

## Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing

**James 3:2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, (spiritually mature and continually empowered by the Holy Spirit) able to bridle the whole body as well.**

**James 3:3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.**

**James 3:4 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/helmsmen desires.**

**James 3:5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body and yet it boasts of great things. (Boast of abominable acts) See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! (Throughout history man has been plagued by forest fires, Oh, but man has also been plagued by the tongue!)**

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

**James 3:6 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.**

Verse 6 is filled with theology. Every one of us in the body of Christ must understand the power of our tongues. This is especially true of you, parents, to teach, train, discipline your children on the control of their tongues. And this begins almost as soon as they begin to speak. I understand that among the first words a baby learns are mama, daddy and NO! And there you are parents, at the beginning of training and teaching your children, not only how to say yes, but how to say no! This includes teaching them proper vocabulary but also the use of their tongues, to control their tongues.

This is the responsibility of the parent. How to pray to God! How to properly speak to you as their parent and to one another. And how not to speak, and when to speak and when not to speak. Not to speak with food in their mouths or sins in their souls. How to express anger. How to express when they are upset. These are the teachings of wisdom from a loving, caring parent.

**And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity;** First, there is a definite article before the word **iniquity**: therefore, **the iniquity**. And the word iniquity is another deep, rich theological term. It basically means unjust, that which is out of harmony with the justice of God.

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

**The tongue is the world of the iniquity** meaning that the tongue can speak against the justice of God, against the righteousness of God. And please remember that the tongue expresses what is in the soul. So, the thinking is out of harmony with the righteousness of God and now expresses that iniquity.

**the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body**, Here the word defile comes from the basic meaning of ‘spot’ or ‘stain.’ That’s right, a spot. Now think about this. Here is a person who is dressed nicely, looks clean and proper, then he opens his mouth and a spot or stain appears. Ever spilt something on your clothing? Then you understand this word. The body may look clean, moral, righteous, then the tongue speaks and a stain appears. Only this word is stronger than a mere staining, it means to get your body spotted with sewage, garbage that comes out of your mouth. To be direct, this passage is saying what comes out of your mouth is far worse than what comes out of your bowels. It is amazing throughout Church history how self-righteous believers cause a couple to divorce because they learned something bad about one of them and instead of using that information to restore, uses it to destroy. Church bodies have been destroyed by the tongue. Christians have been martyred by the tongue.

1. The tongue is that little member of our bodies which expresses the content of the soul.
2. If your soul is filled with Mental Attitude Sins like anger, lust, unforgiveness, then the tongue expresses these sinful thoughts and contaminates not only the body of the speaker but other bodies as well.

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

3. The human body is like a horse or a ship: large but controlled by a small object.
4. The tongue is a small member of the body but the controlling factor of the entire body as a link with the soul. It expresses what is going on in your soul. Therefore, it can contaminate the entire person.
5. The strong winds that determine the direction of a ship are like all the things that happen in our lives, good and bad. And how we direct the soul determines the direction of the tongue.

**and sets on fire the course of our life**, This little phrase is widely translated and interpreted.

OK, see that word *course*? (of course you do) Well, this word refers to something made round or rolling or running, generally a wheel. This is followed by the noun *genesis* which is used to refer to origin or beginning. In the NASV margin: *existence or origin*. So, one of the issues to be addressed is James referring to the origin or the existence of the course of our lives that the tongue sets afire?

This phrase is variously translated: *course of life; your whole life; course of nature; entire course of existence; course of human existence; sets on fire the successions of generations which roll on like wheels; wheel of nature; the wheel of our nativity; setting the whole round of our lives on fire; and setteth on fire the wheel of our natural life*. Each of these are attempts to understand what James is saying about the fire that the tongue sets aflame.

To resolve this problem, let's start by examining the phrase itself. It is composed of two participles and both from the same root verb "to set on

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

fire” **and sets on fire** is *Present Active Participle* of the verb to inflame or to set on fire. **And is set on fire** *Present Passive Participle* of the same verb, and both are introduced by the particle **kai**, which can easily be correctly translated **both ...and** This ending to this sentence would read: **both setting on fire or both setting aflame the course of life and itself receives being set aflame by hell** (literally Gehenna.)

