

The Tongue Must Be Tamed by God

Scripture

“But no man can tame the tongue. [It is] an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh [water] and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.” (James 3:8-12 NKJV)

Commentary

I was reminded of again of my own frailty while at a soccer tournament this weekend. Being frustrated with some of the officiating I made a few negative comments to those near in proximity. A member of my family made a comment that made me realize that my speech was not matching my written message. This person was only jesting and meant absolutely no harm to me, but it made me realized how hypocritical I was being.

Faced with a fresh appreciation of my need for grace I turned first to prayer and then to James. It always bothered me to read the passage above because it starts out saying no man can tame the tongue. This seems like a perfect excuse for my failings. However, if you read on it makes a very strong point that what comes from the source defines the source. A spring only produces one kind of water either fresh or bitter. Likewise, fig trees don't bear olives and so on. This apparent contradiction needed to be resolved.

The answer is found in James' statement, “No man can tame the tongue.” He did not say the tongue cannot be tamed. He only said, no “MAN” can do it. This resolves any conflict because God can control not only the tongue but the whole man.

“[There is] therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God [did] by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those [who live] according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded [is] death, but to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace. Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” (Romans 8:1-9 NKJV)

Let us be spiritually minded, and walk in the Spirit so that God gives us the grace to control our tongues.

Prayer

Father, please forgive us when we fail to represent you as we should. Far be it from us to give the enemies of the cross reason to blaspheme your glorious name. You are worthy of our obedience and love. Strengthen us for the days ahead, amen.