

## James Chapter 3:1-12 – The Dangers of the Tongue

James 3:1-12

### IV. The Dangers of the Tongue – 3:1-12

#### Introduction

In this section of James, he focuses on the tongue, with its dangers and strengths. He uses six different metaphors to describe it, which can be put into three different categories illustrating the strengths of the tongue.

James 3:1-12 – <sup>1</sup>Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. <sup>2</sup>For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. <sup>3</sup>Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. <sup>4</sup>Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. <sup>5</sup>So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things.

See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! <sup>6</sup>And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. <sup>8</sup>But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; <sup>10</sup>from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. <sup>11</sup>Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? <sup>12</sup>Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

<3:1> Μή πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί μου, εἰδότες ὅτι μείζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα. <3:2> πολλὰ γὰρ πταίομεν ἅπαντες. εἴ τις ἐν λόγῳ οὐ πταίει, οὗτος τέλειος ἀνὴρ δυνατὸς χαλιναγωγῆσαι καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα. <3:3> εἰ δὲ τῶν ἵππων τοὺς χαλινοὺς εἰς τὰ στόματα βάλλομεν εἰς τὸ πείθεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν, καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα αὐτῶν μεταγομεν. <3:4> ἰδοὺ καὶ τὰ πλοῖα τηλικαῦτα ὄντα καὶ ὑπὸ ἀνέμων σκληρῶν ἐλαυνόμενα, μεταγεται ὑπὸ ἐλαχίστου πηδαλίου ὅπου ἡ ὀρμὴ τοῦ εὐθύνοτος βούλεται, <3:5> οὕτως καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα μικρὸν μέλος ἐστὶν καὶ μεγάλα αὐχεῖ.

Ἰδοὺ ἡλίκον πῦρ ἡλίκην ὕλην ἀνάπτει. <3:6> καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα πῦρ ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας ἡ γλῶσσα καθίσταται ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν, ἡ σπιλοῦσα ὅλον τὸ σῶμα καὶ φλογίζουσα τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως καὶ φλογιζομένη ὑπὸ τῆς γεέννης. <3:7> πᾶσα γὰρ φύσις θηρίων τε καὶ πετεινῶν, ἐρπετῶν τε καὶ ἐναλίω δαμάζεται καὶ δεδάμασται τῇ φύσει τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ, <3:8> τὴν δὲ γλῶσσαν οὐδεὶς δαμάσαι δύναται ἀνθρώπων, ἀκατάστατον κακόν, μεστή ἰοῦ θανατηφόρου. <3:9> ἐν αὐτῇ εὐλογοῦμεν τὸν κύριον καὶ πατέρα καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ καταρώμεθα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς καθ' ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ γεγονότας, <3:10> ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ στόματος ἐξέρχεται εὐλογία καὶ κατάρα. οὐ χρὴ, ἀδελφοί μου, ταῦτα οὕτως γίνεσθαι. <3:11> μήτι ἡ πηγὴ ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ὀπῆς βρῦει τὸ γλυκὺ καὶ τὸ πικρὸν; <3:12> μὴ

δύναται, ἀδελφοί μου, σικκὴ ἐλαίας ποιῆσαι ἢ ἄμπελος σύκα; οὔτε ἄλυκὸν γλυκὺ ποιῆσαι ὕδωρ.

### A. Warning for Bible Teachers – 3:1-2

#### Passage

Here is the text for this section:

James 3:1-2 – <sup>1</sup>Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. <sup>2</sup>For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

<3:1> Μή πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί μου, εἰδότες ὅτι μείζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα. <3:2> πολλὰ γὰρ πταίομεν ἅπαντες. εἴ τις ἐν λόγῳ οὐ πταίει, οὗτος τέλειος ἀνὴρ δυνατὸς χαλιναγωγῆσαι καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα.

“The wise man is not in a hurry to be a teacher. He knows how great is the risk of misusing the teacher’s instrument, the tongue (1–2). – Dimont

#### Verse 1

Μή πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί μου, εἰδότες ὅτι μείζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα. Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment

#### My brethren –

Ἄδελφοί μου

James continues his use of this phrase to indicate a new line of thought.

#### Teachers

**διδάσκαλοι** didaskaloi Let not many of you become **teachers**, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

[διδάσκαλος](#) didaskalos **teacher**

[noun, nominative, plural, masculine](#)

Sense: teacher – a person who instructs others by imparting skills or knowledge; probably as an occupation.

[BDAG](#) teacher

[LXGRCANLEX](#) teacher

[CDWGTBH](#)

This word is used 58 times in the NT, and of the 48 in the Gospels, nearly all of them are used in reference to Jesus.

#### Do not become (Imperative (16.5.7)) –

Imperative number 21!!!

**γίνεσθε** ginesthe **Let** not many of you **become** teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

**γίνομαι** ginomai **be; become; take place**

[verb](#), [present](#), [either middle or passive](#), [imperative](#), [second person](#), [plural](#)

Sense: to become (condition) – **to enter or assume a certain state or condition.**

[BDAG](#) be born, be produced; be made, be created, be manufactured, be performed; arise, come about, develop; happen, turn out, take place; become someth.; move; to be, prove to be, turn out to be; be there; belong to; be in, be there

[LXGRCANLEX](#) be born, become; to be; to become; to take place; to be born; to happen; to be made; to be done; to come; to come into being; to come about; to arise; to be created; to move; to belong to; to be there

[CDWGTHTB](#)

**“A ready tongue without an informed mind, a devout character, and a holy life will hinder rather than advance the cause of Christ.”** – Vaughan

**“Think of the damage that can be done by a teacher who is unprepared, or whose spiritual life is not up to par.”** – Wiersbe

**Knowing –**

**εἰδότες** eidotes **Let** not many of you become teachers, my brethren, **knowing** that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

**οἶδα** oida **know**

[verb](#), [perfect](#), [active](#), [participle](#), [plural](#), [nominative](#), [masculine](#)

Sense: to know (reflectively) – to know or have knowledge about (someone or something); normally as acquired through reflection or thinking.

[BDAG](#) know; can, be able; understand, recognize, come to know, experience; recollect, recall, be aware of; respect, honor

[LXGRCANLEX](#) to know; know; to know how; to acknowledge; to understand; to respect

**Stricter –**

**μείζον** meizon **Let** not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a **stricter** judgment.

**μέγας** megas **great; loud**

[adjective](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [neuter](#), [comparative](#)

Sense: greater – greater in size or importance or degree.

