

Worship Material
What comes out when you are squeezed
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 15th September

Begin with an opening prayer

Together we will sing God's praises.
Our tongues are joyful now,
but we also remember that our tongues
can be instruments of destruction,
breaking relationships and bringing division and harm.
Together we come seeking God's grace
in the whole of our lives.
Amen.

Read James 3:1-12

Bible notes

James makes a powerful argument on the power and potential consequences of what we say. This passage addresses the importance of controlling our tongues. In a technological age, we might want to include the many instruments of communication we use that would have a similar impact. James cautions aspiring teachers that they have a greater responsibility to bear. Teachers influence and guide others. They may, however, point people in the wrong direction or misuse their power. Teaching should not be undertaken lightly but with self-awareness, humility, and integrity.

James seems resigned to the fact that controlling the tongue is a universal human struggle. Mastering the tongue is a sign of overall self-control. And just as a small rudder guides a massive ship, our words, though seemingly insignificant, have the power to direct the course of our lives and impact those around us.

The tongue is compared to a fire that, though small, can cause immense destruction (vv.5-6). James points out that our words can potentially create chaos and harm. Harmful speech can spread like wildfire, damaging relationships and reputations. The paradox is that humans have been able to tame many aspects of nature but struggle to control their own tongues. James emphasises the difficulty of consistently using speech in a positive and constructive manner. We may use our words to praise God and then turn around to speak negatively about fellow human beings who are created in God's image. Unsurprisingly, a freshwater spring cannot produce salt water, or vice versa (v.12). Therefore, despite being in difficult situations and pressed on every side, our hearts should manifest consistent, positive speech that aligns with God's Word.

Prayer

God of mercy, we thank you for rescuing us and saving us.
When others desert us and all seems lost,
thank you that you steadfastly walk alongside us.

As we sink into the abyss,
thank you that you hear our cries for help
and pull us out of the pit.
Help us not to forget you and to praise your name,
so others too may know your power to heal
and give us a fresh start.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Come, Holy Spirit,
dwell in us and help us to praise you.
Give us words of encouragement
to support those who struggle.
Train our hearts to be generous and kind.
In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.