

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Notes

Sermon Notes for August 15, 1999

Dale Whitehead

"Taming the Tongue"

James 3:1-12

Five reasons why we need to control our tongue.

The tongue's potential to bring judgment (Matthew 12:36, James 3:1).

The tongue's potential to effect the entire course of our lives (James 3:2-4).

The tongue's potential for destruction (James 3:5,6)

James gives us three major elements of danger.

1) The uncontrolled tongue corrupts the whole person.

James refers to the uncontrolled tongue as "the very world of iniquity" because it embodies in itself the essence of all wickedness. And can be an active part of every expression of it.

2) The uncontrolled tongue sets the whole course of life on fire.

Since the preceding phrase spoke of the impact of the tongue on the "whole person", this expression seems intended to set forth the wider social impact of the uncontrolled tongue.

3) The uncontrolled tongue is Satan's tool.

The word "hell" (GEHENNA) is not found in the New Testament outside of the synoptic gospels, where, in each case, it is used by Jesus. The word literally means "Valley of Hinnom," a deep gorge southwest of Jerusalem, where trash, garbage, and the bodies of dead animals were dumped and continually burned.

The Lord used (GEHENNA) to represent the eternal, never-ending torment of hell, "the unquenchable fire, where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:43-44 cf. Isaiah 66:24; Matthew 5:22).

"Hell" is Satan's place, prepared for him and his demons (Matthew 25:41). As such, it is used here as a synonym for Satan and the demons.

Now with this in mind we would have to conclude that the phrase, "and is set on fire by hell" indicates that the tongue can be Satan's tool, fulfilling hell's purposes to pollute, corrupt, and destroy.

An evil report involves a distortion of facts, incomplete facts, or false information. It is given with wrong motivations and can very easily leave the hearer with a negative impression of the person or organization which was the topic of conversation. (2 Samuel 15; Nehemiah 6:1-7).