

James 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! The tongue, though small, boasts great things and can set a forest ablaze. James warns of its destructive potential. Words ignite conflicts, slander, and doctrinal splits.

Reformed communities have seen revivals and divisions sparked by tongues. James calls for reverent handling of speech, aware of its explosive power.

Historical Context

In dry Mediterranean climates, small sparks caused massive fires—an image his audience understood. Social tensions among diaspora Jews could erupt through rumors. James urges restraint to prevent communal infernos.",

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What conversations or online interactions risk sparking fires?
2. How can you proactively speak peace into volatile situations?
3. What safeguards will keep your tongue from boasting or burning?

Interlinear Text

οὕτως καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα μικρὸν μέλος ἐστὶν καὶ
so Even G3588 the tongue a little member is Even
G3779 G2532 G1100 G3398 G3196 G2076 G2532
μεγάλαυχεῖ Ἰδού, ὀλίγον πῦρ ἡλίκην ὕλην ἀνάπτει·
boasteth great things Behold a little fire how great a matter kindleth
G3166 G2400 G3641 G4442 G2245 G5208 G381

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 18:21 (Parallel theme): Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Proverbs 12:18 (Parallel theme): There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.

Proverbs 15:2 (Parallel theme): The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

Psalms 17:10 (Parallel theme): They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.

Psalms 10:3 (Parallel theme): For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.

Jeremiah 18:18 (Parallel theme): Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

Ezekiel 28:2 (Parallel theme): Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God:

Jude 1:16 (Parallel theme): These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

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