

35. It is in these situations that the truth is diminished while emotionalism is promoted. When emotion is mischaracterized as spirituality then spiritual growth is exchanged for human viewpoint.
36. The tongue is at play in these situations. When doctrine is rejected for emotionalism, spiritual growth stops and uncorrected the believer is missing from the phalanx. To that degree the power of the Pivot is diminished.
37. James is giving examples of how the tongue is the organ that verbalizes the content of a person's soul inventory. It is extremely small by comparison to the body.
38. So is the rudder by comparison to the size of an ocean vessel. A single flame can ignite an entire forest transforming hundreds of acres of timber into ash.
39. Here are some points along these lines:
  1. By use of a small bit a rider can cause a large animal to obey him.
  2. The rudder of a ship, small by comparison to the ship to which it is attached, illustrates the tongue of a believer. I may be manipulated to successfully guide the entire vessel, or not.
  3. Some ships are propelled by sails which require the manipulation not only of the rudder but also by prevailing winds, the latter illustrate the changing environment in which the believer functions.
  4. If the pilot understands how to adjust rudders and sails, then he has learned the principles of navigation, initially academically and then by application.
  5. Without doctrine, a believer's tongue is largely uncontrolled by his volition with regard to establishment and biblical viewpoint.
  6. Nevertheless, the tongue is still controlled by the volition which submits to whatever ideas are resident in his soul—these make up his inventory of working objects.
  7. As spiritual growth continues and positive volition is consistent, then the working objects of that believer's soul are being constantly enlarged.
  8. Yet, the person's volition still functions under the Law of Freedom. When a poor decision is made, it is often expressed by the tongue.

9. For believers who have not made the spiritual advance, then their Law of Freedom consistently expresses erroneous ideas some of which are sins of the tongue.
  10. This is the circumstance that James addresses with his examples of bridling the tongue of horses, manipulating the rudders of ships, and how a single flame can ignite a forest.
  11. Sins of the tongue are expressed in several categories, such as, lying, maligning, slandering, judging, libeling, slandering, vilifying, insulting, and gossiping.
  12. This brings us back to James 3:5 and a summary of our exegesis so far.
1. The verse opens with the demonstrative adverb **οὕτως (hútōs)**: “In this way,” followed by the noun, **ἡ γλῶσσα (hē glōssa)**: “the tongue.”
  2. We quoted a description of the tongue, its assets, and it uses, primarily its use in the formation of words.
  3. James’s subjects have to do with his condemnation of how using the tongue wrongly can cause major problems.
  4. This is especially dramatic when its use can cause so much damage from such a small part of the body, described by James as being such a small part of the body.
  5. He summarizes the damage done by use of the tongue by not selecting the Koiné Greek word, **καυχάομαι (kaucháomai)**: “to boast, glory, exult,” which can be used in both a positive and negative sense.
  6. Instead, James goes to the Classical Greek and uses the present active indicative of the verb, **αὐχέω (auchéō)**: “to boast or declare loudly; to be proudly confident.”
  7. The key word here is “boasting.” *Kaucháomai* includes this definition but it can be used in a positive sense. James did not want this idea to intrude on his point so he opted for the fixed idea in the Classical Greek’s cognate, *auchéō*.
  8. This boasting is assumed to produce “great things” which are thought so in the soul of the boaster, but not believed so by James.
  9. The next sentence confirms the latter with the use of the aorist middle imperative of **ὁράω (horáō)**: “to perceive with the eyes; to see with the mind or senses.” [ **IM# 24** ]
  10. This is a command to “see and understand” the following example that illustrates the negative impact the tongue can cause.



11. What is presented by James to illustrate what can be caused by the erroneous use of the tongue is noun, ὕλη (*húlē*): “forest.” And not just any forest but a “great” forest: ἡλίκος (*hēlíkos*). This is not a brush fire. This is the conflagration of thousands of acres of timber.
12. The verb, *horáō*, “see,” is imperative mood #24. This is an interrogative command. The parishioners are ordered to consider the illustration’s example in light of the magnitude of damage the tongue can cause.
13. In the example, a single flame is used to illustrate how one comment by the tongue can ravage a congregation. When one tongue speaks it can cause the entire congregation to become embroiled in controversy.
14. A forest can be set “aflake” by one flame. The Greek text read uses two words for this event, the first is ὀλίγος (*olígos*): “little,” plus the noun, πῦρ (*púr*): “flame.”
15. This is followed by the verb, ἀνάπτω (*anáptō*): “kindles.” One flame, and a massive forest is consumed. One sinful use of the tongue and an entire congregation goes into combat.
16. **Principle:** When someone uses the tongue to express an idea that ignites controversy, James has already provided the problem-solving device. Apply James 2:8 and give the Lord room to carry out His corrective procedures.

**James 3:5** So in this way the tongue is a small organ in the much larger human body, yet it keeps on arrogantly boasting exceedingly about great things. Perceive [ IM# 24 ] how a great forest is kindled by a single flame! (EXT)

**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. (NASB)

1. This verse begins with the statement, “the tongue is a fire” confirming the meaning of the previous verses which demonstrate that small objects have the power to control larger objects—horses’ bits, ships’ rudders, and forests’ fires.
2. In the population of a family, a community, or a country, there are small objects including tongues that influence the destinies of men and nations.
3. Verse 6 begins with a summary statement of verses 1–5, “The tongue is a fire.” What about the bit and the rudder? The three-part sequence illustrates the increasing influence the tongue has when a reversionist sinks deeper and deeper into cosmic system.

