

*The Letter to the  
12 Tribes*

# James

*Jas. 3:1-12*



Jas. 3:1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

4 Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

6 And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:



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8 But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.



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Jas. 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, **slow to speak**, slow to wrath: ...

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and **bridleth not his tongue**, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

## V. THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS BEHAVIOR, 3:1-4:12

### A. Sin in the life revealed, 3:1-4:5

#### 1. Sin in the mouth, 3:1-12

##### a. A word about the teachers, 3:1

(1) Don't multiply teachers, 3:1a – “My brethren, be not many masters...”

(2) Don't misunderstand teaching, 3:1b – “...knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”

## b. A word about the tongue, 3:2-12

### (1) A divine standard, 3:2

Jas. 3:2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.

Prov. 10:19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips *is* wise.

Titus 1:10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:

11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.



## (2) A devastating statement, 3:3-12

### (a) The unbridled tongue, 3:3-5a

#### i. The illustration, 3:3-4

- How a beast is controlled, 3:3

Jas. 3:3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

Prov. 16:32 *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and **he that ruleth his spirit** than he that taketh a city.*

Prov. 25:28 **He that hath no rule over his own spirit** *is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*



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- How a boat is controlled, 3:4

Jas. 3:4 Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

- ii. The application, 3:5a – “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things...”

(b) The untrammeled tongue, 3:5b-6

- i. The illustration, 3:5b – “...Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!”
- ii. The application, 3:6



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- How decadent it is, 3:6a – “And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity...”
- How defiling it is, 3:6b – “...so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body...”

Note the play on words – “...defileth the whole body...” = contamination of the whole church!

- How destructive it is, 3:6d – “...and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.”

Original Word: γέεννα

Transliteration: geenna

Definition: Gehenna, and originally the name of a valley or cavity near Jerusalem, a place underneath the earth, a place of punishment for evil.

**1067** *géenna* (a transliteration of the Hebrew term, *Gêhinnōm*, "the valley of Hinnom") – *Gehenna*, i.e. *hell* (also referred to as the "lake of fire" in *Revelation*).

<http://biblehub.com/greek/1067.htm>

Prov. 18:21 Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

(c) The untamed tongue, 3:7-10

i. The illustration, 3:7

Jas. 3:7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

ii. The application, 3:8-10

- The tongue and its disloyalty, 3:8
  - How pugnacious it is, 3:8a – “But the tongue can no man tame...”
  - How poisonous it is, 3:8b – “*it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

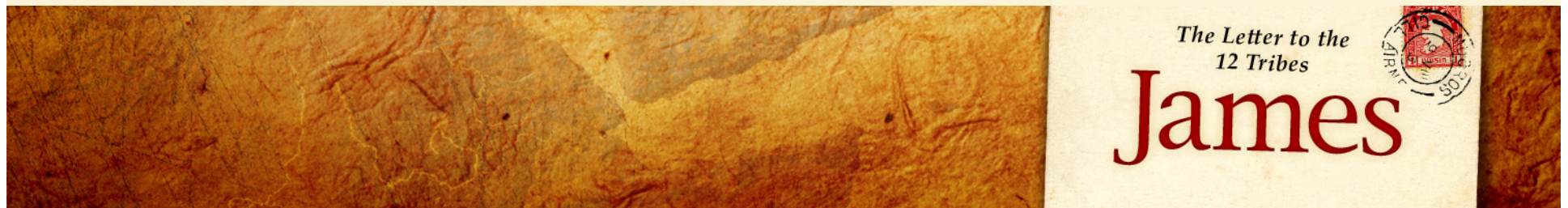
Rom. 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:  
11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

13 Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips:

- The tongue and its dichotomy, 3:9
  - Its ability to bless God, 3:9a – “Therewith bless we God, even the Father...”
  - Its ability to berate man, 3:9b – “...and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.”
- The tongue and its duplicity, 3:10
  - Repetition, 3:10a – “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing...”

- "To the person who speaks praise to God in the worship service and then abuses people verbally at home or at work, James commands, 'Purify your speech through the week.'
- With the person who says, 'Oh, I know I talk too much,' and laughs it off, James is not amused. He insists, 'Be quick to listen, slow to speak.'
- By the person who boasts, 'I always speak my mind, no matter who gets hurt,' James is not impressed. He commands, 'Discipline your speaking.'
- Of the person who says, 'I know I gossip too much, but I just can't help it,' James still requires, 'Control your tongue.'



- Of the person who is in the habit of speaking with insults, ridicule or sarcasm, James demands, 'Change your speech habits.'
- He expects discipline to be happening in the life of a Christian. Any Christian can ask for the grace needed, for God gives good gifts (1:17) and gives them generously (1:5). There is, then, no justification for corrupt habits of speech in our churches today."

George M. Stulac, *James*, p. 130.

- Repudiation, 3:10b – "...My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

Jas. 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, **slow to speak**, slow to wrath: ...

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and **bridleth not his tongue**, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

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(d) unredeemed tongue, 3:11-12

i. The illustration, 3:11

Jas. 3:11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?

ii. The application, 3:12

Jas. 3:12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.



## Conclusion

Psa. 19:14 **Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD**, my strength, and my redeemer.

Prov. 16:23 The **heart of the wise teacheth his mouth**, and addeth learning to his lips.

Lu. 6:45 A good man out of the **good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good**; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

