

James 3:3 Now if we push the bits into the horses' mouths so that they may obey us, we change the direction of their entire body.

v. 4 Consider the example of ships which are quite large and are propelled under the influence of fierce winds upon its sails, yet it is guided by the positioning of a very small rudder toward whatever predisposition the volition of the ship's captain determines.

v. 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. See how a great forest is kindled by a single flame! (EXT)

Synopsis of verse 5:

The rudder is another illustration of the tongue while the captain represents the soul and its inventory. The inventory of ideas retained in its stream of consciousness consists of wheel-tracks of righteousness and wheel-tracks of wickedness.

The ship is analogous of the believer's body which is contaminated by the sin nature in every cell. The dominant trends of the sin nature vary with the individual whose agent provocateurs consistently deploy temptations upon the believer's soul.

These winds that push upon the sails illustrate the soul inventory of the believer which vary according his level of spiritual growth: doctrine in the eleven categories of systematic theology, facilitated wheel-tracks of righteousness as opposed to those that are not facilitated.

The spiritual advance of the believer is determined by the accuracy of the doctrine taught, understood, retained, facilitated, and then applied.

From these categories of soul inventory, the mature believer is able to use his free will to recall and apply the power of the Word of God to his life and circumstances.



On the contrary, the soul inventory of the immature believer is constantly under assault from the sin nature and its lust patterns. His lack of doctrinal ordinance is so limited he is at the mercy of his soul's inability to manage the challenges of the cosmic system.

The mature believer's application to the exigencies that confront him include such qualities as honor, virtue, integrity, rectitude, probity, scruples, trustworthiness, respect, esteem, and dependability.

These among other synonyms are instrumental in a believer's ability to consistently apply the Royal Law to others by maintaining personal integrity from the resource of working objects contained in his doctrinal inventory.

Conversely, immature believers' wagging tongues and loose lips emit vocal venom of ill will for all to hear. The root sin in this activity is the assumption he has all the facts and thus qualified to pronounce judgment for all to hear against a fellow believer.

The sins utilized in such a pronouncement include, for example, to gossip, malign, vilify, slander, defame, hate, ill will, lie, accuse, and judge. These verbal sins are reasons for compound disciplines in Matthew 7:1–2 with the verb, κρίνω (*krínō*): “to judge,” and in that context means:

κρίνω to pass judgment upon (and thereby seek to influence) the lives and actions of other people—judge, pass judgment upon, express an opinion about (Matthew 7:1–2); especially to pass an unfavorable judgment upon, criticize, find fault with, condemn (Romans 2:1, 3; 14:3–4, 10, 13; Colossians 2:16; James 4:11–12; “do not pronounce judgment on anything” 1 Corinthians 4:5. “Why is my freedom to be unfavorably judged by another person’s scruples [conscience]?” 1 Corinthians 10:29 (see also Romans 14:22).⁵

In James's context, his use of the verb *krínō* stresses its negative applications noted above by Bauer. The Apostle's illustrations highlight how this sinful use of judging has multiple negative impacts—primary, secondary, tertiary, and beyond—that originate with judgmental attitudes expressed by the sinful use of the tongue.

We now resume our study of *James: Chapter Three* where James offers his third illustration of the tongue as the ignition of a fire:

⁵ Walter Bauer, “κρίνω,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 567–68.



