tongue gives power and concrete reality to every kind of sin in the universe.

But there is more to the tongue's contamination than this. The pollution is not a temporary phenomenon once done and forgotten, but rather sets off an entire process of living venom that appears to feed itself. The consuming fire that finds its own kindling as it proceeds is a very apt illustration. The 'wheel of nature' (cycle of birth) is set in motion so that all kinds of related destructions seem to spring forth from the flame once started. A bit of "choice" gossip, once started, picks up momentum and obtains added fuel with each retelling. The temptation to add poison to poison seems irresistible, and the entire cycle of giving birth to sin is ignited by a single spark.

Also the "wheel of nature" may refer to the entire cycle of human life, from birth to death. From the moment of speech until death, lies, tale-bearing, and destruction are strewn in the wake of the tongue. Responsibilities of life may come and go, but it seems that whether a child at home, a teenager in school, a parent with family responsibilities, or a grandmother with advice, the tongue goes on and on—ceaselessly, tirelessly, and sometimes wickedly to the very end.

The source of the tongue's fire, hell itself, is really the Greek form of the Hebrew *Gehennom* (or *gaienna*, Joshua 18:16, Septuagint). Originally Gehenna referred to the valley of Hinnom where the Molech, the fire god, was worshipped. Here the sons of Ahaz were burnt in the fire (II Chron. 28:3). The name, however, began to be associated with the place for torment of the wicked after final judgment. Thus Gehenna became the metaphorical name for the flame of hell itself. Here the fire never ceases, but continues through eternity. (Mark 9:47-48; Matt. 25:46; Rev. 14:11). So the tongue being set on fire of hell expresses in a very dramatic sense the unending process of continuing destruction set off by a single careless word. There have been several progressive expressions: From a *world of iniquity*, to the *cycle of birth*, and now the *fire of hell*.

MR. TWO-FACED

Text 3:9-12

9. Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God:
10. Out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren these things ought not so to be.
11. Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter?
12. Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? neither can salt water yield sweet.

Queries

224. What is the difference between reference to God as "Lord" and as "Father"?
225. What is the inconsistency herein in praising God and cursing men with the same tongue?
226. What does "curse" mean as it is used here?
227. What is repeated in this verse, that has just previously been stated?
228. Why the repetition?
229. Why point out the impossibility of nature doing what v. 9 states that we do?
230. Compare 3:11, 12 with Matt. 7:15-23.
231. Do we actually accomplish what v. 9 states?
232. Why do you think the fig, olive, and vine were selected as illustrations?
233. Can you think of several others that illustrate the same point?

Paraphrases

- A. 9. The same tongue at one time praises the Lord and spits forth curses upon man made in the likeness of God. Thus we bless the Father and curse the Father's image.
10. The purity of praises and the filth of curses spring from the same mouth. My brethren, is this consistent and proper?
11. Does a fountain simultaneously from the same opening spill forth both sweet and bitter waters?

12. Does an apple tree bear both pecans and apples? Can a grapevine grow peaches? Neither can one fountain give two kinds of waters!
- B.*9. Sometimes it praises our heavenly Father, and sometimes it breaks out into curses against men who are made like God.
10. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Dear brothers, surely this is not right!
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.

Summary

With an inconsistency not found in all nature we bless the Father and curse the Father's image, man.

Comment

Blessing God is contrasted with cursing man. When the father of John (the baptizer) had his tongue loosed on the eighth day of the new-born child, his first speaking was to "bless God," Luke 1:64. And when he began to prophesy, his first words were, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel . . ." (v. 68). It is not necessary to use the term "blessed" in order to bless the Lord. Any praise or extolling directed to Him or on His behalf is a means of blessing God. Even giving thanks unto God is a means of blessing him. (see Mark 14:19; 26:26; I Cor. 14:16). Thus it is that most people claiming to be a "Christian" cannot make this claim, nor pray, nor sing praises unto Him without blessing God.

Yet how many people will with one breath claim to be a Christian and with another breath, from the same mouth, invoke evil upon their fellowman? Sometimes the expressed evil desire upon the fellow man may reach the proportions of beseeching God to bring damnation upon his fellow man. God does not wilfully or wishfully bring damnation on any man. God's desire to save man from his own damnation was so intense it brought about an "unspeakable" sacrifice. Hell is not fit, and was not designed, for man. Although man may chose to be fit for hell, God has done and is doing everything to prevent man from bringing upon himself this horrible death.

