

Pernicious Power of the Tongue and Possibility of Transformation under the Discipleship of Jesus

Transformative power of discipleship under Christ: From the tongue to the entire life, from the destructive person to the ideal Christian man.

James 3:5 notes that even though the tongue is very small part of the body, it has the power to defile one's entire life:

James 3:5, "Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! ⁶ And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell."

What incredibly pernicious power we possess to destroy the lives of others as well as our own hearts. The idea here is that the tongue has the power to stir up inclinations of the whole body and all its parts—our bodies as well as the lives and bodies of others. Physical violence is often preceded by verbal violence.

Incredibly enough, the tongue is perhaps the last bodily part to submit to goodness and righteousness. James also notes that there is no human power that can tame it:

James 3:8, "But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

However, under the discipleship of Jesus and His grace-empowering yoke, the Christian is able to control the tongue and when he does the effects spread throughout all the body. In fact, under the discipleship of Jesus, the believer finds it increasingly easy, pleasant, and natural to control the tongue. Consider the blessed effects on being able to control the tongue:

James 3:2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he *is* a perfect man (τέλειος ἄνθρωπος), able also to bridle the whole body.

While being a perfect man does not refer to sinless perfection, it does refer to a person who increasingly becomes an ideal Christian man, one who increasingly finds himself being the kind of person he never thought he could be; for example, the loving person in 1 Corinthians 13: a loving Christian who is patient, kind, lacks envy, lacks pride, polite, not self-centered, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, rejoices in truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and who is filled with a love that crowns his faith and hope (13:4-7, 13). He comes to realize that God did not place unrealistic goals before him. He comes to enjoy the transformation that only Jesus provides. What was viewed as an impossible standard becomes a very natural way to live, but only because of the grace that is found in the easy yoke of Jesus, under the transformative power of Jesus.

Safe and Sound in His Beautiful Grace,

Pastor Don