

## James 3:1-12

**James often discusses the tongue.** (Jas. 1:19, 26; 4:11; 5:12).

JAM 1:19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, NIV

JAM 1:26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. NIV

JAM 4:11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. NIV

JAM 5:12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear-- not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned. NIV

### Warning

**JAM 3:1 Let not many {of you} become teachers [of God's word], my brethren [brothers in Christ], knowing that as such we [teachers] shall incur a stricter judgment.**

#### Note:

- K.J.V. "Master" is an older English word for "teacher." He is not talking about a human master/slave relationship. See Eph. 6:5-9.
  - The Greek is the plural of "didaskalos" meaning "teacher."
  - He is talking about a teacher/student relationship among Christians.
1. It is a great responsibility to be a teacher.
    - a. Some might lightly aspire to this position for prestige or power. Some loved to be called "Rabbi." (Matt. 23:7, 8).
    - b. This work should be pursued only after considering the accountability involved and preparation required.
    - c. In the church the term "teacher" was a familiar one. (Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; Heb. 5:11-14).
    - d. It is the work of teachers to edify. (1 Cor. 14:26).
  - Gr. "oikodome"- up building, strengthening, encouragement. \
  - The verb "edify" is from "oikodomeo" meaning to "build up."
2. Teachers shall be judged with "a stricter judgment."

a. The Greek has “meizon” meaning “greater.” Gr. “ mei’zon kri’ma” - may zon kree mah

1) It seems to be used in the sense of “stricter judgment.” NASB

2) The NIV has “more strictly.” Amp. “by a higher standard” Marshall “greater judgment.”

3) See Lk. 12:47, 48. Greater knowledge brings greater accountability.

• Note: KJV “greater condemnation” - James is not talking about condemnation, but accountability.

• Details about standard are not given.

b. Teachers will be judged by a higher standard because of knowledge, responsibility, influence.

c. This should be sobering to those who light heartily seek the position.

### Aspiring To Be Teachers

One might covet to be a teacher	Those desiring to be teachers must
For prestige	Be good examples
Influence	Spend a lot of time in preparation
Authority	Realize they are responsible to guide people correctly.
For money	Willing to learn and change
Attention	Recognize they will have a stricter judgment

d. **It is not intended to discourage all from becoming teachers at all.**

1) James said “Let not many {of you} become teachers.”

2) The pronoun “we” shows James included himself among the teachers. He was functioning as a teacher in writing this letter. He was also an apostle and leader in the early church. (Gal. 1:19; 2:9).

3) The Hebrew writer expected his readers to mature to the point they could be teachers. (Heb. 5:11-14).

4) **It is most serious to cause others to stumble.** (Matt. 18:6,7), and teachers can certainly cause others to stumble.

5) Some will stumble and reject the truth presentation of truth regardless of how it is presented, but teachers must present the truth in love.

### “We All Stumble”

**JAM 3:2 For we all stumble [sin] in many {ways.} If anyone does not stumble [sin] in what he says, he is a perfect [complete, perfect] man, able to bridle [control] the whole body as well.**

1. As mortals Christians “stumble” (sin) in may {ways.}. (Rom. 3:18-23; 1 Jn. 1:8).

2. One of the ways we sin most is with the tongue.

- a. **How many times have we sinned with the tongue?**
- b. Most of us must answer more times than I can count or know.
3. The word “perfect” [Gr. *tel’eios*] denotes a complete, mature, full-grown man. The one who can absolutely control the tongue (never sin with it) is able to completely control his whole body.
4. The teacher lives with constant danger of misusing the tongue.

a. Wrong answer	d Answering without knowledge because of pride.
b.. Losing temper	e. Answering too harshly
c. Answering to please people.	f. Answering too softly without conviction

5. “The man who never says a wrong thing is a perfect character.” NEB

### **“Bits Into Horses’ Mouths”**

**JAM 3:3 Now if we put the bits [bridles] into the horses’ mouths so that they may obey us, we direct their entire body as well.**

1. A bit, though small, in the horses’ mouth controls the horse.
2. The small tongue is likewise able to do great things good and bad.

### **“A Very Small Rudder”**

**JAM 3:4 Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds [gales], are still directed [steered] by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot [helmsman] desires.**

- “pedalion” (pay dah’ lee on) - rudder — Marshall “helm.” (The apparatus by which a ship is steered, comprising rudder, tiller, wheel, etc.)
1. The tongue, like a “very small rudder,” can do great things.
  2. It [the tongue] can impact individuals, families, churches, nations, etc.

### **“The Tongue”**

**JAM 3:5 So also the tongue is a small [little] part of the body, and {yet} it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!**

- “hule” (hoo’ lay) - “forest, amount of wood.”
  - “aucheo” (ow **kheh**’ o) - boast, make wild claims
1. A match or spark can set a forest ablaze.

