

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A0736 – September 9, 2007 – Jas 3:9-12 – The Tongue: Two Sided

James 3:9-12 Ἐν αὐτῇ εὐλογοῦμεν τὸν θεὸν καὶ πατέρα, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ καταρώμεθα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς καθ' ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ γεγονότας· ¹⁰ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ στόματος ἐξέρχεται εὐλογία καὶ κατάρα. Οὐ χρή, ἀδελφοί μου, ταῦτα οὕτως γίνεσθαι. ¹¹Μήτι ἡ πηγὴ ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ὀπῆς βρῦει τὸ γλυκὺ καὶ τὸ πικρὸν; ¹²Μὴ δύναται, ἀδελφοί μου, συκῆ ἐλαίας ποιῆσαι, ἢ ἄμπελος σῦκα; Οὕτως οὐδεμία πηγὴ ἀλυκὸν καὶ γλυκὺ ποιῆσαι ὕδωρ.
(BYZ)

James 3:9-12 With it we bless the God and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰from the same mouth comes forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening sweet and bitter *water*? ¹²My brethren, can a fig tree produce olives, a grapevine figs? Neither does salt water produce fresh. (Author's Translation)

James 3:9-12 With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. ¹¹Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can* salt water produce fresh.
(NASB95)

Last week we continued with the tongue. So far we've seen that Not Many Should Become Teachers. That refers to "professional teachers", those on par with the rabbi's. The Jewish culture of the day precipitated a power lust among men to take that position and use it to gain prestige, influence and control over others but the dangers of the tongue make it a position one should not rush into. For one there will be a stricter judgment at the

judgment seat of Christ. For two, we all stumble in many ways. The sin nature has weaknesses and strengths and we all struggle in many different areas so I can never get on my high horse because I don't commit some pet sin. We all stumble in many ways. That means regenerate people sin. Perfectionism is not taught in Scripture. Until the sin nature is eradicated we will all sin. We should not sin and we don't have to sin but we do. So, sinlessness is not the requirement to be a teacher, maturity is. James says if a man does not stumble with his tongue he's a perfect man, *teleios* man, that is "mature man", not perfect, no one reaches sinless perfection. James is concerned with maturity. Has the believer advanced to spiritual maturity? That's the first issue we have to tackle. Maturity is reached when a man understands basic bible doctrine and is able to communicate basic bible doctrine in word and deed. Maturity is what I call the long-term dimension of sanctification. It takes time, it is a process. It is not reached overnight. No one arrives all of a sudden. We arrive over time by intense study of the Scriptures under a pastor-teacher who is able to study and communicate the word of God from the original languages. If you aren't consistent you really aren't going to grow, you're just getting pieces. You've got to be consistent and persistent. If you can't be here listen to the CD's. Second issue we have to tackle is spirituality. Spirituality is an absolute condition, either you are in fellowship and walking by the Spirit or not. This is needed because no man can tame the tongue. We had the illustration of the demoniac at Gerasa last week, a man who was indwelled by a multitude of demons named Legion and men tried to subdue that man, shackling him in chains and no one could do it. He would just rip the chains apart. Now, think about that; that takes a lot of strength. People don't just go around breaking chains. So, these demons were giving him superhuman strength and that's the picture you want to have in mind when you think about taming the tongue. You can't do it, nobody can. You don't have it in you. So, we have to bring in someone greater than man and that's the Holy Spirit. Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). In other words, here's the tongue and it's a fuse and what sets it on fire? Hell itself, James says, *gehenna*, the final resting place of the demons, so James alludes to the demons as the fire that lights the tongue and we saw this with a very godly man in the NT, you're never immune. Don't think you're immune to this. Here's Peter and what did Jesus say to Peter? "Get behind Me Satan, ". Satan had infiltrated Peter's thinking and Peter bought into it. He bought into Satan's plan and here he's getting in way of the Messiah. He's trying to stop Him from going to the cross. "Whoa,

