



## James 3:2-12 A World of Unrighteousness

August 9, 2015

### Thoughts on the Text:

*(James 3:2 ESV) 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.*

- James isn't teaching **perfectionism**; he is declaring how difficult it is to control one's tongue.

*(James 3:3 ESV) If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.*

- Bits are needed because of the unruly nature of many horses. The point is that to guide the mouth is to guide the "whole body."

*(James 3:4 ESV) 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.*

- Despite the power of the wind upon the ship (or in our day, the power of the engine), all it takes is a small rudder (relative to the size of a ship) to steer it.

*(James 3:5 ESV) 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!*

- A few characteristics of fire: It needs **oxygen**, **fuel**, and **heat**. In other words, one must breathe life into the inappropriate use of the tongue, one must keep the fuel upon it through continued talking, and one must keep energizing this bad usage (heat: energy produced by the movement of atoms).

*(James 3:6 ESV) 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, and set on fire by hell.*

- MacDonald writes, "An evil tongue pollutes not only man's personal life, but it contaminates all his activities as well. It affects "the whole of wickedness in the whole of man for the whole of life."

*(James 3:7-8 ESV) For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

- Like our sin nature itself, while still living in the flesh, the tongue cannot be fully tamed. I submit it must be daily managed through spiritual **crucifixion**, like the rest of the flesh...prayer, obedience, Scripture study, and times of fasting.

*(James 3:9-10 ESV) With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.*

- The hypocritical, sinful nature of the tongue is brought out yet again, but now practically.

*(James 3:11-12 ESV) Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.*

- What is the point? The tongue of one who has been **redeemed** by Christ should not be able to produce that which dishonors Christ. ("Ought not be so")

Lord, by your undeserved but freely given grace, help us control this "world of unrighteousness...this restless evil, full of deadly poison." Sanctify our minds and our mouths that we might speak and declare what you have said, in love and grace, building one another up.

In Jesus' name, Amen.