



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

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**COLORADO**

*James 3:7-8 The Vicious Nature of the Tongue: Part 2*

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*Jesus said in Matthew 15:11, "It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man." Do we really understand the serious impact of our careless speech? As believers, our words matter. No other member of our physical body has comparable power and range of influence for evil. A little spark of unkind words can kindle a fire of such devastating effects. It is as though those who misuse the tongue can be guilty of spiritual arson. Harsh words can set a blaze that incites, provokes, stirs up and inflames. The results can bring a life to ashes and ruin, cause such harm and chaos all from such a small, minute word. The tongue can be so deadly powerful unless it is submitted to the control of the Holy Spirit in the believers' life. It can give utterance to every evil thought and motive and put every evil deed into words. But true faith, true religion James says in James 1:27 is that which keeps oneself from being "undefiled" or unstained by the world. "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God our Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world." Is that what kind of religion you profess? Is that the kind of faith you possess?*

## THE VICIOUS NATURE OF THE TONGUE PART 2 - JAMES 3:7-8

*"See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! 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 life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison." James 3:5b-8*

James does not want us to be ignorant nor deceived about the vicious nature of the tongue! And we better sit up and pay attention to the serious warnings and instructions given in James 3. Unchecked, the tongue has such potential for great harm! Like physical fire, the destructive effects of evil speech expand and not only contaminate ourselves but everything we influence throughout the course of our life.

### A. ALL CREATURES CAN BE TAMED - JAMES 3:7

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

James begins with a simple statement of fact in verse 7 to set up the distinct and unmistakable contrast to follow in the next verse. He says, "For every species," which includes all animals whether on land or in the sea, those that walk or those that fly. Every species of animal, James says, "is tamed and has been tamed" by man. Both the present tense and the perfect

tense of the verb "tamed" are used here showing that this is an observable truth. Our past and present experience demonstrates the superiority of man over animals of every kind. This is nothing new. In fact, in Genesis 1:26, God gave to man the responsibility and ability to tame and subdue all animals of every kind. Psalm 8:6-8 gives evidence of this as well. Man can bridle and break a horse, make a killer whale perform tricks in front of crowds, but, he cannot control and discipline his own tongue.

### B. THE TONGUE CANNOT BE TAMED - JAMES 3:8

*"For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison." James 3:7-8*

Verse 8 begins with "But", which introduces a contrast and a sad contrast at that. "But no one" eliminates the **possibility for any person** to tame their own tongue and "can" reveals the **inability of any man** to tame their tongue. There is no exception.

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**%can** Greek word **%dunatai**, meaning is able.

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James distinctly makes it clear that there is no man who is able in any way to tame their tongue. This is about **our inability to control our own tongue!** This must sink in. The tongue can never be completely mastered and it defies every attempt to tame it. What does the word "tame" mean?

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**%tame** Greek word **%damaso**, means to reduce to stillness, to subdue, to conquer, the idea of bringing oxen under the yoke or of breaking wild horses, subdue, subjugate, to bring under control for one's purpose.

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The contrast is clear; while man can tame and bring under submission wild horses, the tongue cannot be tamed. The tongue is not like a wild animal for it cannot be tamed and no one is able to tame his own tongue. James 3:5 says the tongue is so destructive that its' evil is like an unquenchable fire that destroys and consumes. And now he continues to unfold the truth by demonstrating how man can tame and subdue even the wildest of beasts, but cannot control his own tongue. The tongue is uncontrollable and so destructive. Even our Lord was put to death because of lies. (Matthew 26:57-60) Our tongue will always need to be

guarded. Is it any wonder that David prayed in Psalm 141:3 *“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.”* Oh that this might be our constant prayer. David knew where to turn for help with his tongue, speech and words. What is absolutely hopeless for all men can become a reality only through God’s redeeming grace and power.

As if all this were not enough, James brings two more scathing indictments against the tongue to emphasize the fact that it cannot be subdued, controlled or conquered by man.

1. THE TONGUE IS A RESTLESS EVIL + JAMES 3:8B

*“For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil...” James 3:7-8b*

For James to say that our tongue is a *“restless evil”* could not call for more caution and concern! Not only does our tongue defy any attempt to be controlled, but it is always restless to do evil.

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**“restless”** Greek word **akatastatos**, means unstable, ever stirring, ungovernable, unreliable, ever changing, suggests the idea of a wild animal fighting fiercely against the restraint of captivity.

**“evil”** Greek word **kabos**, means base, degraded in character, prone to be injurious.

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James further describes the tongue as an instrument of wickedness that cannot be restrained and constantly prone to be wicked, evil and vicious. The word *“restless”* used here in James 3:8 is also used in James 1:8 where he refers to the instability of a double minded man who doesn’t really trust and submit to God and falls constantly into sin. So the tongue, which continuously defies control like a wild animal fighting against restraint of any kind, falls into destructive and vicious sin. The tongue is constantly prone to do evil. We must know this: the tongue tends towards evil of every kind whether anger, slander, deception, gossip, flattery, profanity or ridicule. But, true faith bridles the tongue. A true believer submits to God and uses words that call one towards godliness; encouraging, exhorting and speaking truth from love and a pure heart.

2. THE TONGUE IS FULL OF DEADLY POISON+ JAMES 3:8C

*“For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.” James 3:7-8*

James continues to drive us to an understanding of the vicious nature of the tongue which cannot be controlled. As he does, this must bring us to our knees, directing us to God’s grace and power which enables us to control the tongue. For not only is the tongue restless to do evil, it is *“full of deadly poison.”*

James charges the tongue as being full of *“deadly poison.”* The Old Testament commonly referred to the speech of the wicked as compared to a serpents tongue. (Psalm 13:3, Psalm 139:4, Psalm 140:3) In essence James is saying that our words can be a deadly, venomous poison. One writer suggested that our words are like verbal cyanide that can destroy ones life.

Consider the words of Paul referring to the fact that all men have sinned as he uses Old Testament quotes in Romans 3:13-14a,

*“Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving; the poison of asps is under their lips whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness...”*

Graves were sealed so the awful smell of death and decay would not be evident. Paul is referring then to the foul words that come from the mouth. While we may not smell the awful stench of our words, they are like an open grave. And they reveal what’s really in our heart. Our words are like the poison of *“asps”*, a viper that is cunning and venomous. Does that sound like the point James is making here in chapter 3?

Our Lord refers to our destructive words in 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.”*

Jesus even seems to liken our worst insults with murder! Do we take our words that seriously? Was James overstating the vicious nature of the tongue? Was Jesus? No, for it is restless to do evil and full of deadly poison that can destroy a life if we do not keep it in check. For the tongue is never completely mastered.

Do you doubt what your words can do? Consider recent events in our country where two teenagers in different states committed suicide because of continual, insulting and degrading words from fellow classmates. Verbal venom is such a deadly poison that can destroy a life. Given the sobering warning from Scripture regarding the propensity of our tongue towards such great evil, may we submit our tongue, which no man can tame, to the work and will of our Lord.

***“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.” Ephesians 4:29***

**And may this be true of us who believe!**