wait a minute here, what's happening here? How did I get over here in left field?" Well, Satan infiltrates and plants a false thought, we entertain the false thought, buy into it and before you know it we're voicing the opposition. And when we're doing that we're not walking by the Spirit, that's what I'm getting at with spirituality. He can tame the tongue, not us. So, who was Peter walking by? Was he neutral? See, here's what Christians think, well, I'm either "walking by the Spirit or I'm neutral." That's not the way Jesus thought. Either you were walking by the Spirit or you're walking by the flesh. There's no in-between, there's no neutrality, there's no gray area here. What did Paul say, "the mind set on the flesh is" what "toward God"; "Hostile" toward God. That doesn't sound too neutral to me. At any given moment we are either hostile to God or friends with God. This is the moment-by-moment dimension of sanctification or what I call the existential dimension. So there is a long term dimension to sanctification, that's maturity and there's a moment-by-moment dimension, that's spirituality. And if our tongue is going to bless and not curse we first have to be mature, that is, have sound bible doctrine in our heart because that which fills the heart comes out of the mouth. And second we have to be spiritual, that is, we have to be in fellowship walking by the Spirit because only He can tame the tongue. We can't do it. And there are four wisdom devices James has given us so far. These are daily reminders, teaching tools for parents and grandparents; the Horses Bit, the Ships Rudder, the Fire's Spark and the Animals of air, sea and land. Use them. Don't fool yourself, the tongue is the very world of iniquity and no one can tame it, it's a restless evil. It vacillates, it's unstable and I assure you, if you keep bad company, if you're friends are the people who reject Bible doctrine and live the party scene, I assure you they are going to pull you down. Bad company corrupts good morals and the first place you will notice this, the very first place is your speech because bad company corrupts deep down in the heart. And they want you, they don't want your tolerance, they want your participation because then they've got you. Then they've got you guilty and that's what they want, others who will pat them on the back for the wickedness they commit. This kind of thing goes on and on and on through every culture, we induct you into our club through some act of wickedness and this brings a unity to the group. The problem is it's a false unity because it's built on shared guilt. And once you're in it's hard to get out, very hard. So, don't keep the bad company to begin with. If you already do, get out and get stability in your life, get Bible doctrine, get maturity, grow up. Finally, the tongue is also "full of deadly poison" or better, "death-

bringing poison” it’s something that brings death to ourselves and others. We don’t need to be the authors of death. The heart conceives wicked plans to destroy others and the tongue often carries out the plan. We conceive to destroy someone’s reputation and how do we do that? Spread rumors, spread lies, spread half-truths. This gets personal so fast. Well, we all do this out of selfish ambition, power lust, anger, the sins of the tongue are many. So, let’s move to verses 9-12 this morning.

Here we find that the tongue is two-sided. It blesses and curses. It builds and destroys. It directs and misdirects. But this is contrary to God’s creation. It violates everything we know from creation. When we look at a spring a good spring does not put out bitter water, a fig tree does not produce olives and salt water does not produce flesh. So, there is this incongruity with the tongue. James says, “these things ought not to be this way.”

Let’s look at the details. Verse 9, **With it**, that is, “with the tongue” **we bless**, and when James says **we** here he means “the regenerate”. We **bless our Lord and Father** and there’s a little textual issue here, some manuscripts read **God and Father**, just know that it’s there, no big deal, but really we’re interested in this word **bless**, (*eulogeo*), “to say good”, “to speak well of”, “to praise”. We get the English word “eulogy” from this and the eulogy is the part of the funeral or memorial where people stand up and say good things about the person, to praise them and their accomplishments. You can skip that part at my funeral. You know, anything good in me, anything good in any one of you, it wasn’t put there by us. It was put there by God, none is good but God, relative goodness maybe but not divine good, no divine good is in us because of us. So, we should never get arrogant as if we’re so good and we wrought this divine good in our hearts. If you’re going to say any kind of eulogy at my funeral eulogize God not me. So, the idea here is that the tongue blesses God, it praises God, it gives thanks to Him, and that’s exactly what it was designed to do. God made us thinking, speaking creatures in His image to bless Him, to glorify Him and we do that when we walk by the Spirit.

