

Not Perfect, but Still Improving

We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. —James 3:2

Enjoying a measure of success in controlling the tongue on occasion does not mean you are perfect! I can assure you that you have not “arrived”—even if you go three days without an unguarded comment—or that the problem of controlling the tongue is now behind you. Tongue control is only a temporary grace—given one day at a time, and hour by hour when you are having a good day.

Never being at fault in what one says, then, means perfection. James is obviously not expecting that of any Christian. So the tongue is something you must live with, work with, get victory over—little by little—every day. But one day at a time! It is terrific when you have a good day. It is very encouraging. But if you had a good day, I lovingly caution you: wait until tomorrow!

I know what it is sometimes to preach well, to come down from the pulpit with an inner confidence and say to myself, “Well, at last I have learned how to preach.” But when I feel like that for very long, here is what happens—nearly every time: I do so poorly the next time I am in the pulpit that I leave saying, “If that is the best I can do, I should get out of the ministry.” So if you have a good day with tongue control, thank God for it, but don’t be deluded that you have mastered the art of tongue control; you just might be a miserable failure the next day.

The truth is, however, we can improve. We do get better at it. The reward is worth the effort, I promise you.

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