[BDAG](#) large, great; great; surprising

[LXGRCANLEX](#) large, great; great; large; important; great one

[CDWGTHTB](#)

**Judgment**

**κρίμα** krima **Let** not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur **a** stricter **judgment**.

**κρίμα** krima **judgment; condemnation**

[noun](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: sentence – the punishment that is imposed following a verdict of guilty in a court case.

[BDAG](#) dispute, lawsuit; decision, decree; judging, judgment; judicial verdict; justice.

[LXGRCANLEX](#) lawsuit; judgment; judgment; dispute; condemnation; judicial verdict

[CDWGTHTB](#)

Teachers will be judged with “special strictness.”

**Judgment is correct, not condemnation (KJV).**

**We will incur –**

**λημψόμεθα** lēmpsometha **Let** not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such **we will incur** a stricter judgment.

**λαμβάνω** lambanō **receive; take**

[verb](#), [future](#), [middle](#), [indicative](#), [first person](#), [plural](#)

Sense: to experience ⇔ receive – to experience, conceived of as coming into the possession of an experience.

[BDAG](#) take, take hold of, grasp, take in hand; remove; take, acquire; receive, accept; take up, receive; choose, select; receive; receive, make one’s own, apprehend/comprehend; receive, get, obtain

[LXGRCANLEX](#) take; to receive; to take; to lay hands on; to take possession of; to seize; to take away; to take hold of; to collect; to select; to come to believe; to acquire; to receive back; to try an experiment

[CDWGTHTB](#)

**James includes himself** as a teaching elder in the church in Jerusalem.

“Christian teachers entered into a perilous heritage. In the Church, they took the place of the Rabbis in Judaism. There were many great and saintly Rabbis, but the Rabbi was treated in a way that was liable to ruin the character of any man. His very name means ‘My great one’. Everywhere he went, he was treated with the utmost respect. It was actually held that a man’s duty to his Rabbi exceeded his duty to his parents, because his parents only brought him into the life of this world but his

teacher brought him into the life of the world to come. It was also said that if a man's parents and a man's teacher were captured by an enemy, the Rabbi must be ransomed first. It was true that a Rabbi was not allowed to take money for teaching and that he was supposed to support his physical needs by working at a trade; but it was also held that it was a specially pious and meritorious work to take a Rabbi into the household and to support him with every care. It was desperately easy for a Rabbi to become the kind of person whom Jesus depicted—a spiritual tyrant who made a great show of piety, someone who loved to have the highest place at any function, a person who gloried in the almost subservient respect shown to him in public (cf. Matthew 23:4–7). No profession is more liable to give rise to spiritual and intellectual pride.” – Barclay

Vaughan says, “The office of teacher offered a respect, a prominence, and an authority which made some men hanker after it.” James says, “Don’t!!!”

The outward privileges of the role are far more than offset by the immense responsibility. Remember Jesus' words:

Luke 12:48 – “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.”

“A teacher's greater knowledge brings with it a greater responsibility to live according to that knowledge.” – Moo

“In the New Testament itself, we get glimpses of teachers who failed in their responsibility and became false teachers. There were teachers who tried to turn Christianity into another kind of Judaism and tried to introduce circumcision and the keeping of the law (Acts 15:24). There were teachers who lived out nothing of the truth which they taught, whose lives were a contradiction of what they taught and who did nothing but bring dishonour on the faith they represented (Romans 2:17–29). There were some who tried to teach before they themselves knew anything (1 Timothy 1:6–7), and others who pandered to the false desires of the crowd (2 Timothy 4:3).” – Barclay

What can we infer about the churches James was addressing from this verse? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some practical applications of this verse? \_\_\_\_\_

What should you look for in a teacher? \_\_\_\_\_

What might be the benefits of having more than one teacher? \_\_\_\_\_

What practical applications should the teacher have from this verse? \_\_\_\_\_

We could also talk about the implication that if everyone listened to James, there would be few teachers, and thus more pressure on the teachers that remain, and greater difficulty to create teaching teams and find backups.

“A concern about people wanting to teach leads James into a general warning about the tongue.” – Moo

## Verse 2

πολλὰ γὰρ πταίωμεν ἅπαντες. εἴ τις ἐν λόγῳ οὐ πταίει, οὗτος τέλειος ἀνὴρ, δυνατὸς χαλιναγωγῆσαι καὶ ὄλον τὸ σῶμα.	For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well
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## We stumble –

**πταίωμεν** ptaiomen For **we** all **stumble** in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

πταίω ptaiō **stumble; trip**

verb, present, active, indicative, first person, plural

Sense: to sin ⇔ stumble – to sin, conceived of as missing a step and falling or nearly falling.

BDAG stumble, trip; be ruined, be lost

LXGRCANLEX stumble, trip; to stumble

CDWGTHB

James used this idea of “stumbling” in 2:10, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.”

James even included himself in this. **We all stumble.** (“All”, by its position in the Greek, is emphatic.)

“We commit sin again and again – all of us.” – Vaughan

“In many ways” likely means in lots of different ways, setting the stage for him to hone in on one particular way we sin – with our words.

## What he says –

**λόγῳ** logō For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in **what he says**, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

λόγος logos **word; message**

noun, dative, singular, masculine

Sense: message (communication) – a communication that is most often spoken, but can come through other means.

BDAG word; computation, reckoning; the Logos.

LXGRCANLEX word; account; appearance; statement; saying; word of

mouth; speech; Word; reason; matter; thing

[CDWGTHB](#)

We sin in many ways, “but at no point are we more likely to sin than in the realm of speech.” – Vaughan

### Perfect

Here is James’ favorite word, again!

**τέλειος** teleios For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a **perfect** man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

[τέλειος](#) teleios **perfect; mature**

[adjective, nominative, singular, masculine](#)

Sense: perfect – being complete of its kind and without defect or blemish.

[BDAG](#) perfect; perfect, complete, expert; full-grown, mature, adult;

initiated.; perfect, fully developed

[LXGRCANLEX](#) perfect; complete; mature; perfect; complete; final; total

[CDWGTHB](#)

Mature. Grown up.

### To bridle –

This isn’t the first time James has used this term. Remember 1:26.

James 1:26 – If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not **bridle** his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man’s religion is worthless.

**χαλιναγωγῆσαι** chalinagōgēsai For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able **to bridle** the whole body as well.

[χαλιναγωγέω](#) chalinagōgeō **bridle; hold in**

**check**

[verb, aorist, active, infinitive](#)

Sense: to curb ⇔ bridle – to curb something, conceived of as placing a bridle on something (like a horse) so as to control it.

