

Note the use of the same tongue in prayer and blasphemy. This gives a graphic picture of the sin of that day, and the social iniquity which prevailed. It was committed by professing Christians, and James severely rebukes such conduct. Study the two illustrations from the outer world to show how unnatural such conduct is. The stream is the same as the source, and bitter and sweet cannot exist in the same fountain. The olive and fig cannot both grow on the same tree. Nature is true to its own life, and hence no irregularity in its fruit. So no human heart can continue to have two such contradictory outflows as cursing and blessing. If the heart is right, swearing may be a careless habit which can be stopped. If the heart is wrong, praying is only a mere form and meaningless. James pleads for a consistent life in the use of speech.

The sin of the tongue is still a scandal in the Christian church. The unbridled tongue is the cause of nearly all personal and family quarrels. There is seldom any serious difficulty between neighbors, but the tongue magnifies the thoughtless statement until there is bitter enmity and revenge. This is equally true in the church. Social difficulties and wrangling among the workers is largely due to the idle, gossipy tongue. If the tongue could be curbed, there would be a marked revival of personal, practical piety in many churches. The secret of control in v. 17 should not be forgotten.

### For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

By Rev. E. Douglas Fraser, D.D.

Horses, a ship, a fire, wild beasts, birds, creeping things, the great sea, a fountain, fruit trees, a vine,—it should not be difficult with so many and so varied images, to hold attention, albeit the Lesson is didactic, and not narrative. The difficulty will be, to keep steadily to the teachings of the Lesson, not to be run away with by the illustrations by which the writer seeks to bring these out.

1. What leads James to speak about the tongue, is a preliminary point which needs to be made plain. See Exposition, which explains that so many among the Christian Jews to whom James wrote his Epistle were eager to be teachers (preachers), that he

thought it necessary to warn them of this folly: the more they said, the greater the condemnation if they spoke unworthily, or did not live up to their teachings. All this in v. 1. This leads the writer, naturally, to speak about the tongue.

2. The importance of the tongue. V. 2. states this: he that can keep his tongue right, can keep his whole self right. The class will easily be led into talking this out. The tongue as a horse's bit, will be interesting to boys and girls in the town or on the farm (v. 3), and as a ship's rudder, to those by the sea, to whom managing a boat is second nature. Let the emphasis be on the extreme importance of keeping the tongue right and true, seeing that it so controls the whole being and life.

3. The harm a bad tongue can do, vs. 5, 6. A forest or a prairie fire: some of the scholars have seen these. Let them tell about them; and be sure to keep them in mind that the great, spreading conflagration came from a single spark, the result of some one's thoughtless or malicious act. The lesson is evident. Remind the scholars also that Satan likes no better sport than starting the flame which an ungoverned tongue gives ("set on fire of hell").

4. Tongue training. Again, v. 7 will afford plenty of scope for the scholars: they will have much to say about the training of wild creatures. "No man can tame" the tongue (v. 8). Who then can?

5. Double tongues. Vs. 9, 10 announce a fact, alas, all too well known. The interest centres on the illustration of the fact in vs. 11, 12. The teaching is, that the double tongue is contrary to nature, as nature ought to be: it is because it is "set on fire of hell" (v. 6), that it is double.

6. The cure for it all. Perhaps the scholars can be led to suggest methods for curing bad tongues. Let them do so, but bring them, in the end, to James' cure—"the wisdom that cometh from above" (v. 17), the new thoughts and desires and purposes which the Holy Spirit of God gives to all who seek His presence within them. Select from the passages that follow, one suitable to each member of the class, and have that scholar read it aloud: the passage may "stick".—