2. The tongue “boasts of great things.”
3. The tongue, though small, can create mass destruction.

**JAM 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, the {very} world of iniquity [wickedness]; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles [contaminates] the entire body, and sets on fire the course of {our} life, and is set on fire by hell.**

JAM 3:6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. NIV

1. “The tongue also is a fire.” (Prov. 16:27; 26:18-22).
2. “world of iniquity” means “a lot of iniquity” like the expression “world of wisdom” means a “a lot of wisdom.”
3. The tongue “defiles the entire body.” NIV “corrupt the whole person”
4. “Course of {our} life” NIV “sets the whole course of his life on fire.”
  - a. Lit. “inflaming the course of the nature.”
  - b. “genesis” - birth, successive generation, lineage; meton. life
5. The evils of the tongue “is set on fire by hell,” that is, originates from hell (gehenna).
  - a. The devil is behind the evils of the tongue.
  - b. We must constantly resist the devil. (Jas. 4:7).

**JAM 3:7 For every [countless, all kinds] species of beasts [animals] and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by the human race.**

- “damazo” (dah mad’ zo” - subdue, tame, control
  - “and have been tamed by man” NIV...Lit. “and has been tamed by the human nature.”
1. The word “every” is a hyperbole denoting countless kinds.
  2. We have seen evidence of this in circuses, some amusement parks, etc.

**JAM 3:8 But no one can tame the tongue; {it is} a restless [unruly] evil {and} full of deadly poison.**

1. The tongue can never be tamed, but must constantly be guarded for one’s whole life.
2. The tongue is “a restless evil”.
  - a. It is ready to lash out at any moment.
  - b. The tongue is like a restless animal--never still.
  - c. It is always ready and eager to destroy.

3. The words “full of deadly poison” suggest the tongue is like a poisonous snake. See Psa. 140:3; Rom. 3:13.

**JAM 3:9 With it we bless {our} [lit. the] Lord and Father; and with it we curse men [humanity], who have been made in the likeness of God;**

- “homoi’osis” means “likeness, resemblance.”

1. It is very inconsistent to praise God, and then “curse men” “who have been made in the likeness of God.” Gen. 1:26, 27.

2. “Lord” in context can refer to God or Christ or both.

a. Jesus (Jas. 1:1; 2:1; 5:7.8).

b. God (Jas. 4:10; 5:4).

c. Either (Jas. 1:7, 12; 3:9; 4:15).

### **Rebuke**

**JAM 3:10 from the same mouth come {both} blessing and cursing. My brethren [brothers in Christ], these things ought not to be this way.**

1. Gr. “ou chre” (oo kh-ray) - The words mean “It is not fitting.”

2. There is no occasion when cursing should come out of the mouth of a Christian.“

3. Christians must not curse God or man or curse at all.

### **Fountain**

**JAM 3:11 Does a fountain [spring] send out from the same opening {both} fresh and bitter {water}?**

1. Gr. “pege” (pay gay) - a source, spring, fountain, a well.

2. The answer to James’ question is obvious.

3. Cursing, filthy language, gossip, etc. should not flow out of the Christian’s mouth.

### **Fig Tree, Vine, Salt Water**

**JAM 3:12 Can a fig tree, my brethren [brothers in Christ], produce olives, or a [grape] vine produce figs? Neither {can} salt water produce fresh.**

1. The answer is an emphatic “no.”

2. “The same mouth” must not produce “{both} blessing and cursing.”

3. “No more can sea water give you fresh.” Jerusalem Bible

**Scriptures** (Psa. 39:1; 19:14; Prov. 15:1-4, 7, 23, 26, 28; Matt. 12:36, 37; 1 Pet. 3:10, 11).

### **Sins of the Tongue**

1. Cursing - God or man	9. Filthy language
2. Lying (Prov. 6:16-19; Col. 3:9)	10. Hasty words (Jas. 1:19).
3. Gossip (Lev. 19:16).	11. Boasting (Jas. 3:5).
4. Murmuring (1 Cor. 10:10).	12. Sarcasm or cruel speech
5. False teaching (Matt. 7:15; Gal. 1:6-8).	13. Slander (Jas. 4:11).
6. Swearing (oaths) (James 5:12).	14. Angry words (Eph. 4:26, 27).
7. Blasphemy (Exod. 20:7)	15. Backbiting (Psa. 15:4). This is talking behind one's back.
8. Harsh, unjust criticism	16. Deceitful (Psa. 120:2; Prov. 26:18-25; 1 Tim. 3:8).

### **Good Use Of The Tongue**

1. Praise God	5. Express love
2. Teach & edify	6. Confessing Christ (Matt. 10:32).
3. Encourage and praise others	7. Confessing Sin (1 Jno. 1:9).
4. Give useful information	8. Pray for self and others

### **How do we control the tongue?**

1. We must keep the heart (mind). (Matt. 15:17-19).	4. We must realize how much it hurts others.
2. We must ask for God's help. (Jas. 4:8).	5. We must realize how much it hurts us. a. Relationships with others. b. Our health c. The trouble it brings upon us.
3. We must work at it daily and constantly keep up our guard.. (Psa. 39:1).	6. We must recognize we are accountable for the way we use our tongues. (Matt. 12:36, 37).

- The tongue can never be tamed in the absolute.
- We must work on controlling the tongue all through life.
- Being young or old is not an excuse for sinning with the tongue.

- No one has been given a license to have an uncontrolled tongue.
- Seeking to excuse the sins of the tongue is not acceptable with God. (Jas. 1:27; 3:10).
- Saying “I always say what is on my mind” is a sure way to sin.

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