[BDAG](#) bridle, hold in check

[LXGRCANLEX](#) to bridle, hold in check; to bridle; to hold in check

[CDWGTHB](#)

These are the only two times the word is used in the Bible.

“One’s ability to control his tongue implies control over the whole body.” – Vaughan

“Speech sins are the most difficult to stop, if we could stop them, then we surely could stop all the rest.” – Blomberg and Kamell

This is a really valuable principle, and one that I hope my girls learn. They (and I) can tell a whole lot about a boy by watching what happens when he gets hurt, angry, scared. What comes out of his mouth will tell whether or not he has control of his tongue. And if he doesn’t have control of that, it’s extremely likely that he doesn’t have control of other parts of his body, either.

### Summary of 1-2

“It is James’ warning that teachers have of their own choice entered into a special position and are, therefore, under the greater condemnation if they fail in their task. The people to whom James was writing coveted the prestige given to teachers; James demanded that they should never forget the responsibility.” – Barclay

“James warns his readers to think twice before becoming teachers. A Christian teacher must be both wise and genuine, and this will be proved by self-control.” – Knowles

## B. The Power of the Tongue – 3:3-5a

### Passage

Here is the text for this section:

James 3:3-5a – <sup>3</sup>Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. <sup>4</sup>Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. <sup>5</sup>So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things.

«3:3» εἰ δὲ τῶν ἵππων τοὺς χαλινοὺς εἰς τὰ στόματα βάλλομεν εἰς τὸ πείθεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν, καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα αὐτῶν μετάγομεν. «3:4» ἰδοὺ καὶ τὰ πλοῖα τηλικαῦτα ὄντα καὶ ὑπὸ ἀνέμων σκληρῶν ἐλαυνόμενα, μετάγεται ὑπὸ ἐλαχίστου πηδαλίου ὅπου ἡ ὁρμὴ τοῦ εὐθύνοτος βούλεται. «3:5» οὕτως καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα μικρὸν μέλος ἐστὶν καὶ μεγάλα αὐχεῖ.

### Verse 3

εἰ δὲ τῶν ἵππων τοὺς χαλινοὺς εἰς τὰ στόματα βάλλομεν εἰς τὸ πείθεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν, καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα αὐτῶν μετάγομεν. | [NASB95 NT RI](#)

Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well | [NASB95](#)

### Bits –

**χαλινοὺς** chalinous Now if we put the **bits** into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.

[χαλινός](#) chalinos **bridle; bit**

[noun, accusative, plural, masculine](#)

Sense: bit (bridle) – a piece of metal (perhaps iron) held in a horse's mouth by reins and used to control the horse while riding.

[BDAG](#) bit, bridle

[LXGRCANLEX](#) bit, bridle; bit

[CDWGTHB](#)

### Obey –

**πείθεσθαι** peithesthai Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will **obey** us, we direct their entire body as well.

[πείθω](#) peithō **persuade; convince**

[verb, present, passive, infinitive](#)

Sense: to obey – to be obedient to.

[BDAG](#) convince; persuade, appeal to; cajole, mislead; win over, strive to please; conciliate, pacify, set at ease/rest; depend on, trust in; be convinced, be sure, certain; be persuaded, believe; obey, follow; be

persuaded by someone, take someone's advice; obey, follow someone; be convinced, certain

[LXGRCANLEX](#) convince; to persuade; to depend on; to put confidence in; to have confidence; to trust in; to obey; to conciliate; to appeal to  
[CDWGTHB](#)

### Direct, turn (KJV, NIV), guide (ESV, RSV) –

**μετάγομεν** metagomen Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, **we direct** their entire body as well.

[μετάγω](#) metagō **guide; direct**

[verb, present, active, indicative, first person, plural](#)

Sense: to guide (course) – to direct the course of; determine the direction of travelling.

[BDAG](#) guide; move, remove

[LXGRCANLEX](#) guide; move; to guide

[CDWGTHB](#)

### Verse 4

ἰδοὺ καὶ τὰ πλοῖα, τηλικαῦτα ὄντα καὶ ὑπὸ ἀνέμων σκληρῶν ἐλαυνόμενα, μετάγεται ὑπὸ ἐλαχίστου πηδαλίου ὅπου ἡ ὁρμὴ τοῦ εὐθύνοτος βούλεται. | [NASB95 NT RI](#)

Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires | [NASB95](#)

### Look, behold (KJV), take as an example (NIV) (Imperative (17.5.7)) –

Imperative number 22!!!

### Ships –

**πλοῖα** ploia Look at the **ships** also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.

[πλοῖον](#) ploion **ship; boat**

[noun, nominative, plural, neuter](#)

Sense: boat – any size boat; including those propelled by oars or those with a mast and sails.

[BDAG](#) ship; boat; a ship

[LXGRCANLEX](#) a ship; boat; ship

[CDWGTHB](#)

“As the ship which conveyed Paul to Malta, which contained two hundred and seventy-six persons (Acts 27:37).” – Vincent

### Strong, fierce (KJV) –

**σκληρῶν** sklērōn Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by **strong** winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.

[σκληρός](#) sklēros **harsh; hard**

[adjective, genitive, plural, masculine](#)

Sense: hard (severe) – very strong or vigorous.

[BDAG](#) hard; rough; hard, harsh, unpleasant; hard, strict, harsh, cruel, merciless; stubbornness

[LXGRCANLEX](#) hard; rough; rough; hard; demanding

[CDWGTHB](#)

“A dead branch that no longer bends.” – Lenski

### Directed, guided (ESV, RSV), steered (NIV), turned (KJV) –

**μετάγεται** metagetai Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, **are** still **directed** by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.

[μετάγω](#) metagō **guide; direct**

[verb, present, passive, indicative, third person, singular](#)

Sense: to be guided (course) – to be directed in the course of; be determined in the direction of travel.

[BDAG](#) guide; move, remove

[LXGRCANLEX](#) guide; move; to guide

[CDWGTHB](#)

### Very small –

**ἐλαχίστου** elachistou Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a **very small** rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.

[ἐλάχιστος](#) elachistos **insignificant; least; trivial**

[adjective, genitive, singular, neuter](#)

Sense: least – a superlative quantifier meaning smallest in amount, extent, or degree.

[BDAG](#) least.; very small/short; insignificant, trivial

[LXGRCANLEX](#) least; very small; least; insignificant; very small; least important

[CDWGTHB](#)

Aristotle – “A rudder is small and it is attached to the very end of the ship, but it has such power that by this little rudder, and by the power of one man—and that a power gently exerted—the great bulk of ships can be moved.”

