

THE UNRULY MEMBER

BIBLE TEXT : James 1:26; 3:1-18.

LESSON 359 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles" (Proverbs 21:23).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

James 1:26

²⁶ If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

James 3:1-18

¹ My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

² For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.

³ Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

⁴ Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

⁵ Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

⁶ And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

⁷ For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

⁸ But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹ Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

God's Creation

God created man in His own likeness. He gave Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, a beautiful garden for their home. They talked with God as he walked in the garden in the cool of the day. They must have been very happy there until they believed Satan's lie, and sinned. They disobeyed God and tried to hide from Him. Sin separates people from God. Adam and Eve could no longer live in the beautiful garden, because they had done wrong. One of their sons did wrong, too, and had to be punished for his sin. Cain killed his brother, Abel, because Cain was jealous of Abel. Then he lied to God and tried to cover his sin, but God knew what had happened. Because of his sin, Cain left the presence of God and his home. There came a time that God was sorry that He had made man. Instead of following God, man became very wicked.

For His Pleasure

Jesus, the Son of God, was with His Father at the time of the creation. We read, "All things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:16). All things were made to give honour and praise to the Lord. In Revelation we read of a song of praise: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). It has been said that all God's creation, except man, praises God. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Psalm 19:1).

The body of a man should be the temple of the living God, but God cannot dwell in some people because there is sin there. Some people allow their feet to carry them to mischief. The hands of others are used to steal, and to harm people. The mouth and tongue of others speak all manner of evil.

It is pleasing to God that we use our tongue for His glory. In the last Psalm we read: "Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD" (Psalm 150:6) In another Psalm we read: "Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God" (Psalm 147:1). God's people also use the tongue for praying, for encouraging others, for testifying and telling others about Jesus.

A Little Member

Although a man's tongue is only a small member of the body, it is unruly and hard to control. Birds, beasts, creeping things, and creatures of the sea have been tamed by man. When men want to drive a horse they put a bit in his mouth so they can control him. By the tug on the bit, the horse obeys the driver to go to the right or to the left or to stop. "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." But God can tame the tongue.

A Fire

The tongue is a little member of our body but it can cause a great deal of damage. The things that have once been said can never be unsaid. The things that we say may be remembered by someone else long after we have forgotten them. "The tongue is

¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

¹¹ Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?

¹² Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

¹³ Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

¹⁴ But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

¹⁵ This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.

¹⁶ For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

a fire." A fire can be a blessing to man. It is used to cook food, to warm homes, and to do many other good things when it is kept in control. But a fire can also do much damage. Even a small fire! Out of control, it spreads and grows until sometimes many homes and other buildings as well as lives are destroyed. "The tongue is a fire." The tongue can bring much blessing. It also can, by a bit of gossip, cause untold damage, which can never be repaired. Human lives and reputations have been hurt, ruined, and destroyed by an uncontrolled tongue.

Speaking Evil

There are times when people intentionally speak mean and harsh words. They take it upon themselves to "get even" or to punish others by their words. Some people seem to like to make others suffer in that manner. If there is any judgment and any punishment due, that is for the Lord to send. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. . . . Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:17-19).

At times it is necessary for those in authority – parents, teachers, ministers – to correct children and other people. Although it may not be pleasant to either party and the words may seem cruel at the time, the Lord requires correction. From the Proverbs we read: "Chasten thy son while there is hope" (Proverbs 19:18), and, "Withhold not correction from the child" (Proverbs 23:13).

There are times when some people speak lies and deceit. Although for a time they may seem to gain by so speaking, they really hurt themselves. From the Proverbs we read: "The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed and fro of them that seek death" (Proverbs 21:6); "Lying lips are abomination to the LORD" (Proverbs 12:22); and "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish" (Proverbs 19:9). "All liars" are included among those who will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone to burn forever (Revelation 21:8).

A Slip of the Tongue

When some people say bad words they try to excuse themselves by saying that their tongue slipped. They may say words that they do not mean to say, but because those evil words are in the heart they come out. Anger and hatred in the heart cause the tongue to speak evil words. When sin is in the heart, the rest of the body is marred. Sin, like leaven, affects the whole person. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9). The condition of the heart influences one's words and actions. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Jesus said: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man" (Matthew 15:18).

In the Heart

Sin in the heart may not be seen by man but it affects the words which come from the mouth. It may cause swearing, lies, false reports, gossip, dirty stories, and other mean and bad words. When one is saved, the sins in the heart are gone. The love of God in the heart will cause a person to speak good words. From the same fountain does not come fresh water and salt water. They would mix. The fresh would become salty. Likewise, cursing and blessings should not come from the same mouth. The good words are spoiled by the bad ones. Even one bad word mars a good life.

After one is saved, Satan will try in many ways to cause him to say that which is not right. The love of God in a Christian's heart will help him to control his tongue. He will pray much and keep in

the Spirit instead of speaking in a light manner. He will avoid talking too much and talking without thinking. There is a time to speak and a time to keep silence (Ecclesiastes 3:7).

A Purpose

Let us guard our tongues, taking heed to the words of the Psalmist: "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile" (Psalm 34:13). David said: "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue" (Psalm 39:1); "I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress" (Psalm 17:3); and, "My tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long" (Psalm 35:28). By so doing we can not only keep ourselves from trouble (Proverbs 21:23), but we can also be a blessing to others.

From the Proverbs we read: "The tongue of the just is as choice silver: . . . The lips of the righteous feed many" (Proverbs 10:20, 21). Those who are ready for the Lord's coming have been likened to a good wife, of whom it is said, "In her tongue is the law of kindness" (Proverbs 31:26).

QUESTIONS

1. For whose pleasure were we created?
2. Whose temples are our bodies?
3. In what way is the tongue like a fire?
4. Why cannot a fountain bring forth both salt water and fresh water?
5. How can blessing and cursing come from the same mouth?
6. What causes a person to say evil words?
7. What can control a person's tongue so it will not slip?
8. In what way is the tongue unruly and full of poison?
9. How can a person guard his words to keep from speaking evil?
10. David purposed to speak what kind of words?