

3. By placing the word “tongue” first it deprives it of its case which normally is accusative and is usually the object of the verb, which here is the present active indicative of **δύναμαι (dúnamai)**: “able.” In the NASB it is the word “can.”
4. Ordinarily, the noun “tongue” would occur at the end of the sentence. James places it first because it is the thing he wants to emphasize. It is like putting an implied exclamation point on it: “The tongue no one is able to tame!”
5. The verb “tame” is the aorist active infinitive of **δαμάζω (damázō)**: “To reduce to stillness or quietness; to subdue or tame.”
6. James then expands on the tongue’s negative impact in two ways. The first is, “it is a restless evil.” The word “restless” is the adjective **ἀκατάστατος (akatástatos)**: restless is fine but it also has the meaning of being “unstable.”
7. Synonyms of “unstable” include: “unbalanced, of unsound mind, mentally ill, deranged, demented, disturbed, unhinged, volatile.”⁵
8. This disturbing set of definitions for the deranged is followed by the noun, **κακός (kakós)**: “evil.” This asserts that this man’s mind-set is “full of deadly poison.”
9. This phrase begins with the adjective, **μεστός (mestós)**: “full” and defines how this evil is to be characterized. It is followed by a long, compound, multisyllabic adjective suggesting what it takes to describe this problem: **θανατηφόρος (thanatēphóros)**.
10. This compound is composed of the noun, **θάνατος (thánatos)**: “death,” and **φέρω (phérō)**: “to bring.” Together they result in the adjective, “death-bringing.”
11. What brings this death is the noun, **ἰός (iós)**: “the venom that serpents inject from their fangs.”
12. We have done some minor commentary on the Genus **ἑρπετόν (herpetón)**: “reptile,” including two venomous species of snakes, the family Viperidae: rattlesnake, cottonmouth, copperhead, and bushmaster and the family Elapidae: Black Mamba, Coral, King Cobra, and Death Adder.
13. The viper has folded front fangs; it strikes, inserts venom, and withdraws. The Élapid has fixed front fangs; it strikes, bites, inserts venom, and chews and often repeats the last two steps.
14. It can be confidently stated that both species are “full of death-bringing poison.” James speaks metaphorically when he writes that the restless tongue does the same thing which no one can tame.

⁵ Oxford American Writer’s Thesaurus, 3d ed., comp. Christine A. Lindberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 955.



15. Occasionally venomous snakes run out of venom and thus out of ammo. Shortly, their venom sacs are reloaded.
16. On rare occasions, the tongue of the death-bringing reversionist goes silent while his soul conjures his next oral assault on its next victim.
17. The serpents' venom is replenished through natural process and is the major component of his defense department's ordinance against suspected enemies.
18. The death-bringing venom of the reversionist emerges from a reservoir of mental-attitude arrogance and hatred against anyone he decides needs a good, old-fashioned chewing out in the fashion of an Élapid.
19. The analogous venom of the reversionist is the result of mental attitude sins. His venom sacs are systematically refilled by the constant production of arrogance and hatred from the cosmic systems.
20. His mental-attitude sins produce the venom while the tongue functions as the fangs.
21. This habitual behavior pattern is expressed in numerous ways. The advanced reversionist, having lost touch with reality, is mentally deranged. Therefore, he can vacillate between apparent cordiality toward others and then suddenly spin on a dime by expressing hostility.

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(End JAS3-86.Rev. See JAS3-87.Rev for continuations of study at p. 321.)



22. Such a person is obviously unstable, but his fluctuating behavior patterns cause others to never quite know where they stand because they never know what personality trait will emerge next.
23. The venom of the unstable believer has an arsenal of ordnance to deploy: gossiping, criticizing, maligning, judging, et. al., while assigning all sorts of sins and indiscretions to the poor bloke caught in his crosshairs.
24. A mature believer has the stability of soul to allow these assaults to bounce off his doctrinal armor. To do so provides an example of the situation James is describing and wishes to prevent.
25. In fact, James introduces chapter three with the example of how a believer ought to behave:

James 3:2 For we all fall into sin in many ways. If anyone does not sin in what he says, he is a mature believer, able to restrain his tongue by bridling his entire body with his volition.
(EXT)