### Verse 5a

οὕτως καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα μικρὸν μέρος ἐστὶν τοῦ σώματος, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ὑψοῦται ἐπὶ τὰ μεγάλα ἀρχεῖται. Ἰδοὺ ἡλίκων πύρ ἡλίκην ὕλην ἀνάπτει. | [NASB95 NT RI](#) So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire | [NASB95](#)

Commentators add that the same exact thing can be said and applied to the pen, and today, the text.

### Small, little (RSV, KJV) –

**μικρὸν** mikron So also the tongue is a **small** part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

[μικρός](#) mikros **small; little**

[adjective, nominative, singular, neuter](#)

Sense: small – limited or below average in number, quantity, magnitude, or extent.

[BDAG](#) small, short; unimportant, insignificant; smallness

[LXGRCANLEX](#) small; small amount; short time; little; short; insignificant; unimportant

[CDWGTHB](#)

### Great things, great (NIV) –

**μεγάλα** megala So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of **great things**. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

[μέγας](#) megas **great; loud**

[adjective, accusative, plural, neuter](#)

Sense: great – remarkable or out of the ordinary in degree, magnitude, or effect.

[BDAG](#) large, great; great; surprising

[LXGRCANLEX](#) large, great; great; large; important; great one

[CDWGTHB](#)

## Boasts –

**αὐχεῖ** auchei So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet **it boasts of** great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

**αὐχέω** aucheō **boast**

[verb](#), [present](#), [active](#), [indicative](#), [third person](#), [singular](#)

Sense: to boast (show off) – to show off verbally.

[BDAG](#) boast

[LXGRCANLEX](#) boast; to boast

“In spite of its smallness, the tongue achieves great results.” – Vaughan

“It is not an empty boast. Indeed, it is difficult to exaggerate the deeds of the tongue. It can sway men to violence, or it can move them to the noblest actions. It can instruct the ignorant, encourage the dejected, comfort the sorrowing, and soothe the dying. Or, it can crush the human spirit, destroy reputations, spread distrust and hate, and bring nations to the brink of war.” – Vaughan

### Summary of 3:3-5a:

“The point is the smallness of the tongue and the greatness of its effect.” – Lenski

“The tongue also is small, yet it can direct the whole course of a person’s life.” – Barclay

Proverbs 18:21 – **Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.**

You might look at James’ metaphors and note that the bit and rudder control the horse and ship, but the tongue doesn’t control the body. While I believe James’ point here is just to begin his next argument clearly understanding how small the tongue is, yet how great it’s impact can be, there is the possibility of an alternate, deeper point here. James could be continuing his thought about teachers from verses 1 and 2. He could be saying that the tongue (teachers) control the direction of the entire church, and therefore must be kept under control.

“James is not for a moment saying that silence is better than speech. He is not pleading for a life where speech is forbidden, as it would be for Trappist monks. He is pleading for the control of the tongue. Aristippus, the Greek philosopher, had a wise saying: ‘The conqueror of pleasure is not the man who never uses it. He is the man who uses pleasure as a rider guides a horse or a steersman directs a ship, and so directs them wherever he wishes.’ Abstention from anything is never a complete substitute for control in its use. James is pleading not for the silence that comes from a fear of saying something wrong or hurtful but for a wise use of speech.” – Barclay

## A Special Word for Dads

Dads: Your words weigh more. Your critical words have a stronger negative effect than anyone else in your child’s life. And your positive encouragement can mean more than anyone else’s.

Colossians 3:21 – Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Listen to Andy Stanley in his sermon *Future Family*:

“Now, again, for me as a father this is probably one of the New Testament teachings that I have violated the most. It’s usually unintentional. Exasperate or embitter means you say things to your kids, and you may mean something positive. You’re trying to discipline them or you’re trying to encourage them or you’re trying to contrast their behavior with somebody else’s, and without meaning to you’ve just frustrated them. You’ve just burdened them.

And you argue, ‘But what I’ve said is true; I’m just telling them the truth.’ But you place a weight on your words that causes them to be discouraging, not helpful, or encouraging.

**We’ll talk about this later, but dads, we need to know this. You see, women—moms—your words weigh about twenty-five pounds. Dads, your words weigh about five hundred pounds. And men can say the same thing a woman can say, a father can say the same thing a mother can say, and it feels different.**

And two thousand years ago . . . this is amazing . . . Paul knew that. And he doesn’t say, ‘Women, don’t exasperate your children. He says, ‘Fathers, I know your tendency. Your tendency is to treat your children like slaves. Your tendency is to treat your children like the men and women you own. Your tendency is to treat your children like your animals.’

No, your children—remember, Jesus said that it’s okay to bring the children up to the front row. Fathers, be careful how you speak to your children. I’m telling you, there are so many bad parenting examples where I just wish, I wish, I wish could go back and retake the words that I said. And in every case the words were true, but they crushed the spirit of one of my children. But the ideal way to relate to our wives and children is recorded in the Bible. That’s two thousand years ago Paul understood that dynamic. Isn’t that powerful?”

### C. Examples of the Tongue's Danger – 3:5b-12

If you're a man you speak an average of 20,000 words a day. If you're a woman you speak 30,000 words a day. (Like the guy who was asked, "Do you resent that your wife has the last word?" He replied, "No, I'm just glad when she finally gets to it!" Or the wife who broke her jaw. When they took an X-ray it turned out to be a motion picture.)

#### Passage

Here is the text for this section:

James 3:5b-12 – See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! <sup>6</sup>And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. <sup>8</sup>But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; <sup>10</sup>from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. <sup>11</sup>Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*? <sup>12</sup>Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can* salt water produce fresh.

Ἴδου ἡλίκον πῦρ ἡλίκην ὕλην ἀνάπτει· <3:6> καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα πῦρ· ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας ἡ γλῶσσα καθίσταται ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν, ἡ σπιλοῦσα ὄλον τὸ σῶμα καὶ φλογίζουσα τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως καὶ φλογιζομένη ὑπὸ τῆς γεέννης. <3:7> πᾶσα γὰρ φύσις θηρίων τε καὶ πετεινῶν, ἐρπετῶν τε καὶ ἐναλίω δαμάζεται καὶ δεδάμασται τῇ φύσει τῆ ἀνθρωπίνῃ. <3:8> τὴν δὲ γλῶσσαν οὐδεὶς δαμάσαι δύναται ἀνθρώπων, ἀκατάστατον κακόν, μεστή ἰοῦ θανατηφόρου. <3:9> ἐν αὐτῇ εὐλογοῦμεν τὸν κύριον καὶ πατέρα καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ καταρώμεθα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς καθ' ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ γεγονότας, <3:10> ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ στόματος ἐξέρχεται εὐλογία καὶ κατάρα. οὐ χρή, ἀδελφοί μου, ταῦτα οὕτως γίνεσθαι. <3:11> μήτι ἡ πηγὴ ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ὀπῆς βρῦει τὸ γλυκὺ καὶ τὸ πικρὸν; <3:12> μὴ δύναται, ἀδελφοί μου, συκὴ ἐλαίας ποιῆσαι ἢ ἄμπελος σῦκα; οὔτε ἀλυκὸν γλυκὺ ποιῆσαι ὕδωρ.

