

James 3:2-12

Introduction:

1. Subjects previously covered in our study of James include "facing temptations" (1:2-18), "hearing and doing the Word" (1:19-27), "respect of persons" (2:1-13), "faith and works" (2:14-26), and "a warning for teachers" (3:1).
2. (3:2-12) James wrote about the use of the tongue.
 - a. James earlier touched on the importance of using the tongue properly (1:19, 26).
 - b. (ch.3) James dealt with the use of the tongue in more detail.
 - 1) (vs.2-4) The tongue is to be controlled.
 - 2) (vs.5-8) The uncontrolled tongue is described.
 - 3) (vs.9-12) The tongue is to be used consistently.

Discussion:

- I. (vs.2-4) THE TONGUE IS TO BE CONTROLLED
 - A. (vs.2a) Because of our human weaknesses we stumble in many ways.
 1. God has made it possible for us to be forgiven of such sins (1 John 1:7, 9).
 2. (vs.2b) However, if a person does not stumble in what he says he is a perfect individual who is able to control his whole body.
 - B. (vs.3-4) James gave 2 illustrations.
 1. (vs.3) The first illustration involves a horse that is controlled by a small bit in his mouth.
 2. (vs.4) The second illustration involves a ship that is controlled by a very small rudder.
 - C. The point: *Christians must have their tongues under control.*
 1. What good is an uncontrolled horse or an uncontrolled ship?
 2. What is the value of a Christian who has an uncontrolled tongue? (1:26)
 - D. We must control our tongues because we will be judged by our words (Matthew 12:36-37).
- II. (vs.5-8) THE UNCONTROLLED TONGUE IS DESCRIBED
 - A. (vs.5) In comparison to other parts of the body the tongue is very small.
 1. However, if it is not controlled it is capable of boasting great things.
 2. Even though the tongue is very small it can start a great fire.
 - B. (vs.6) The tongue is said to be a fire and a world of iniquity.
 - C. (vs.7-8) The tongue is said to be untamed.
 1. Man has tamed all kinds of animals.
 - a. However, no man has been able to tame the tongue.
 - b. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison [like a poisonous snake].
 2. The tongue can be tamed, but it can only be tamed by the person to whom it belongs.
 - a. Each person is responsible for controlling his own tongue.
 - b. To control the tongue good things must be in the heart (Matthew 12:34-35; 15:18).
- III. (vs.9-12) THE TONGUE IS TO BE USED CONSISTENTLY
 - A. (vs.9-10) We do not use our tongues consistently if we bless God and curse men who are made in God's image.
 1. This includes sins such as gossip, slander, railing, backbiting, whispering, and talebearing.
 2. Concerning such sins James said, "*My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*"
 - B. (vs.11-12) James gave 3 illustrations.
 1. Does a spring bring forth both fresh and salt water at the same time?
 2. Can a fig tree bear olives?
 3. Can a grapevine bear figs?
 - C. A Christian who blesses God and then curses his fellow man uses his tongue inconsistently, and he will be held accountable.

Conclusion:

1. In order to be blessed by God we must control our tongues (1 Peter 3:10).
2. Let us imitate the Lord's example (1 Peter 2:22).
3. A fitting prayer to adopt is found in Psalm 19:14.