To ask such a God to "damn" our fellow man is the height of affrontery and a disregard for His revealed love. Such a request reveals a tendency within our own hearts that is completely foreign to the ways of God. To request or charge our fellow man to "go to hell" is in complete opposition to the desire of God so constantly expressed . . . even by His tears and His shed blood. This is so obvious that a Christian needs but reflect a moment to agree.

But can we not also curse men without using curse words? In the same way in which we bless the Father by singing praises unto Him, can we not also curse our fellow man by expressing ill-will, by slander, by sending forth destructive verbal missiles? How many times men are tempted to climb the ladder of success by stepping upon the rungs of the spoiled reputations of their fellow men. Although we can never get ourselves out of the pit of guilt in this fashion, we sometimes attempt to feel elevated by trampling underfoot our fellow man. While we trample our neighbor into the mire of sin and shame, our own feet become stained with his blood, and the stench of our murderous action causes all mankind to withdraw from us in horror!

It is no wonder the Lord admonishes us to "bless and curse not." (Rom. 12:13). Although the Christian may himself be the object of cursing and receive reviling, defamation, and even the filth of the world, he is still admonished to bless and endure, as did the apostle Paul. "Even to this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and we toil, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now." (I Cor. 4:11-13).

Oh, that entire congregations of God's people would read this third chapter and tremble. Countless are the broken hearts and broken lives that are left in the wake of a poisonous tongue. How many ministers have ceased to preach, driven to despair by the loose tongues of those who should be on the Lord's side? How many thousands have been driven from the assembly of God's people in shame and disgust over slander and tale-bearing? How many churches have been split asunder by the everlasting venom of poisonous tongues?

Who is the image of God? Some may argue that only the Christian bears this stamp. Yet, is not this very chapter addressed to Christians? Are not Christians involved in the very sins so strongly

admonished in this epistle? No doubt, the saint of God is to grow in God's image (II Cor. 7:2; Rom. 8:29; II Pet. 1:4ff), and no doubt he shall one day indeed be as He is (Phil. 3:21; I John 3:1-3; I Cor. 15:5ff). The Image of God however applies to all men. Man (mankind) was created in His image. Although man has corrupted and defaced this image; and although it is in no single instance all that it should be; the likeness of God is there . . . in both Christian and the non-Christian. (see I Cor. 11:7; Gen. 1:26; 5:1; 9:6; Malachi 2:10).

What then is this image? Is it man's body, having two legs; a creature that walks upright and has a thumb different from all other animals? Although a few may hold to this conviction, often using the argument to support strange and unusual doctrines not found in the Scriptures; the consensus is that man's likeness of God is in the nature and capacity of the inner man. God's image includes such attributes as reason, conscience, knowledge, the power of dominion, the capacity for moral and spiritual holiness, conviction through testimony (faith), etc. In potential and capacity, man is in the image of God. In freedom of will, freedom to choose heaven or hell, man is in God's image. In his guilt, his sin, his temporary body, his limitations to time and space he is certainly not in God's image; but one day, by the mercy of God even these things will change!

The problem of cursing seems to trouble many commentators. The allowable cursing within the Old Testament (Prov. 11:26; 24:24; Gen. 9:25; 49:7; Josh. 6:26; Judges 5:23; 9:20, 57.) seems to conflict directly with the prohibition of James. The problem seems to dissolve, however, when we recall that a curse does in reality exist, especially for the benefit of the devil and his angels. But we should also reflect that man is the author of neither salvation nor damnation. We can no more create a curse than we can create a scheme of redemption. To repeat the salvation offered by God, and to repeat the curse of sin revealed in the Scripture, is not only our privilege but our duty. But to set ourselves up as the judge of man and the author of either salvation or damnation is to assume in arrogance a responsibility we should by all means prefer to avoid. We have neither the capacity nor the right for such a task, and we only work havoc when we try.

Man with a free will of his own is able to do that which nature, moving only by instinct and intuition, cannot do. Thus man ac-

complished transgression and soul destruction beyond the ability of other creatures. Man can, and does, do things that "ought not so to be." He succeeds in being inconsistent because he is two-faced. The fountain is not two-watered, the tree is not two-fruited, but man can make himself two-faced. The tree was designed to bear fruit after its kind (Gen. 1:11). Mankind was also intended to bear fruit in God's image. It would be far better to have been a tree with no will of one's own than to be a man who deliberately makes the wrong choices in life.