We finish this major section on the tongue and should remember well the quote we ended with last time:

Proverbs 18:21 – **Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.**

#### Verse 5b

Ἴδου ἡλίκον πῦρ ἡλίκην ὕλην ἀνάπτει· | See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire | [NASB95 NT RI](#)

### See, behold (KJV), consider (NIV) (Imperative (18.5.7)) –

Imperative number 23!!!

#### Such a small, –

**ἡλίκον** hēlikon So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by **such a small** fire!

[ἡλίκος](#) hēlikos **how great; how small**

[adjective, nominative, singular, neuter](#)

[BDAG](#) how great

[LXGRCANLEX](#) how great

[CDWGTHB](#)

“Impossible to convey in English translation is a striking rhetorical feature of this sentence: the words ‘great’ and ‘small’ translate the same Greek word. The word in question ‘expresses magnitude in either direction.’”

#### Fire, spark (NIV) –

**πῦρ** pyr So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame **by such a small fire!**

[πῦρ](#) pyr **fire**

[noun, nominative, singular, neuter](#)

Sense: fire (element) – the process of combustion of flammable materials producing heat and light and (often) smoke.

[BDAG](#) fire

[LXGRCANLEX](#) fire

[CDWGTHB](#)

#### Forest, wood –

In their experience in Israel at that time, they would likely not see forests. But there was brush that covered the hills, and in their dry climate it could easily burst into flame with disastrous results.

#### How great –

**ἡλίκην** hēlikēn So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See **how great** a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

[ἡλίκος](#) hēlikos **how great; how small**

[adjective, accusative, singular, feminine](#)

[BDAG](#) how great

[LXGRCANLEX](#) how great

[CDWGTHB](#)



**Set aflame, kindleth (KJV), set ablaze (RSV), is set on fire (NIV) –**

**ἀνάπτει** anaptei So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest **is set aflame** by such a small fire!

**ἀνάπτω** anaptō **kindle; set ablaze**

**verb, present, active, indicative, third person, singular**

Sense: to kindle – to cause to start burning.

**BDAG** kindle

**LXGRCANLEX** kindle; to kindle

**CDWGTHB**

## Verse 6

καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα πῦρ, ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας ἢ And the tongue is a fire, the very world of γλῶσσα καθίσταται ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν, iniquity; the tongue is set among our ἡ σπιλοῦσα ὅλον τὸ σῶμα καὶ members as that which defiles the entire φλογίζουσα τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως καὶ body, and sets on fire the course of our φλογιζομένη ὑπὸ τῆς γεέννης. | **NASB95** life, and is set on fire by hell | **NASB95 NT RI**

**Tongue –**

Note that unlike the hand, or even arrow, the tongue can do damage at great distances, especially when brought into today's culture with telephones, recordings, books, and the internet.

**World –**

**κόσμος** kosmos And the tongue is a fire, the very **world** of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

**κόσμος** kosmos **world**

**noun, nominative, singular, masculine**

Sense: totality ⇔ world – the quality of being complete and indiscriminate; understood as the world (and probably hyperbolic).

**BDAG** adornment, adorning; orderly arrangement, order; the world, the (orderly) universe; the world; totality, sum total

**LXGRCANLEX** order; the world; world; adornment

**CDWGTHB**

**Iniquity (NASB, NRSV, KJV), unrighteousness (ESV), evil (NIV) –**

**ἀδικίας** adikias And the tongue is a fire, the very world **of iniquity**; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

**ἀδικία** adikia **injustice; unrighteousness**

**noun, genitive, singular, feminine**

Sense: unrighteousness – failure to adhere to moral principles, commands, or laws.

**BDAG** wrongdoing; unrighteousness, wickedness, injustice

**LXGRCANLEX** unrighteousness; injustice; wrongdoing

**CDWGTHB**

**Is set (NASB, ESV), is (KJV), among (NIV), is placed (NRSV) –**

**καθίσταται** kathistatai And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue **is set** among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

**καθίστημι** kathistēmi **appoint; put in charge**

**verb, present, passive, indicative, third person, singular**

Sense: to be made – to be made or caused to be or to become.

**BDAG** bring, conduct, take; appoint, put in charge; make, cause

**LXGRCANLEX** bring, take; appoint; to appoint; to make; to set; to cause to be; to bring

**CDWGTHB**

"This differs a little from the simple *is*, though it is not easy to render it accurately. The verb means **to appoint, establish, institute**, and is used of the tongue as having an appointed and definite place in a system (among our members). It might be rendered **hath its place.**" – Vincent

**Defiles (NASB, KJV), staining (ESV, NRSV), corrupts (NIV) –**

**σπιλοῦσα** spilousa And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which **defiles** the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

**σπιλόω** spiloō **defile; stain; to stain, defile**

**verb, present, active, participle, singular, nominative, feminine**

Sense: to blemish ⇔ stain – to mar or impair with a flaw (as ritual impurity); conceived of as marking or discoloring with foreign matter.

**BDAG** stain, defile

**LXGRCANLEX** to stain, defile; to defile; to stain

**CDWGTHB**

## Sets on fire –

Only found twice in NT, both in this verse.

**φλογίζουσα** phlogizousa And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and **sets on fire** the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

[φλογίζω](#) phlogizō **set on fire**

[verb](#), [present](#), [active](#), [participle](#), [singular](#), [nominative](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: to set ablaze – to set fire to; cause to start burning.

[BDAG](#) set on fire

[LXGRCANLEX](#) set on fire; to set on fire

[CDWGTHB](#)

Don't forget that in that day, they "possessed few effective means for extinguishing fires."

## Course (NASB, KJV), cycle (NRSV), whole course (NIV) –

**τροχόν** trochon And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the **course** of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

[τροχός](#) trochos **wheel**

[noun](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [masculine](#)

Sense: course of existence – the various manners of acting and paths of life that constitute human existence; uncertain.