But on the other hand **with it we curse men**, *kataraoimai*, you know what this means, we “call down curses upon them”. “I hate that guy”. Oh really? Did you know John said if you hate your brother you’re a murderer (1 John 3:15)? “How’s that, I haven’t killed him?” Well, maybe you haven’t but isn’t the spirit of hatred the spirit of a murderer? When you say, “I hate that guy”

aren't you saying, "I really wouldn't mind getting rid of that guy."? So watch it, when you let hatred get started in your heart you're not abiding in Him, you're not walking by the Spirit. You know what we're called to? We're not called to hate, we're called to love our brethren, to the point that we will lay down our lives for one another (1 John 3:16). Turn over to Rom 12:14. Here we get into the application part of Romans and Paul is just getting going on how we ought to conduct ourselves among one another, this is in the church body. And he says, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." And these are imperatives, commands. If you violate this, if you call down curses on people who persecute you, you know what? Your sinning; you're out of fellowship; you've got to confess that. "But they did this to me." "Sorry, there's no excuses." We were made to bless even those who persecute us. We were made to bless people not dogs, cats and mice and we'll get into why in a moment and the reason is going to fly right in the face of evolution. If you are an evolutionist then you cannot escape the fact that humans are just another animal and the fittest survive baby and I will take you down. Get out of my way. I'm not going to bless my persecutors, this is life and death struggle. And this idea, this concept of struggle, climbing the corporate ladder at everyone else's expense has so penetrated our thought that you rarely see this. When was the last time you saw a Christian blessing someone who persecuted them? Try that one on. This is a tall order James calls us to.

Who is man? Man, is **made in the likeness of God**. Man possesses certain characteristics that are **in the likeness of God**. Now, we have to deal with this **likeness**. You're all familiar with the way Genesis talks about the creation of man. Let's turn there, Gen 1:26. In chapter 1 we have the creation of the universe and there's a structure here we never want to forget. I always marvel at how much you can get out of the text just by observing, observing, observing and what do you observe is the last thing God creates? Do you think that might be significant? On days 1-3 He creates habitats and on days 4-6 He populates the habitats and what is God doing? Why does He do things this way? Not only does this point out the highly rational mind of God. I mean, here we have the work of an engineer. I create domains and I fill those domains. And what's the last thing God fills the domain with? Man. Everything is preparatory for man. He doesn't bring man in on day 1 or 4. It wasn't ready until day 6 and the crown of creation is that last piece, man and it's a startling truth, a wonderful truth. He's saying, "I designed this environment for you and you are designed for this environment." There's a

correspondence between you and your environment and between you and God. Man was made from the dust of the earth and from the breath of God. So, let's look at the Doctrine of the Image of God under eight points. This is what James is concerned about, that we not curse men made in the likeness of God. He doesn't say image and likeness or image but likeness and we want to grasp what he means.