1. The volition of this believer has the power to make a good decision from the inventory of doctrines in his *kardía*. This is a problem-solving device that empowers the believer to regulate his entire body and most importantly his tongue.
 2. This is made possible by his volition complying with his conscience to apply doctrine in his soul as the working object of his faith.
 3. The sin nature may tempt him to say something verbally, but his conscience restrains and overrides that temptation thereby suppressing the lust patterns of the sin nature.
 4. By suppressing the desires of the sin nature, the believer bridles his volition so his tongue is not used to utter sinful comments.
 5. The soul therefore avoids uttering a sinful remark and thereby maintains the filling of the Holy Spirit.
 6. This is an example of how the Royal Law and the law of freedom function so that the believer is able to “love his neighbor as himself.”
26. Such a response expresses unconditional love for his adversary. He transfers the adjudication of the assault over to the Supreme Court of Heaven while maintaining poise and grace.
 27. The illustrations given in verses 7 and 8 continue James’s exposition about the overwhelming impact the untamed tongue can have and the ramifications of its cosmic assaults from the venom sacs of the reversionists’ free will.



28. James continues his dissertation on the tongue by discussing the dichotomy illustrated by the inconsistencies of its use.

James 3:9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God. (NASB)

1. A dichotomy is defined as “a division into two especially mutually exclusive or contradictory groups of entities.”¹ The pronoun “it” refers to the tongue. It is reflexive and should be translated, “By means of this, i.e., the tongue.”
2. The instability of this believer’s volition is again addressed by James. First, he writes that with the tongue, this reversionist uses his volition to verbally “bless our Lord and the Father.”
3. The word “bless” is the present active indicative of the verb, **εὐλογέω (eulogéō)**: “we bless, praise, extol, glorify.” The direct objects of these encomiums are cited as, **κύριος (kúrios)**: “Lord,” and **πατήρ (patḗr)**: “Father.”
4. In James’s context, he establishes that his primary and overriding concern is the flagrant, unbridled use of the tongue to communicate human viewpoint, human good, and evil in one’s criticism of others.
5. Overwhelmingly, these excoriations are laced with venom that contains gossip, criticism, accusations, argument, false finding, sins, and behaviors directed toward other believers.
6. Somewhere in the process, this spiritual reprobate occasionally realizes that his castigations are ill-received, rejected, and rebutted—sometimes done argumentatively and in other times by clear, biblically-based responses.
7. For various reasons, by a guilt complex, by a desire to publicly portray spirituality, or an effort to take the spiritual high ground, the antagonist uses his tongue to arrogate Christ and God as witnesses on his behalf.
8. This is hypocrisy of the most dangerous order. One must not use God to support sin. Use of the tongue to criticize a fellow believer is an overt, verbal sin. The latter is bad enough; the former is blasphemous.
9. When aggrandizing his comments by implying support by God and Christ is a dangerous game to play. For example, take this tactic and combine it with Matthew 7:1–2 and the confluence of divine wrath is sure to follow.
10. James wants to impose quietus on that tactic and get back to the central issue of his commentary which begins with the phrase, “and with it, namely the tongue,” or “and by means of the tongue.”

¹ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2014), s.v. “dichotomy.”



11. It is by means of the tongue that reversionists “curse men.” The verb “curse” is the customary present middle indicative of **καταράομαι (*kataráomai*)**: “to curse or execrate; to wish anyone evil or ruin.”
12. James uses the verb, *kataráomai*, to describe the motivation of this reversionist. The verb is generally translated “curse,” but the context demands a more precise definition which is supplied by the word “execrate.” Here are extended definitions of the word:

Execrate. To denounce evil against, or to imprecate evil on; hence, to detest utterly; to abhor; to abominate.²

Execrate. To imprecate evil upon; hence to detest utterly; to abhor. Execrate implies intense loathing and, usually, a fury of passion.³

Execrate. To imprecate evil upon (as an expression of hatred); to express or feel intense loathing or abhorrence for; utter detestation.⁴
13. *Kataráomai* is also defined as a curse, but the dictionary definitions noted above show that execrate carries a more intense application to the verb. Its customary present tense indicates that this execration regularly occurs or is part of an ongoing state that occurs regularly.
14. The impact of this verb is further intensified by the middle voice indicating that the person’s volition employs this tactic consistently.
15. The tongue is simply an organ in the body. It has several functions, one of which is the enunciation of ideas fed to it by the thought processes contained in the believer’s stream of consciousness.
16. The tongue is being scolded by James, but his Letter makes it clear that the organ is just the means of communicating the thoughts and ideas contained in a person’s soul.
17. Therefore, as we have noted earlier, “The medium is the message.” The medium in context is the tongue. What it communicates has the power to persuade or dissuade.
18. Either way, the tongue is only the medium by which the soul is enabled to communicate its ideas to others.

² Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, vol. 1 (1828), s.v. “execrate.”

³ *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, 2d ed. (1953), s.v. “execrate.”

⁴ *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1971), s.v. “execrate.”