[BDAG](#) wheel

[LXGRCANLEX](#) wheel

[CDWGTHB](#)

## Life (NASB, ESV, NIV), nature (NRSV, KJV) –

**γενέσεως** geneseōs And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the **course of our life**, and is set on fire by hell.

[γένεσις](#) genesis **genealogy; birth; existence; origin**

[noun](#), [genitive](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: origin (source) – the source of something's existence or from where it is derives.

[BDAG](#) birth; existence; life, human experience; history, life.; lineage, family line

[LXGRCANLEX](#) birth; genealogy; existence; origin

[CDWGTHB](#)

*"The wheel of birth—i.e., the wheel which is set in motion at birth and runs on to the close of life."* – Vincent

"The tongue can destroy or corrupt the entire course of a person's life" – Faithlife Study Bible

After reading all of the commentaries, I get a picture here of a chariot or wagon whose wheels are on fire traveling through villages and fields, not only burning up itself, but also catching so much on fire around it, and ruining the lives of those affected by it.

## Whole course of life.

## Is set on fire –

**φλογιζομένη** phlogizomenē And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and **is set on fire** by hell.

[φλογίζω](#) phlogizō **set on fire**

[verb](#), [present](#), [passive](#), [participle](#), [singular](#), [nominative](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: to be set ablaze – to be set fire to; be caused to start burning; sometimes figuratively for the burning of anger.

[BDAG](#) set on fire

[LXGRCANLEX](#) set on fire; to set on fire

[CDWGTHB](#)

"In the tinder-dry conditions of Palestine, a forest fire was almost immediately out of control—and no one can control the damage of the tongue. 'Three things come not back—the spent arrow, the spoken word and the lost opportunity.' There is nothing so impossible to kill as a rumour; there is nothing so impossible to obliterate as an idle and malicious story. Before we speak, let us remember that once a word is spoken it is gone from our control; and let us think before we speak because, although we cannot get it back, we will most certainly answer for it." – Barclay

## Hell –

**γεέννης** geennēs And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by **hell**.

[γεέννα](#) geenna **hell; Gehenna**

[noun](#), [genitive](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: hell – a place of (darkness and fiery) torment where sinners suffer eternal punishment.

[BDAG](#) Gehenna

[LXGRCANLEX](#) Gehenna; hell  
[CDWGTHTB](#)

“The valley south of Jerusalem now called the Wadi er-Rababi (Josh. 15:8; 18:16; 2 Chron. 33:6; Jer. 32:35) became the place of child sacrifice to foreign gods. The Jews later used the valley for the dumping of refuse, the dead bodies of animals, and executed criminals. The continuing fires in the valley (to consume the refuse and dead bodies) apparently led the people to transfer the name to the place where the wicked dead suffer.” – Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary

### Summary

NIV translates this well.

It corrupts the whole person,  
sets the whole course of his life on fire,  
and is itself set on fire by hell.

And by corrupting or staining the whole person, it destroys “true religion” James spoke about earlier.

How can the tongue have such dire effect? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Verse 7

πάσα γὰρ φύσις θηρίων τε καὶ πετεινῶν ἐρπετῶν τε καὶ ἐναλίω δαμάζεται καὶ δεδάμασται τῇ φύσει τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ·   <a href="#">NASB95 NT RI</a>	For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race   <a href="#">NASB95</a>
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“Being compared to the elements or creatures of nature would have been particularly degrading to James’ audience.” – Faithlife Study Bible

### Species (NASB, NRSV), kind (ESV, KJV, NIV) –

**φύσις** physis For every **species** of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

[φύσις](#) physis **nature; species**

[noun](#), [nominative](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: kind (category) – a category of things distinguished by some common characteristic or quality.

[BDAG](#) natural endowment/condition, nature; natural characteristic/disposition; nature; natural being, creature

[LXGRCANLEX](#) nature; species

[CDWGTHTB](#)

### Of beasts, animals (NIV) –

**θηρίων** thēriōn For every species **of beasts** and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

[θηρίον](#) thērion **beast; animal; wild beast**

[noun](#), [genitive](#), [plural](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: quadruped – an animal (especially a mammal) having four limbs specialized for walking.

[BDAG](#) animal, beast; beast, monster

[LXGRCANLEX](#) animal; beast

[CDWGTHTB](#)

### Birds –

**πετεινῶν** peteinōn For every species of beasts and **birds**, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

[πετεινόν](#) peteinon **bird**

[noun](#), [genitive](#), [plural](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: winged animal – any of various kinds of birds or other flying creatures, such as bats, whether clean or unclean.

[BDAG](#) bird

[LXGRCANLEX](#) bird

[CDWGTHTB](#)

### Reptiles –

**ἐρπετῶν** herpetōn For every species of beasts and birds, **of reptiles** and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

[ἐρπετόν](#) herpeton **reptile**

[noun](#), [genitive](#), [plural](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: small moving thing – small animals (including reptiles) that move along on land or water, possibly by creeping.

[BDAG](#) reptile

[LXGRCANLEX](#) reptile

[CDWGTHTB](#)

This word includes all “creeping things.”

## Creatures of the sea –

**ἐναλίωv** enaliōn For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and **creatures of the sea**, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

ἐνάλιος enalios **belonging to the sea**

adjective, genitive, plural, neuter

Sense: sea creature – an animal that lives in water; perhaps especially saltwater.

BDAG belonging to the sea

LXGRCANLEX belonging to the sea

CDWGTHB

## Tamed –

**δαμάζεται** damazetai For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, **is tamed** and has been tamed by the human race.

δαμάζω damazō **tame; subdue**

verb, present, passive, indicative, third person, singular

Sense: to be tamed – to be or become docile and tractable; used of things naturally wild and uncontrollable.

BDAG subdue, tame, control

LXGRCANLEX subdue; to tame

CDWGTHB

## Race (NASB), mankind (ESV, NIV) –

**φύσει** physei For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed **by** the human **race**.

φύσις physis **nature; species**

noun, dative, singular, feminine

Sense: kind (category) – a category of things distinguished by some common characteristic or quality.

BDAG natural endowment/condition, nature; natural characteristic/disposition; nature; natural being, creature

LXGRCANLEX nature; species

CDWGTHB

## Verse 8

τὴν δὲ γλῶσσαν οὐδεὶς δαμάσαι δύναται But no one can tame the tongue; it is a ἀνθρώπων· ἀκατάστατον κακόν, μεστή restless evil and full of deadly poison | ἰοῦ θανατηφόρου. | [NASB95 NT RI](#) [NASB95](#)

## No man –

This means what it says. “No one of men.”

