

and therefore deserves condemnation. But those of us who are teachers will be judged more severely than others, if we do not practise what we know, and profess, and urge upon those about us. *If any* (teacher or other) *stumbleth not in word* (Rev. Ver.). It is in speech that we most frequently sin. *A perfect man*; a full-grown Christian, one who reflects the character of Christ (Eph. 4 : 13), whose words were full of wisdom (Mark 6 : 2) and grace, Luke 4 : 22. *Able . . . to bridle* (master) *the whole body*. The man who can control his power of speech, the most rebellious part of his nature, can master the whole.

II. The Little Tongue, 3-5a.

Vs. 3-5a. *Bits in the horses' mouths*, etc.; an illustration showing the power of little things. Man controls and guides the great animal with a small bit. *Ships also* (Rev. Ver.). A second illustration is drawn from the sea, which would be familiar to a Galilean fisherman like James, Mark 1 : 19. Ships are even harder to be governed than horses, because they cannot be trained. *Driven of fierce winds*; which add their force to the ship's weight. *A very small rudder* (Rev. Ver.). See Light from the East. *Governor*; helmsman, or pilot (Rev. Ver., "the steersman"). *Tongue is a little member*. But, like the bit and the rudder, it can do great things; these show its power. *Boasteth*. Having done great things, the tongue is apt to brag about them; that shows its evil bent.

III. The Evil Tongue, 5b-8.

Vs. 5b, 6. *How much wood* (Rev. Ver.); Rev. Ver. Margin, "how great a forest". *Kindled by how small a fire* (Rev. Ver.); as the fire left burning by a careless camper often results in the consuming of many square miles of timber. *The tongue is a fire*; a good servant, if kept under control, a bad master, if allowed to get the upper hand. *A world of iniquity*. From the tongue come all kinds of evil. *Defileth the whole body*; makes the whole man impure, (1) by suggesting sin to himself and others, (2) by committing sin, such as lying and profanity, (3) by excusing or defending sin. *Settleth on fire the wheel of nature* (Rev. Ver.). "Wheel of nature" may be "a figure for the whole of life from birth,—the wheel which then begins to roll

on its course and continues rolling until death." What seems to be meant is, that, through the tongue, sin is present and active from the beginning of life to its close. *And is set on fire by hell* (Rev. Ver.). Sin is traced to its source in hell, where Satan reigns.

Vs. 7, 8. *Beasts . . . birds . . . creeping things* (Rev. Ver.). *things in the sea . . . tamed*. The division of animals is as in Gen. 1 : 26,—quadrupeds, birds, reptiles, fishes. *Tongue can no man tame*. James does not mean that no man can control his speech. Probably he means that mere unaided human nature cannot do it. But with God all things are possible. The "perfect man" (v. 2) can master his tongue. *A restless evil* (Rev. Ver.); never idle. *Full of deadly poison*; Ps. 58 : 4 ; 140 : 3.

IV. The Fickle Tongue, 9-12.

Vs. 9-12. *Bless we the Lord and Father* (Rev. Ver.); praise God revealed in His might ("Lord") and in His love ("Father"). *Curse we men*. The words may apply to the Jewish Christians, who blessed God in their prayers, and yet cursed Gentiles who, as well as themselves, were made in the image of God, Gen. 1 : 26. *Ought not so to be*; and will not be so, if we yield our tongues to the control of Christ, 1 Pet. 2 : 23. In vs. 11, 12, James illustrates the fickleness of the tongue by contrasting it with: (1) *a fountain*, which cannot send forth from the same opening (Rev. Ver.) *sweet water and bitter*; (2) *the fig tree*, which can never yield olives (Rev. Ver.); (3) *a vine*, on which no one ever finds figs; (4) *salt water*, which cannot yield sweet (Rev. Ver.).

Light from the East

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SHIPS—James has in mind the ships which traded between the ports of the Mediterranean, and which were of considerable size. Paul's ship carried 276 persons (Acts 27 : 37), besides the supplies and cargo; many of them were capable of carrying from 500 to 1,000 tons. They had usually only one mast, with strong ropes passing through a block at the masthead, and one large sail fastened to an enormous yard. Occasionally there were topsails also. This arrangement con-