

James – A Portrait of Living Faith

Memory Challenge: James Chapter 1: 1-18...

Lesson 9 – Who Can Tame the Tongue?

James 3:1-12

Control of the tongue is one of the three tests of living faith (true religion) that James lists in chapter 1:26-27. Remember he wrote: ***“If anyone considers himself to be religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion or faith is worthless.”*** The genuineness of a person’s faith will inevitably be demonstrated by his speech.

I. Teachers will be judged more strictly (1-2)

Anyone who desire to teach God’s Word must understand the seriousness of this responsibility. Teachers must learn to put a tight rein on their tongue since they are especially vulnerable to say something using the wrong words or in the wrong context.

In verse 2 when James states this very clearly when he says: ***“For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone who does not stumble in what he says is a perfect man.”*** The word perfect here means mature or complete.

II. Illustrations and Comparisons of the Tongue (3-5)

James uses three analogies to illustrate the influence of the tongue. He says the tongue is like (1) a bit in the mouth of a horse, (2) the rudder of a large ship and (3) a small spark or fire in a dry forrest.

The tongue can cause extensive destruction and damage when it is used for malicious gossip and slander, or use of hateful speech, falsehoods and simply careless words uttered in casual conversation. It can spread like a wildfire. See Prov. 16:27-28; Prov. 26:20-22.

III. The Tongue is a Fire – Its Characteristics (3:6)

In this verse, James gives perhaps the strongest statement in scripture regarding the danger and destruction of the tongue. James rightly says “the tongue is a fire.”

First James says the tongue is “a world of iniquity among the parts of the body, as speech is involved in most every form of wickedness. **Second** the tongue has the capacity to corrupt the whole person, as can sets on fire the course of our life. **Thirdly** the tongue is set on fire by hell.

IV. No Man Can Tame the Tongue (7-8)

James point in these two verses is that the tongue is uncontrollable and untamable. ***For very kind of animal can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.*** When the tongue is tamed by a mature man, we know that it was not him who tamed it, but God. ***“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth, keep a watch over the door of my lips.” Psa. 141:3.***

V. The Inconsistency of the Tongue and the Consistency of God (9-12)

The tongue is hopelessly inconsistent, as are our lives. One minute we use the tongue to bless the Lord and the next we use it to curse our fellow man, knowing that he has been made in the likeness of God.

We cannot tame and control the tongue, but God can. We must make every effort to please God with our speech.