We’ll finish with the question, “How, then, can you tame the tongue?”

## Restless –

**ἀκατάστατον** akatastaton But no one can tame the tongue; it is a **restless** evil and full of deadly poison.

ἀκατάστατος akatastatos **restless; unstable**

adjective, nominative, singular, neuter

Sense: unstably restless – denoting a ceaseless motion that is lacking in stability, fixity, or firmness.

BDAG unstable, restless

LXGRCANLEX unstable, restless; unstable; restless

CDWGTHB

## Evil –

**κακόν** kakon But no one can tame the tongue; it is a **restless evil** and full of deadly poison.

κακός kakos **bad; evil; wrong**

adjective, nominative, singular, neuter

Sense: evil (behavior) – morally objectionable behavior.

BDAG bad, evil; evil, injurious, dangerous, pernicious; evil, harm, wrong

LXGRCANLEX bad, evil; evil; wrong; harm; bad

CDWGTHB

“At once *restless* and *incapable of restraint*.” – JFB

“Though nature has hedged it in with a double barrier of the lips and teeth, it bursts from its barriers to assail and ruin men.” – Estius

## Full –

**μεστή** mestē But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and **full** of deadly poison.

[μεστός](#) mestos **full; full of; filled with**

[adjective, nominative, singular, feminine](#)

Sense: distinctive ⇔ full – characterized by some particular trait or aspect; conceived of as being full of the characteristic.

[BDAG](#) full; filled w. somet.

[LXGRCANLEX](#) full; filled with

[CDWGTHB](#)

## Poison –

**ιοῦ** iou But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full **of** deadly poison.

[ιός](#) ios **poison; venom; corrosion**

[noun, genitive, singular, masculine](#)

Sense: venom (snake) – venom secreted by snakes (and other venomous animals).

[BDAG](#) poison, venom; corrosion, rust

[LXGRCANLEX](#) poison; rust; corrosion; rust; poison

[CDWGTHB](#)

## Deadly –

**θανατηφόρου** thanatēphorou But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of **deadly** poison.

[θανατηφόρος](#) thanatēphoros **deadly; death-dealing**

[adjective, genitive, singular, masculine](#)

Sense: deadly – causing or capable of causing death.

[BDAG](#) death-dealing

[LXGRCANLEX](#) death-dealing

[CDWGTHB](#)

Death-bearing

## Summary

“Would you turn hungry lions or angry snakes loose in your Sunday morning service? Of course not! But unruly tongues accomplish the same results.” – Wiersbe

## Verse 9

ἐν αὐτῇ εὐλογοῦμεν τὸν κύριον καὶ πατέρα, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ καταρώμεθα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ γεγονότας· | [NASB95 NT RI](#) With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God | [NASB95](#)

Here, James portrays the tongue as “double-minded” as before.

## Bless, praise (NIV) –

**εὐλογοῦμεν** eulogoumen With it **we bless** our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

[εὐλογέω](#) eulogēō **praise; bless**

[verb, present, active, indicative, first person, plural](#)

Sense: to praise – to express one’s esteem or approval of.

[BDAG](#) speak well of, praise, extol; bless; provide with benefits

[LXGRCANLEX](#) speak well of; bless; to bless; to praise

[CDWGTHB](#)

Barclay – “This was especially relevant to a Jew. Whenever the name of God was mentioned, a Jew had to respond: ‘Blessed be he!’ Three times a day, devout Jews had to repeat the *Shemoneh Esreh*, the famous eighteen prayers called *Eulogies*, every one of which begins: ‘Blessed be thou, O God.’ God was indeed *eulogētos*, *the Blessed One*, the one who was continually blessed. And yet the very mouths and tongues which had frequently and piously blessed God were the very same mouths and tongues which cursed their neighbours. To James, there was something unnatural about this; it was as unnatural as for a stream to gush out both fresh and salt water or a bush to bear different kinds of fruit.”

## Curse –

**καταρώμεθα** katarōmetha With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it **we curse** men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

[καταράομαι](#) katarāomai **curse**

[verb, present, either middle or passive, indicative, first person, plural](#)

Sense: to curse (invoke harm) – to invoke divine harm or evil upon someone or something.

[BDAG](#) to curse, execrate

[LXGRCANLEX](#) to curse, execrate; to curse

[CDWGTHB](#)

“Causing injury or harm to someone through a statement.” – Faithlife Study Bible

“The ancient curse was far more than abusive language; it called on God, in effect, to cut a person off from any possible blessing and to consign that person to hell.” – Moo

### Likeness –

Initial comments

**ὁμοίωσιν** homoiōsin With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in **the likeness** of God;

[ὁμοίωσις](#) homoiōsis **likeness**

[noun, accusative, singular, feminine](#)

Sense: similarity – the quality of being similar (to something).

[BDAG](#) likeness, resemblance

[LXGRANLEX](#) likeness

[CDWGTHB](#)

“He who truly worships and honors God, will be afraid to speak slanderously of man.” – Calvin

“Indeed, one who curses men in effect curses God himself, for men are made in ‘the likeness of God’.” – Vaughan

What are some examples of cursing someone? \_\_\_\_\_

“You will always be lazy.”

What are some examples of blessing someone? \_\_\_\_\_

Maybe we need some practice blessing others! It’s not common in our culture.

Assignment: Bless five people this week. (Start with your spouse and children!)

### Verse 10

ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ στόματος ἐξέρχεται εὐλογία from the same mouth come both blessing καὶ κατάρα. οὐ χρὴ, ἀδελφοί μου, ταῦτα and cursing. My brethren, these things οὕτως γίνεσθαι. | [NASB95 NT RI](#) ought not to be this way | [NASB95](#)

### Come –

**ἐξέρχεται** exerchetai from the same mouth **come** both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

[ἐξέρχομαι](#) exerchomai **go out; come out**

[verb, present, either middle or passive, indicative, third person, singular](#)

Sense: to go out (exit) – to (go out) move out of or depart from.

[BDAG](#) go out, come out, go away, retire; go out.; die; go out, proceed; depart; escape

[LXGRANLEX](#) go out, come out; to go out; to go or come out of; to depart; to go away; to get out; to come forth

[CDWGTHB](#)

### My brethren –

Ἄδελφοί μου

James here uses “brethren” in his secondary way, to emphasize his point.

### Verse 11

μήτι ἡ πηγή ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ὀπῆς βρῦει τὸ γλυκὺ καὶ τὸ πικρὸν; | [NASB95 NT RI](#) Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water | [NASB95](#)

### Fountain (NASB, KJV), spring (ESV, NIV) –

**πηγή** pēgē Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water ?

[πηγή](#) pēgē **spring; well; fountain**

[noun, nominative, singular, feminine](#)

Sense: spring (water) – a natural point from which ground water issues forth.