The sweet waters from the hills around the dead sea sometimes go underground and furnish pressure for springs near to the dead sea. Before they spring forth, they mix with the waters of the dead sea, which are very salty. There are salt water springs near the dead sea and there are also sweet-water springs in Palestine. But no spring is both salty and sweet at the same time. Can a man love God and hate his brother? "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (I John 4:7-8)

FOURTEEN THREE-PART SERMON STARTERS

PROFESSIONAL WRECKERS 3:1-5

1. Every man has a tendency to wreak havoc v. 2.
2. A very small crow-bar can wreck a big house v. 3-4.
3. The tongue is the greatest wrecker of all, tearing down in a few minutes a lifetime of work. (v. 5).

THE BEGINNING OF SELF-CONTROL 3:1-5

1. We all need self-control. (v. 2a).
2. Small things control big issues, such as animals, ships, and lives. (v. 3-4).
3. The tongue's control is the beginning of self-control. (v. 5, 2b).

THE FULL-GROWN MAN 3:2 (Introductory note: Perfect = full-grown).

1. Children stumble, men walk. . . .
We all wish to "grow up." (v. 2a).
2. Self-control is the real mark of a man. (v. 2b, cf Gal. 5:23).
3. The tongue is the key to real manhood. (v. 2b).

THE TEACHER'S BURDEN 3:1-2

1. Heavier responsibility. (v. 1a).
 - A. Other lives at stake.
 - B. Greater knowledge increases one's responsibility.
2. Heavier judgment. (v. 1b).
 - A. God expects more from greater ability.
 - B. Ability to teach, admonish, guide ones own self.
3. Heavier reward. (v. 2b, the *perfect* man).
 - A. Teaching is in obedience of God's desires.
 - B. Heavenly treasures in the form of souls won.

WHY LITTLE GIRLS LIKE HORSES 3:3

1. Power inherent in God's creature . . . "the whole body."
(compared with the frail girl's body).
2. The huge creature can be controlled . . . "they may obey." (control is the difference between appreciation and fear).
3. A small member controls the big brute.
(little girls with reins can control horses).

LESSONS FROM BOATS 3:4

- A. Power essential for movement.
(whether steam, motor, or sail, force is necessary).
- B. Movement essential for control.
(Likewise we must be moving and doing before there is self-control).
- C. Directed control on a small rudder.
(Haphazard control would get nowhere. Our lives must have direction and goal). (With proper power, movement and direction, a small effort will control a large life).

THE WORLD OF INIQUITY 3:6 (Introduction: That's a lot of sin!)

- A. The many kinds of sin promoted by the tongue.
(Lust of the flesh, of the eye, pride of life).
 - B. The world-spread misuse of the tongue.
(Universality of lies, national lies, etc.).
 - C. The amount of sin promoted by a single tongue.
(A life ruined, a family, a church, a community, a nation).
- Conclusion: Why did God give us such a powerful member?
Its proper use . . . to praise Him and spread the Gospel.

THE BURNING OF NATURE 3:6 (Introduction: Nature's life process).

- A. Sin *grows* through being fed by many tongues.
- B. Sin *kills* with its terrible destruction and wages.
(People who enjoy death and corruption thrill with sin's processes).
- C. The tongue gives *rebirth* to sin, starting the cycle of growth and death again. (Illustration: the tale-bearer).

PROMPT DESTRUCTION 3:6

- A. BURNING PROCESS of the tongue.
... like a forest fire, feeds itself and grows.
- B. All-inclusive DESTRUCTION of the tongue.
... a world of iniquity.
- C. Peculiar QUICKENING nature of the tongue.
... Sets in motion a process of giving birth to new sin.
... the "wheel of nature."

Conclusion: The tongue is made for quickening life instead of quickening death; for progress instead of the burning process, for construction rather than destruction.

WHEN THE LION-TAMER RUNS 3:7-8

- A. Lion-Tamers usually do not run.
... every kind of beast has been tamed.
- B. A wild untamed beast is to be feared.
... His action is unpredictable.
... He is a man-killer.
... Death alone stops him.
- C. An uncontrolled tongue goes untamed. (application).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNCONTROLLED TONGUE 3:8

- A. Untamed.
- B. Restless Evil.
- C. Full of Poison.

MR. TWO-FACED 3:9-12

- A. The face worn before God.
- B. The face worn before some men.
- C. The inconsistent action against nature and reason.

3:1-12

JAMES

OUT OF THE SAME MOUTH 3:9-10

- A. Blessings for the Father.
- B. Cursings for the Father's image.
- C. Sweet words of love and vile filth of vessels of dishonor.
(See II Tim. 2:20-21).

TONGUE-PAINTED PICTURES 3:1-8

- A. Professional Wreckers. (v. 1-5).
- B. Sin's "Hot Spot." (v. 6).
- C. Lion-Tamers in Flight. (v. 7-8).