1. We understand ‘course of life’ referring to the course of life of that person whose life is set aflame by the scorching tongue.
2. The tongue is expressing the defiled soul.
3. It is so important to control the tongue and
4. the way to control the tongue is to control the thoughts of the soul and
5. the way to control the thoughts of the soul is to be empowered by God the Holy Spirit
6. Which is by faith in the third member of the Godhead.
7. To give the Holy Spirit what is needed to inflame our souls for the Lord is to have it filled with divine viewpoint or by Biblical information.

**James 3:6** (revised translation) **And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity, the tongue is set among the members as that which defiles the entire body, both setting aflame the**

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

**course of life and itself receives being set  
afame by hell. (literally Gehenna.)**

1. The course of your life is determined by your tongue.
2. The tongue is the igniting place between the defilement in the soul and the manifestation of the life of that believer.
3. The course begins with evil or thoughts of iniquity—all mental attitude sins which enflames evil expressions and turns into evil deeds. (overt sins)
4. The tongue is the link between evil thoughts and evil expressions and evil deeds, all constantly ignited by the tongue.
5. The tongue expresses the sins in the mind, which produces reactions in the body---violence, going to addictive solutions like drugs, pornography to temper tantrums.

**and itself receives being set afame by hell** (literally Gehenna). What under the world does this mean?

1. Gehenna refers to the valley of Hinnom. Hinnom means sorrow or groaning, to be afflicted, wailing, lamentations. This was located south of the city of Jerusalem. This is where the Jews dumped their garbage and burned it. This is also where they offered their children to Molech, under Baalism (2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 19:2-6). Gehenna means valley of lamentations, valley of groaning because of the cries of those cast into it.

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

2. Being a garbage dump for centuries means that there was always a fire, flaming from the valley of Hinnom. Something was always burning.
3. Therefore it became a popular word for ‘hell’ in the Jewish language. In the Jewish influence, this word is brought into the Greek as ‘Gehenna’ rather than hell.
4. For a perfect scripture to see this point in translation and to tie it with the tongue, let’s turn to

**Matthew 5:22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.**

First of all, note the marginal note in NASV *Gehenna of fire* which is a direct reading from the Greek. So, instead of ‘hell’ the Greek says *Gehenna of fire*.

5. What is interesting is that James does not refer to ‘hell’ or Gehenna as a place of punishment for the defilement that comes from the tongue, but rather it’s igniting is from Gehenna.

**James 3:6 (revised translation) And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which**

Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing  
Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)

**defiles the entire body, both setting aflame the course of life and itself receives being set aflame by hell. (Literally Gehenna)**

What does this mean? This means that the sins of the tongue are the fuel that keeps the fire of Gehenna burning. In other words, what you are saying is what keeps the flames of hell burning. This is how evil, how destructive the tongue is.

James 3:7 seems rather simple on the first reading. But, as it reads, it is not accurate and is not what the Greek says.

**James 3:7 For every species (next we have four categories of species mentioned with regard to lower creation) of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.**

We must look at the word ‘tamed.’ It is obvious that man has not tamed all the beasts. This is the *Perfect Passive Indicative* of the Greek verb *damazo* which fundamentally means to subdue or control. Taming is not implied here, though in some cases it is true. Subduing is one thing, taming is another. In context this should be translated **has been subdued or controlled by the human race**. None of these groups of animals has subdued the human race. (in spite of Hitchcock’s movie *The Birds*)

**James 3:7 (revised translation) For every species of beast and birds, of reptiles and**



**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

**creatures of the sea, is subdued or controlled  
by the human race**

Think of the king of beasts, the lion, with his great power. But man can control it. He is stronger than man, faster than man etc., but man can subdue him. Even the king cobra can be controlled. The human race can be very impressed with all that he can subdue and control in the animal kingdom, yet he cannot control that tiny little muscle in his mouth called his tongue. This is the point James is making: man controlling and subduing the greatest of creatures and yet he cannot control his own tongue.