8 Points to Doctrine of Imago Dei

First, man is the only created being made in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26-28). Angels, animals, birds, planets, rocks, etc... are not made in God's image. Man and man alone. *Second*, the words "image" and "likeness" are virtually synonyms (Gen 1:26 with 27; Gen 5:1). This is confirmed by both the Hebrew and Greek words used for "image" and "likeness". In Gen 1:26, "Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;" "image" and "likeness"ⁱ In the Hebrew "image" is the word *selem* meaning "outline of a figure" and "likeness" is the word *demut* meaning "resemblance of a figure".ⁱⁱ These are so close they are virtually synonymous. Note that v 27 only uses "image" which implies they are synonyms. If that's the case then why didn't God just use one word? It seems He uses both to intensify the thought.ⁱⁱⁱ The Greek parallels to these Hebrew words are *eikon* "image" and *homoiosis* "likeness". The LXX rendering of Gen 5:1 gives us some insight into how these terms were understood ~250 yrs before Christ. The Hebrew uses *demut*, "likeness" and we would expect the Hebrew scholars who translated this into Greek to use its parallel *homoiosis* but instead they chose *eikon* "image". So, the Jews at that time understood these as synonyms. Thus, "image" and "likeness" are synonyms and I will use them interchangeably. When we go to James and he uses "likeness" (*homoiosis*) he could just as well have used "image" (*eikon*). *Third*, the image of God is both body and spirit (Col 2:9; Heb 1:3; John 14:9). Some people limit the image of God to the spiritual capacities; emotion, intellect and will which are part of man's "spirit" but this has several problems. For one it means only *part* of man is made in God's image and *not all* of man but the Bible teaches that *all* of man is made in God's image. It also has difficulty avoiding the conclusion that angels are made in God's image because they are spirit beings that have emotion, intellect and will. So, if we uniquely have the image of God and angels do not then what is it that makes us different from angels? The body.^{iv} Angels do not have a body.^v So, I take it that man's body and spirit are made

in the image of God. It is the totality of man and not a part of man that is made in God's image. This does not mean that God has a body. God is "Spirit" and does not have a body contrary to the god of Mormonism. So, what I mean is that if God were to project Himself down to finite size we would see a human body. In fact, this has already happened! "This is not just a neat philosophical point. It has directly to do with the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ."^{vi} Hebrews 1:3 says the Incarnate Son is the "exact representation" of God's nature and Col 2:9 "For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form." It is difficult to escape the conclusion that man is made in the image of God in both body and spirit. *Fourth*, the image of God was marred by sin at the Fall of Man but not erased (Gen 5:3; Gen 9:6; Jam 3:9; implied by Rom 8:29; Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:49). In Gen 5:3 Adam is said to have given birth to a son in his image and his likeness in contrast to God's image and God's likeness. This could imply erasure but in Gen 9:6 man is said to be made in the image of God (also cf Jam 3:9). So, we conclude that the image was marred by sin at the Fall of Man but not erase. *Fifth*, all men still maintain the dignity and uniqueness of being made in God's image despite sin (Gen 9:6; Jam 3:9). For this reason it is wrong to murder a man and it is wrong to curse a man because all men still maintain the image of God. *Sixth*, the work of Christ on the cross provides salvation for all of man, both body and spirit. This is not just a neat point. It has to do directly with the truths of regeneration and resurrection. *Seventh*, at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone He saves the human spirit through regeneration (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:5. Tit 3:5). Tit 3:5 "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit," At that point the mar of sin on the human spirit is erased and the human spirit is restored to its original function of communing with God in a personal relationship and intimate fellowship. *Eighth*, the bodies of all believers will be transformed into a resurrection body fit for heaven (1 Cor 15:49; Phil 3:21). As Paul said, "Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly." The resurrection is required to completely restore the marred image of God to its original status and actually beyond. The new human spirit we receive at regeneration and the transformed human body we receive at resurrection are incorrupt and incorruptible. Thus we will dwell with Him eternally as creatures wholly renewed in both body and spirit. This has exciting implications for what we will be doing in the New Heaven and New Earth (Rev 21-22).