[BDAG](#) spring, fountain, flow; fountainhead

[LXGRANLEX](#) spring, fountain; spring; well

[CDWGTHB](#)

### Opening –

**ὀπῆς** opēs Does a fountain send out from the same **opening** both fresh and bitter water ?

[ὀπή](#) opē **hole; opening; opening, hole**

[noun, genitive, singular, feminine](#)

Sense: hole (opening) – an opening into or through something.

[BDAG](#) opening, hole

[LXGRANLEX](#) opening, hole; opening

[CDWGTHB](#)

## Send out (NASB, KJV), pour forth (ESV, NRSV), flow (NIV) –

**βρύει** bryei Does a fountain **send out** from the same opening both fresh and bitter water ?

[βρύω](#) bryō **pour forth**

[verb](#), [present](#), [active](#), [indicative](#), [third person](#), [singular](#)

Sense: to stream – to flow freely and abundantly.

[BDAG](#) pour forth

[LXGRCANLEX](#) pour forth; to pour forth

[CDWGTHB](#)

“An expressive word, found nowhere else in the New Testament, and denoting a full, copious discharge. Primarily it means to be **full to bursting**,” – Vincent

## Fresh –

**γλυκὺ** glyky Does a fountain send out from the same opening both **fresh** and bitter water ?

[γλυκὺς](#) glykys **sweet; fresh**

[adjective](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: sweet (fresh) – not containing or composed of salt water.

[BDAG](#) sweet

[LXGRCANLEX](#) sweet

[CDWGTHB](#)

## Bitter (NASB, KJV), salt (ESV, NIV) –

**πικρόν** pikron Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and **bitter** water ?

[πικρός](#) pikros **bitter**

[adjective](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: bitter (taste) – causing a sharp and acrid taste experience.

[BDAG](#) bitter; bitter, embittered, harsh

[LXGRCANLEX](#) bitter

[CDWGTHB](#)

## Verse 12

μή δύναται, ἀδελφοί μου, συκὴ ἐλαίας Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce  
ποιῆσαι ἢ ἄμπελος σύκα; οὔτε ἄλυκόν water produce fresh | [NASB95](#)  
γλυκὺ ποιῆσαι ὕδωρ. | [NASB95 NT RI](#) olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt  
water produce fresh | [NASB95](#)

## My brethren –

Ἄδελφοί μου

James here uses “brethren” in his secondary way, to emphasize his point.

## Produce (NASB), bear (ESV, NIV, KJV) –

**ποιῆσαι** poiēsai Can a fig tree, my brethren, **produce** olives, or a vine produce figs?  
Nor can salt water produce fresh.

[ποιέω](#) poieō **make; do**

[verb](#), [aorist](#), [active](#), [infinitive](#)

Sense: to produce – to bring forth or yield.

[BDAG](#) make, manufacture, produce; do, cause, bring about, accomplish, prepare; do, keep, carry out, practice, commit; do someth. to/with; do, make; work, be active; make/do someth. for oneself; of oneself

[LXGRCANLEX](#) make; do; to make; to produce; to do; to make oneself out to be; to put; to act; to spend; to cause; to bring about; to appoint; to carry out; to accomplish; to perform; to work; to keep; to hold

[CDWGTHB](#)

“No tree can bring forth fruit inconsistent with its nature, as for example, the fig tree, olive berries: so if a man speaks bitterly, and afterwards speaks good words, the latter must be so only seemingly, and in hypocrisy, they cannot be real.” – JFB

## Salt –

**ἄλυκόν** halykon Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs?  
Nor can **salt** water produce fresh.

[ἄλυκός](#) halykos **salt; salty**

[adjective](#), [nominative](#), [singular](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: salty – containing or filled with salt.

[BDAG](#) salty

[LXGRCANLEX](#) salty

[CDWGTHB](#)

This could better be translated, “a salt pond” or “a salty spring”

## Fresh –

**γλυκὸ** glyky Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce **fresh**.

**γλυκὺς** glykys **sweet; fresh**

[adjective](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: sweet (fresh) – not containing or composed of salt water.

[BDAG](#) sweet

[LXGRCANLEX](#) sweet

[CDWGTB](#)

## Practical Application

Barclay –

- “John Bunyan tells us of Talkative: ‘He was a saint abroad and a devil at home.’”
- Many people speak with perfect courtesy to strangers and may even preach love and gentleness, and yet snap with impatient irritability at their own families.
- It has not been unknown for someone to speak with piety on Sunday and to curse a team of workers on Monday.
- It has not been unknown for someone to utter the most pious sentiments one day and to repeat the most questionable stories the next.
- It has not been unknown for someone to speak with sweet graciousness at a religious meeting and then to go outside to destroy another person’s reputation with a malicious tongue.”

“It is one of life’s hardest and plainest duties to see that the tongue does not contradict itself but speaks only such words as we would want God to hear.”

## Conclusion

Six metaphors:

- Bit –
- Rudder –
- Fire –
- Animal –
- Fountain –
- Tree –

Curse the gossips and the double-tongued,  
for they destroy the peace of many,  
Slander has shaken many,  
and scattered them from nation to nation;  
it has destroyed strong cities, and overturned the  
houses of the great.

Slander has driven virtuous women from their homes,  
and deprived them of the fruit of their toil.

Those who pay heed to slander will not find rest,  
nor will they settle down in peace.

The blow of a whip raises a welt, but a blow of the  
tongue crushes the bones.

Many have fallen by the edge of the sword,  
but not as many as have fallen because of the tongue.

Happy is the one who is protected from it,  
who has not been exposed to its anger,  
who has not borne its yoke,  
and has not been bound with its fetters.

For its yoke is a yoke of iron,  
and its fetters are fetters of bronze;  
its death is an evil death,  
and Hades is preferable to it.

...

As you fence in your property with thorns,  
so make a door and a bolt for your mouth.

As you lock up your silver and gold,  
so make balances and scales for your words.

Take care not to err with your tongue,  
and fall victim to one lying in wait.

- Sirach in Ecclesiasticus 5:13-6:1

How, then, do you tame the tongue?

Matthew 12:34 (NKJV) – <sup>34</sup> **Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.**

John 15:3 (NASB95) – <sup>34</sup>“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

John 15:3 (The Message) – <sup>34</sup>You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.

**Fix the heart, and the tongue will fall in line.**