**James 3:8 But** (in contrast: a contrast between man being able to subdue wild dangerous creatures of the lower creation but not able to subdue or control his own tongue) **no one can tame/subdue the tongue;** (now we have three characteristics of everyone's tongue:)

- (1) **it is a restless**
- (2) **evil and**
- (3) **full of deadly poison.**

The tongue is an uncontrollable fire it is a world of iniquity; and now we learn that the tongue **is restless**. The best way to understand this Greek word is that it describes the opposite of what man can do with all the lower creatures: *un-subduable, uncontrollable!* Simply stated, the *tongue is uncontrollable*. The tongue is not to be restrained. So, you parents

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

have an idea of the task before you in teaching and training your children to control their tongues.

Next: they are **evil** Actually, this Greek word refers to something that is not good or not right and therefore means bad or wrong. “If something is unsuitable or unusable it may be termed by this word” It can be used to refer to something that is harmful, something that causes suffering or causes a disaster. This is what your tongue can do, cause suffering or cause a disaster, cause someone to suffer in their soul because of something you have said. Whether it is true or not, is not the point. The issue is that what you have said is bad, and causes someone to suffer in their own soul...People, life is just too short to hurt others with your tongue. The word is used by Paul to refer to what is in opposition to God, contrary to what is good or what is right. Just because what you say may be true, does not mean it is right for you to say it. The tongue is like a wild beast, you have to struggle with it, fight it every day.

### **Full of deadly poison**

1. The analogy is obvious from herpetology, of a poisonous snake. Generally, a snake does not bite, he strikes. The poisonous venom goes through the fang.
2. The mental attitude sins are the poisonous venom.
3. The tongue is the fang which carries the venom to the victim.
4. The poison goes through the fang, the tongue in the form of gossip, judging, maligning, lying, striking out at another person.

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

5. The poison of the tongue like gossip etc., manifests the soul of the person doing the tongue striking. Oh, people you may be attractive outwardly, but you are so ugly inside where it really counts.

*James 3:9-10 Paradox of the Tongue*

**James 3:9 With it** (or by means of this) **we bless** (we bless or we praise or we extol) **our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men,** (that is we speak disparaging of someone; we condemn someone) **who have been made in the likeness of God** (This goes back to Genesis in the design and creation of mankind.)

Oh, and the point James is making is that a believer puts on the front of praising God, acting so self-righteous in front of people. But, on the other hand, when they open their mouths, they condemn others, speaking disparaging of them. They judge what others are doing and not doing.

**James 3:10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing...**

Here is the paradox of all mankind. Here is the instability of people. Blessing toward God but cursing toward others.

God designed the tongue for blessing, but after the fall, out of that same mouth comes cursing.

**James 3:10 ...My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.**

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

And there is a divine provision to control your tongue and that is the power of the third member of the Godhead. The filling of the Holy Spirit. When He controls your soul, He controls your tongue, and only blessings, only good can come out of your tongue.

**James 3:2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a spiritually mature man, able to bridle the whole body as well.**

**James 3:3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.**

**James 3:4 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.**

**James 3:5 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**

**James 3:6 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, both setting aflame the course of life and itself**

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing  
Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

**receives being set aflame by hell (literally Gehenna).**

**James 3:7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is subdued/controlled and has been subdued by the human race.**

**James 3:8 But no one (by his flesh nature) can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.**

**James 3:9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;**

**James 3:10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.**

We have studied sins of the tongue now for some 45 years, but since this is such an important part of our Christian lives, let's go over some of the pertinent points on sins that proceed out from our mouths.

**I. Source of Sins of the Tongue**

We are going to start out with an understanding of the battle that is before us by understanding where these sins originate.

