

Sermon Notes: Taming the Tongue

James 3:1-12

Text: James 3:1-12 — *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. ² For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. ³ Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. ⁴ Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. ⁵ Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. ⁸ But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.*

Review: *See back*

Take Away:

- I. A Warning for the Tongue of the Teacher:** *(References: Luke 6:43-45; Romans 1:28-32; Luke 6:39-40; Matthew 23:15; Matthew 18:6; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 1 Timothy 3:6)*

- II. The Dangerous Fire of the Tongue:** *(References: Proverbs 26:20-22; Proverbs 11:13; Numbers 11:1; Psalm 95:7-11; James 5:9; Philippians 2:14-16; Leviticus 19:16-18; Proverbs 6:16-19)*

- III. A Good Tree will Produce Good Fruit:** *(References: Proverbs 18:20-21; Hebrew 4:12)*

Review of James 2:14-26:

1. Last time it was really important for us to get Paul and James straightened out as the two are so easily pitted against one another by grabbing a verse here and a verse there. Yet, we know that from our study of James, that James' definition and argument about genuine faith doesn't contradict Paul at all. Paul is zealous to combat the Judizers who see the covenant promises tied to being biological descendants of Abraham through keeping the law. Paul makes the point that for all of Biblical history it has always been salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That was Abraham's faith, and to be a son or daughter of Abraham is to have the faith of Abraham. As Christ told the Pharisees: John 8:56 – *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.*

Yet the Pharisees, who claimed to be Abraham's children, sought to kill Jesus. If they were truly Abraham's children by the faith of Abraham, they would not do this. Instead they act like their father who isn't Abraham at all, but the Devil.

James would say "amen" to all of this. Justification is by faith alone in Christ alone, and it has always been that way. Yet, James would add, that faith—that genuine faith alone in Christ alone—must produce good fruit if it is really dwelling within the believer. So necessary is this that James can say in verse 24 that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. Meaning that we are justified by works—as a witness that one is saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone at the end of all things. Our works will either rise up to commend our faith, or to condemn it. Faith is the tree, works are the fruit.

2. James presses this point by bringing up a likely objector from his opponents. The objector suggests that faith and works are separate and are in water tight compartments. James refutes this by saying how can one "show" their faith then? The answer is one cannot. James says I'll show you my faith by my works because faith by itself is dead.

3. Finally we saw James' point lived out by two OT saints, Abraham and Rehab. Both followed the pattern of confessing belief by faith alone, and then both proved that faith genuine by their works. For Abraham, it was the testing of the sacrifice of Isaac, and for Rehab it was the hiding of the spies. We took away the deeply Christian truth that such faith comes out in our works through the denial of self by lovingly following Christ. We "work out" our faith every day by dying to ourselves in thought, word, and deed. Genuine faith works not to see us boast and glorify ourselves, but instead to boast in Christ and be lovingly confirmed to his image.

Questions for the Table:

1. Take an assessment of the teachers you choose to fill your life with (books, podcasts, YouTube, etc). Do these teachers bear good fruit or spew bad fruit? How do they affect the way you think about the world? Does this align with the truth of God's word?
2. Take an assessment of your thought life. What kinds of words do you speak over yourself? What kinds of words do you speak over others? Do these words align with the truth of God's word?
3. Are there areas in which you find yourself complaining? How do you need to change the way you think about those situations to remember the goodness of God's sovereignty? Kids, how is complaining connected to rebellion?
4. Why is our tradition of worship at KCC (singing psalms, liturgy) important when considering our words?
5. Read the part of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* where Lucy sees her friends talking about her in the magic book in chapter 10. What does Aslan say to her? Discuss the nature of gossip and slander.