

“AN UNTAMED, THOUGHTLESS TONGUE”

James 3:1-12

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Years ago Malcolm X made a statement that literally put the United States government completely against him and his ideology. When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated he said “The roosters have come home to roost.” In other words the evil deeds of America had resulted in the death of its leader. Malcolm X’s words were penetrating and thought provoking. This week radio talk show host Don Imus used vindictive words to portray a group of college basketball players. His tongue was untamed and thoughtless.

In James 3 he shares a characteristic of the mature believer: he/she has power over his/her tongue. James warns the Christians, of his day, to be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” (James 1:19). The believer who does not bridle his/her tongue is not truly religious (James 1:26). We must speak and act as though

We were already facing Christ in judgment (James 2:12). When you read passages like James 4:1, 11-12, you get the impression that this assembly must have had some interesting meetings!

The power of speech is one of the greatest powers God has given us. With the tongue, we can praise God, pray, preach the Word, and lead the lost to Christ. What a privilege! But with the same tongue we tell lies that can ruin a person’s reputation or break a person’s heart. The ability to speak words is the ability to influence others and accomplish tremendous tasks; and yet we take this ability for granted.

In this passage of scripture, James gives us six pictures of the tongue: the bit, the rudder, fire, a poisonous animal, a fountain, and a fig tree. This morning I want to put these six pictures into three meaningful classifications that reveal the three powers of the tongue.

I. Power to Direct: The Bit and the Rudder – James 3:1-4

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| A. Proverbs 18:21 | D. Proverbs 12:22 |
| B. Psalm 14:3, 4 | E. Proverbs 10:19 |
| C. Matthew 12:34 | |

II. Power to Destroy: The Fire and Animal – James 3:5-8

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| A. Psalm 39:1, 3 | C. Proverbs 14:29 |
| B. Proverbs 17:27 | D. Matthew 12:34 |

III. Power to Delight: The Fountain and the Tree – James 3:9-12

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| A. Proverbs 18:4 | D. Proverbs 12:18 |
| B. Proverbs 10:11, 21 | E. Romans 15:32 |
| C. Proverbs 13:14 | F. 1 Corinthians 16:18 |
| | G. Philemon 7:20 |

The problem, of course, is not the tongue; it is the heart (James 3:14)

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| A. Matthew 15:18 |
| B. Proverbs 4:23 |

TWELVE WORDS THAT CAN TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE

Please
Thank You
I’m Sorry
I LOVE YOU
I’m Praying for You

Give God your tongue and your heart each day and ask Him