

The Epistle of
JAMES



*Tempering the
Tongue*

James 3:1-18

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You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. (Matthew 7:16-17).

A prayer for
wisdom (1:5-7)

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graph TD; A["A prayer for wisdom (1:5-7)"] --> B["Bridling the tongue (1:26)"]; B --> C["Visiting orphans and widows in their distress (1:27)"]; C --> D["Warning against partiality — Show your faith by your works (2)"]; D --> E["Taming the tongue (3:1-12)"];
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Bridling the
tongue (1:26)

Visiting orphans
and widows in
their distress
(1:27)

Warning against
partiality — Show
your faith by your
works (2)

Taming the
tongue (3:1-12)

James 2

Faith without works.

Faith is perfected by works (2:22).

Illustrated by the problem of partiality within the church (2:2-4).

James 3

Faith without words.

The one who does not stumble in what he says is a perfect man (3:2).

Illustrated by one who blesses God while cursing men (3:9-10).

James 3:1

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

James 3:1

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“**mezar judgment**”

James 3:1

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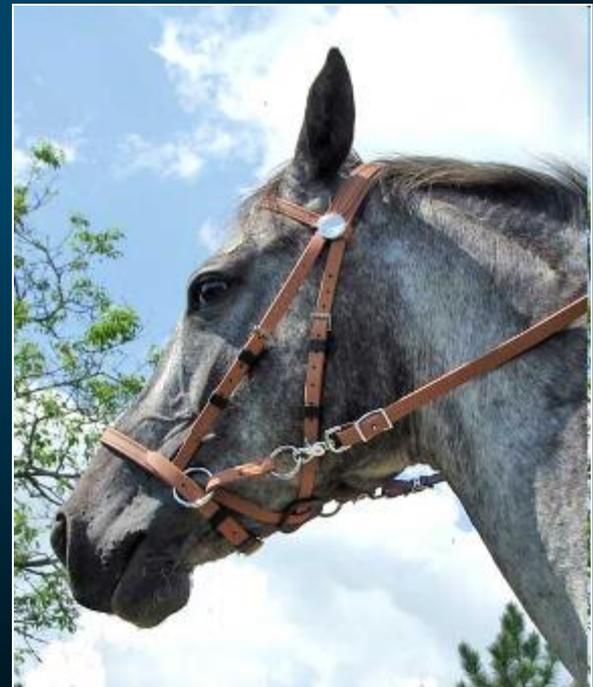
For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you (Matthew 7:2).

James 3:2

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.

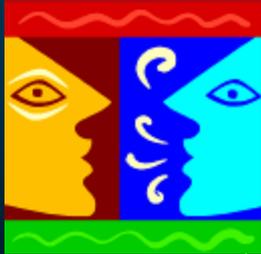
James 3:3

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.



What is the point of these two illustrations?

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!



Like a madman who throws firebrands,
arrows and death,
So is the man who deceives his neighbor,
And says, "Was I not joking?"
For lack of wood the fire goes out,
And where there is no whisperer, contention
quiets down.
Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to
fire,
So is a contentious man to kindle strife.
(Proverbs 26:18-21).

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.**

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“For the sons of Judah have done that which is evil in My sight,” declares the LORD, “they have set their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it. ³¹ And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind.” (Jeremiah 7:30-31).

“Therefore, behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when it will no more be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of the Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place. ³³ And the dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the sky, and for the beasts of the earth; and no one will frighten them away.” (Jeremiah 7:32-33).

Hinnom Valley



Hinnom Valley



James 3:7-8

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

The Tongue

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graph TD; A[The Tongue] --- B[Defiles the body]; A --- C[Is set on fire by hell]; A --- D[Sets on fire the course of our life];
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Defiles the
body

Is set on
fire by hell

Sets on
fire the
course of
our life

James 3:9-10

With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰ from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

James 3:11-12

Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can* salt water produce fresh.

A prayer for
wisdom (1:5-7)

Wisdom from
above (3:13-18)

Bridling the
tongue (1:26)

Taming the
tongue (3:1-12)

Visiting orphans
and widows in
their distress
(1:27)

Warning against
partiality — Show
your faith by your
works (2)



James 3:13

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

James 3:14-16

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

James 3:17

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

Wisdom from Below

Bitter jealousy and
selfish ambition

Arrogant

Lies against the truth

Wisdom from Above

Good deeds manifest
the gentleness of
wisdom

Humble (1:21)

A hearer and a doer of
the Word (1:22-25)

Wisdom from Below

Earthly, natural and
demonic: The world,
the flesh and the devil

Disorder and every evil
thing

Earthly

Wisdom from Above

Pure, peaceable,
gentle, reasonable, full
of mercy and good
fruits, unwavering,
without hypocrisy

Fruit of righteousness
is sown in peace

Heavenly

Wisdom from Below

Natural wisdom – the Greek term can be translated “soulish” – we would call it “humanistic”

Wisdom from Above

Supernatural wisdom coming down from the Father of Lights.

James 3:18

And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

**Literal
Translation**

The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who are making peace

