

James 3:1-12 - A Teacher of the Law?
First Southern Baptist Church - June 30, 2021

Train of Thought

Faith/ works - chapter 2 (surety that you know a tree by it's fruit)

Words - 2:1-12

So... (drawing a conclusion), who is wise? Then show it by your words (which are your works)

Verse 1 - So you want to be a teacher?

Teaching - options

1. "Teaching" then off on words
2. "Tongue" - teaching is example of the use of tongue
3. Changing subjects

Importance of teachers

1. Few could read
2. A place of honor in the NT gifts (right along with prophecy and apostles) - 1 Cor. 12:28; Romans 12:7; Eph. 4:11
3. A place of prominence and authority which made some desire it.
4. Rabbis held an official teaching position
 - in some Jewish circles Rabbis had greater honor than their own parents. The parents brought them into life - but Rabbis brought them into the life to come.
 - guest teachers could be asked to speak... Jesus was such a guest, as was Paul/ Barnabas
5. The danger - some would want to be teachers for the wrong reason

Danger for teachers

1. Someone will believe you
2. The nature of the task makes you critical
3. To sin with the tongue is a grave problem, but to do it with a group, or in public, and acting as spokesman for God is worse*
4. Which is more dangerous?
 - atheists and secularists from outside the church
 - teachers who misrepresent the Word of God, on the inside of the church
5. This is why God says that a pastor should not be a "novice" - 1 Tim. 3:6.
6. Which would rule out celebrities, or other new converts.

Judgement of Teachers

1. Greater condemnation - isn't this a double standard?
2. Stricter judgment
3. Because right speech is such a critical mark of true faith- what they say exerts a powerful influence on others
4. To whom much is given, much is required

Verse 2 - From Teachers to Tongues (*segue*)

Perfect man (*teleios*) - two possible meanings

1. Absolute perfection - without flaw
2. Complete/ mature - a person who does not stumble in what he says
-we all stumble in many ways... but if you do not stumble here, you're good

A mature heart will be expressed in mature God-honoring speaking. Mature believers will control their tongues. Then the control issue bring us to verse 3.

Verses 3-4 - Two Analogies of Control

“Behold” - a vivid illustration

Bits in the Horse’s mouth

Turn the mouth, then the head, then the body. (Even the best horse still requires “control”). Spirited horses are broken by the use of the bit.

Rudder on a Ship

Their ships were small, compared to ours... but the analogy is the same. Even though driven by fierce winds the ship may be controlled.

The **conclusion** is found in verse 5... “Even So” - small boasts great things.

Verse 5 - The Comparison

“Even so” - just like this.

The tongue can

1. Sway men to violence - Sway me to noble actions
2. Instruct the ignorant - tell lies
3. Instruct the ignorant
4. Encourage the depressed
5. Rouse the careless, - stir men and women

“Behold” - a fresh illustration - Fire

Behold how great a “matter” - how great a “wood”

Fire starts small but grows. Water cannot multiply - it never expands into a flood.
Fire feeds on itself.

Verse 6 - More Fire

1. A fire - a very world of iniquity. A system of evil, lawlessness. A source of unrighteousness and ungodly behavior within sinful men. It breeds and gives vent to every sort of sinful passion.
2. So is the tongue among our members - just like that. The evil spreads like

fire... contaminating the whole

3. Sets on fire the course of our life. The “wheel of nature” - sets this moving.

“Defiles the whole” - will stain and damage whatever it touches. Begins the evil cycle of nature. It affects all of human life/ existence. More than implies that this evil come right out of hell.

4. Is set on fire of hell - Gehenna hell. The garbage dump:

-to dump dead bodies of executed criminals

-to dump dead bodies of animals

-unclean, indecent for any use

-burned all the time... stench, maggots were continually present - Mk. 9:43-44

-a place prepared for the devil and his demons

-the Old Testament location for child sacrifice to Molech - 2 Kings 23:10

Also,... “set on fire” is “*phlogizo*” a continuing state.

Metaphors used to describe the tongue’s havoc:

1. Stain (6b)

2. Fire (6a)

3. Beasts (7)

4. Venom (7b,8)

Verses 7-8 - Untamable

“For” says that verses 7-8 provide the basis for something that has been said in verse 6.

Untamable:

1. Like animals - it is wild, primitive, beastly

-man lost dominion of himself in the garden

-it is an animals that can easily slip out of it’s cage

2. Restless (verse 8)

-“unruly” - “*akatastatos*” rendered “unstable” at 1:8

3. Wicked - evil, intractable

4. Full of poison - like a snake’s tongue

Verses 9-12 - Inconsistent

He illustrates how deadly/ uncontrollable the tongue is. The depth of its wickedness, is found in its inconsistency.

1. Bless/ curse (9-10)

The highest function of the human voice is to bless God... but we also curse man. To slander man is in effect to slander God. Why? Man is made in the image of God. The image of God is the reason given, for “thou shalt not kill.” James says we still have the image of God, though fallen, and marred.

2. Fresh/ foul water (11)

A spring may be good or bad, but it is always consistent.

3. Fig tree/ olives (12)

4. Fresh/ salt water (12)

Theme of Doubteness in James:

1. Double in praying - 1:7-8
2. Double in partiality - 2:4ff
3. Double in works - 2:14-26
4. Double in words (here)

So... the tongue can be evil... now, he traces the bad words (and by implication the bad works - 2:14-26), to the source. The wisdom of God, and earthly wisdom. Next week's lesson is God's wisdom. Sincerity of our faith... your words/ works will show forth what is within you.

Now, let's consider Matthew 12:31-37:

1. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit - why?
2. We will be judged by our words... why?
3. Know a tree by its fruit

On a More Positive Note:

1. Isaiah 50:4
2. Eph. 4:29
3. Jesus was called "the Word" of God