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

A. Sins of the Tongue originate from our Inherited Sin Nature (ISN). This is the sin nature that we inherited by being a descendant of Adam. When Adam fell in the garden, he passed it on to all his descendants. So, we are each born into the human race with an Inherited Sin Nature.

- (1) This ISN has various names in the Bible: old man Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9; carnal or fleshly Romans 7:14; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3.
- (2) Our ISN is continually being corrupted. Ephesians 4:22.
- (3) Our ISN is more deceitful than all else. Jeremiah 17:9. Therefore, what comes out of our fleshly controlled tongue desires to be deceitful.
- (4) Our ISN is incurably sick. Jeremiah 17:9. This is one reason why it cannot be subdued.
- (5) We have seen that the tongue is evil. Well, the reason for this is that our ISN is full of evil. Ecclesiastes 9:3.
- (6) Another reason the tongue cannot be tamed, even subdued, is that it is insane, meaning it cannot comprehend behavior that is most fitting to God. Ecclesiastes 9:3.

B. The ISN and the Tongue have three impulses striving to control our tongues.

The World: 1 John 2:15-17; John 15:19;

The Flesh: Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 7:18; & 8:7; & 13:14;

The Devil: 2 Thess. 2:4; John 8:44; & 10:10.

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

C. But God has graciously supplied everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as their Savior two primary defenses against these.

First, He has done away with our old self. It has lost its power, except when we choose to allow it to rule. Romans 6:6.

Then, God made us a New Man, a New Nature, a spiritual nature. Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24.

Then, God supplied every believer with the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit. Gal. 3:5; 1 John 4:4.

So, by faith in the Holy Spirit we empower the Holy Spirit to direct and control what comes out of our mouths.

II. Sins of the Tongue are motivated and sponsored by Mental Attitude Sins. These involve especially pride or arrogance, jealousy – it is dangerous as to how many believers deny they are jealous of someone in the family, church, work, or social life. Don't be in denial, confess it, acknowledge it and then go to a life of faith in Holy Spirit. But these mental sins also include such things as bitterness—even bitterness toward God; hatred, vindictiveness and anger. All these and so many more make us ugly people.

**Psalms 5:9 There is nothing reliable in what they say; Their inward part is destruction itself. Their throat is an open grave; They flatter with their tongue.**

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

- III. Out of the 7 sins that God hates, 3 are sins of the tongue. Proverbs 6:16-19.
- IV. Not only does God hate sins of the tongue but you should be aware of the discipline involved from sins that come from our mouths. First, there is Divine Discipline for the Mental attitude sins—this is the venom we studied in James 3. Then, there is divine discipline for sins of the tongue.

Compare:

**Psalms 64:8 So they will make him stumble;  
Their own tongue is against them; All who see  
them will shake the head.**

With:

**Matthew 7:1 “Do not judge so that you will not  
be judged.**

**Matthew 7:2 For in the way you judge, you will  
be judged; and by your standard of measure,  
it will be measured to you.**

**Psalms 12:3 May the LORD cut off all flattering  
lips, The tongue that speaks great things;  
(boasting of James 3:5)**

- V. So dangerous and destructive are sins of the tongue in a local church, that the pastor-teacher is to constantly warn the congregation against them.



**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing**  
**Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

**2 Timothy 2:14 Remind them of these things, (repetition of messages concerning sins of the tongue) and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.**

**2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.**

**2 Timothy 2:16 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness,**

**2 Timothy 2:17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, (names of trouble makers!)**

- VI. Warning! Troublemakers are characterized by sins of the tongue to disrupt a congregation. So, not only is the pastor to continually teach in regards to sins of the tongue, but believers in the congregation are specifically commanded to avoid such trouble makers and separate from them, not listen to them but separate from them.

**Romans 16:17 I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause**

**Your Tongue: A Cursing or a Blessing  
Colossians 4:6 (via James 3:5-10)**

**divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.**

**Romans 16:18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.**

VII. If you want to have inner happiness and enjoy the days of your life, avoid sins of the tongue.

**Psalm 34:12 Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days,**

**Psalm 34:13 keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.**