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. The noun “fire,” is **πῦρ (púr)** is used figuratively in this verse as an illustration depicting the sinful use of the tongue starting a sequence of mental attitude, verbal, and overt sins among those who hear the accusations of the speaker.
2. James points out in verse 5 that “the tongue is a small organ in the much larger human body.” When it is used sinfully, “it keeps on arrogantly boasting exceedingly about great things.” He then includes his third illustration by comparing the untamed tongue with a forest fire, “See how a great forest is kindled by a single flame!”
3. Three small things—the bit, the rudder, and the flame—have the power to control a horse and a ship and ignite a conflagration.
4. Properly used, the tongue is an organ with which the soul of a spirit-filled believer can communicate truth, light, insight, encouragement, comfort, inspiration, leadership, knowledge, and appropriate emotional response.
5. However, in James’s dissertation, he describes the tongue as a fire. Following that, he excoriates the person who ignites a fire with his tongue with the phrase, “the world of iniquity.”
6. The phrase, “the world of the iniquity”: **κόσμος (kósmos) τῆς (tēs) ἀδικίας (adikía)**, which refers to the Latin term, *cosmos diabolicus*, or the cosmic systems of arrogance and hatred.
7. The use of the tongue is further defined as an organ, “set among our members,” the plural of the noun, **μέλος (mélos)**: “parts of the body.”
8. We are made up of a number of members, some larger, such as head, arms, legs, and the hidden ones of smaller sizes like heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys, i.e., anatomy. None of these are capable of expressing thought.
9. James goes on to point out that the tongue is the only organ which defiles the entire body.” The verb “defile” is the present active participle of **σπιλόω (spilōō)**: “to defile, spot, stain, or contaminate.”
10. The point James is driving home is the damage done first of all within the soul of the speaker which has negative impact upon his entire person. The discipline created by the tongue’s misuse is the source of accumulating divine discipline to the body.



11. The person whose tongue is out of control eventually functions under the power of reverse process reversionism. This level of cosmic decline defines the life of the unbeliever, the reversionistic believer, and a collection of both whose absence of thought coalesces into a mind-set that foments rebellion against all establishment standards.
12. Our translation, so far, reads this way:

James 3:6a The tongue is a fire, from the cosmic systems of arrogance and hatred; the tongue is placed in the structure of our anatomy as that which contaminates the entire body ... (EXT)

13. Before continuing our examination of James 3:6, we pause to note some principles that define the current Zeitgeist of client nation America.



Principles Related to Reverse Process Reversionism

1. Reverse Process Reversionism is the final stage of reversionism. Everything that is worthwhile and valuable in life is rejected; everything that is useless is accepted.
2. Christian degeneracy reaches its peak in reverse process reversionism. The believer cannot be distinguished in any way from an unbeliever, although he cannot lose his salvation.
3. In reverse process reversionism, the believer totally reverts from the divine standards found in Scripture.
4. Reverse process reversionism refers to spiritual retrogression; going in the opposite direction either spiritually, mentally, or physically.
5. The level of reversionism results in the inversion of establishment and doctrinal standards which rejects love for God, occupation with Christ, submission to the teaching authority one's right pastor, and often betrayal of family, relatives, and friends.
6. This is a form of reversionism that is described by Jesus in his dissertation on the Nike Awards and why the believers at Ephesus are called out in Revelation 2:4–5, "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent." (NASB)

(End JAS3-24. See JAS3-25 for continuation of study at p. 241.)



7. The “first love” refers to Jesus Himself and the developing canon of Scripture that had almost been assembled as the New Testament.
8. When doctrine is ignored or rejected, the believer gravitates through levels of reversionism. The soul must have coordination from volition regarding the content of one’s inventory of ideas. Positive volition aggrandizes doctrine into the soul while negative volition results in a decline through the stages of reversionism.
9. This transformation results in the love of the lie. It is propagated as the truth or, worse, knowingly working to invert truth into distorted areas of human good and evil undergirded by the lie.
10. This is the process presently transpiring in the United States. Laws of divine establishment are being ignored in order to foment the lie. The lust for unrestricted liberty is at war against the restraints of Scripture imposed by its imperative moods.
11. Salvation is exchanged for acceptance among one’s peers rather than faith alone in Christ alone.
12. Those who are believers, but are in status quo reversionism, come under the scrutiny and admonitions of biblical absolutes and divine condemnations:
 1. The enemy of God:

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)
 2. The enemy of the cross:

For many walk [**wheel-tracks of wickedness**], of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ. (Philippians 3:18)
 3. A hater of God:

“He who hates Me hates My Father also.” (Jesus in John 15:23)
 4. Spiritually double-minded:

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:8)