Now, that said, I don't want to lose the point James is making. We are not to curse men, **who have been made in the likeness of God. have been made** is a perfect active participle. It points out that God takes an active role in making each man and that once made they are made **in the likeness of God**. He made each of us albeit indirectly through procreation, through the mother and father and the development within the womb of which He takes part (Ps 139:13-16). So, if all men are made in the likeness of God then it is logical that we should not curse them. God was active in bringing this person into existence. If we come along and curse that man then have we not cursed the God who made that man? Put another way, by cursing the likeness of God have we not also cursed God? Similar kinds of arguments are found throughout the Bible. For example, Gen 9:5-6 prohibits murder. If a man murders another man the murderer must be capitally punished *because* man is God's image. Exod 21:17 prohibited cursing one's parents. If a child cursed his parents the child was capitally punished because parents are God's representatives. So here if a man curses another man he is cursing God Himself. So, we should never curse a man, we should never "call down curses on a man, detest them". As Paul said, Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse" (Rom 12:14) and as Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44).^{vii} And he was talking about individual enemies not national enemies. He's not saying ignore a national assault against your country, ignore 9/11. He's not saying "Don't go to war." He's talking on the individual level. And if you do this, if you genuinely love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you I can guarantee God will knock your socks off. It's not easy to do. Sometimes you have to back off from the situation, the conflict, whatever has happened, pray about this thing, "Lord, what would you have me to do here. I don't want to let this thing blow up. I don't want full scale conflict with this person. Lord, work this thing out, work in their life because I love this person and there's this conflict and I'm not going to solve it. I'm just going to follow your word." And sometimes what you need to do after that little prayer is just call this person and say, "Hey, I know we have a conflict, I'm not angry at you and I just wanted you to know that." Don't let it boil in your mind or their mind. And if you do this I think you'll be surprised what God will do. Some of my strongest and best friends in the world today are people I had conflict with in the past. And I prayed for these people and God was faithful, He's always faithful. And some of these people are life-long friends. I can count on them for anything and they can

count on me. But you always have this choice. Are you going to get nasty with people and give them what they deserve, are you going to run them down and wish the worst for them or are you going to show them grace and pray for them. The tongue can go either way. Take some time, think about these things, ask yourself, "Do I pray for my enemies? Do I bless those who persecute me?"

Verse 10, **from the same mouth come blessing and cursing**. This is the point today. The tongue is two-sided. And all this does is manifest our hearts, we've got an old sin nature and we've got a new nature, one curses the other blesses. What's the controlling principle at any one given time? Am I walking by the Spirit or am I walking by the flesh? And something's not right about this. This two-sided thing is abnormal. Look at what James says, **My brethren, these things ought not to be**. That's the way they are but that's not the way they ought to be. So there's this inner conflict going on. We're in the process of development, We've got a new regenerate spirit that blesses under the filling of the Spirit and we've got an old sinful nature that curses under the flesh. And this is not how things ought to be. And they aren't always going to be this way either. One day, that sin nature is going to be eradicated and the only thing that is going to come from your lips, as a believer, is blessing. But in the meantime there's this oddity to our lives and all we can do now is advance to maturity and be spiritual. That's the best that can be done, and when you're there you'll be in the place where you can use the tongue to build up and not tear down, you won't be as prone to stumbling with your lips.

Now, we want to look at verses 11-12 briefly. All James is doing here is saying, "Hey, look, there's nothing else like the tongue out there." And that just goes to show that something's wrong here. We're out of kilter with creation. **Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?** What we have here is a *pege*, a spring, a fresh water spring. Have you ever drank water out of a spring? Isn't it refreshing, it's pure, it's cold, it's perfect, you say to yourself, "This is the way things are supposed to be. Don't you." When I was in Israel up north by Tel Dan you have mountains up there and a few get snow and it was June so it's melting and it comes from three sources right into the Upper Jordan and into the Lake of Galilee and we were at one of those sources and you just dip your bottle in that water and it's cold, pure, you've been hiking for awhile. Talk

about refreshing. That's the picture here. And James says **Does the spring pour forth fresh and bitter water from the same opening?** No, of course not. But our mouths do. What an incongruence. That word **fresh** is *glukos*. Anyone know what word we get from that in the English? Glucose. What's that? A sugar. In the ancient world they called fresh water "sweet" water because it was drinkable, it satisfied. You can remember in Exodus when God made the waters sweet at Marah (Exod 15:25). Not **bitter**, there's the antonym to *glukos*, its *pikros*, bitter water, sour to the taste, undrinkable. You might remember a famous Proverb that talks about "sweetness of speech increases receptivity to teaching" (Prov 16:21). When someone makes something palatable, because of its logical coherence or its clarity or the beauty of expression or it's kindness we just lap it up. It appeals to us and the tongue can be used that way. But it can also be very bitter. So, the point is that one source isn't supposed to pour forth two opposites. And this reminds us of the source of our speech, the heart. Whatever fills your heart is going to come out your mouth. And so we want to fill our hearts with the truth of God's word and advance to maturity and walk as spiritual.

Then another question, **Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs?** And the obvious answer is "No". **figs, olives, vines**, all common in Israel. In Fredericksburg we'd say "peaches". Peach trees don't make apples. So, the principle here is like produces like not unlike. You don't get **olives** on a **fig tree** and you don't get **figs** on a **grapevine**. Why doesn't the tongue follow the same principle? Because we've got a flawed heart.

Finally, **Nor can salt water produce fresh**. I got to thinking, if I were in the land of Israel what images would this conjure up. And we talked about that fresh, sweet water that comes from those mountains in the north and how they flow into the Upper Jordan River, down into the Lake of Galilee and that's Israel's primary water source (30%). It's a real important source of water. Syria, Jordan and Palestinians in the West Bank keep trying to get their hands on the Jordan River and the Lake of Galilee because they all know Israel wouldn't make it without that fresh water. So, any Hebrew in James' day would think of the Jordan and the Lake of Galilee when you spoke of fresh water. And what would they think of if you said **salt water**? This is the Greek word *alukos* and it's not used anywhere else in the NT but it is used in the Greek LXX in Num 34:3 and 12 of the Salt Sea, also called

the Dead Sea. And I want to bring these two images together for you geographically to illustrate the two-sided tongue.



If you follow the sweet waters from those mountains down the Upper Jordan to the Lake of Galilee and into the Lower Jordan where do they end up? In the Dead Sea. 33% mineral content. Anyone and everyone can float in that water. You can't sink. It tastes terrible. If you drink a mouthful of that water it will kill you, literally. And that fresh water of the Jordan meets with that salty water of the Dead Sea, and right there where they meet, that's your tongue. It's an enigma this thing and there's a war going on. The world, the flesh and the devil are down here in the Dead Sea trying to corrupt your heart and then there's God and His word up here in the Jordan calling you to learn sweet Bible doctrine and advance spiritually under the Holy Spirit. What are you going to do? Many of you, you're here once a week, granted some of you can't make it any other time but listen. The word of God is not going to overwhelm your circumstances if you're here once a week, it's just not going to happen. You have got to start listening to the audio, going over it and over it and over, showing up for Bible class consistently every time the doors are open or listening to the CD's when you miss. This is not a game. You may think it's a game but there is a war going on and it's going to get real out in the open when the Tribulation hits but it's going on right now. There's a war over what's going into your heart/mind. With our heads bowed and our eyes closed.

ⁱ There are five views of "image" and "likeness" in the literature. 1) "Image" and "likeness" are distinct, 2) The image refers to the mental and spiritual faculties that man shares with his creator,

3) The image consists of a physical resemblance, i.e. man looks like God, 4) The image makes man God's representative on earth, and 5) The image is a capacity to relate to God.

ii Evans and Coder *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*.

iii Keil *Commentary on the OT* taken from Luther.

iv I realize there are other differences in terms of role or function between men and angels but here I am only referring to constitutional differences between man and angel.

v While angels do not have a body this does not mean they cannot and have not corporealized at various times in biblical history and through those bodies interacted with this physical creation (e.g. The Sons of God Coming In To the Daughters of Men in Gen 6, the Sodom and Gomorrah episode in Gen 18, Peter's Prison Break in Acts 12, Angels rolling Away the Stone at Jesus Tomb in Matt 28 and many instances in the Future Tribulation of Rev 6-18.

vi Charles Clough.

vii Here's another parallel in James to the Sermon on the Mount which so many expositors have noticed.

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