



The Tongue is a Fire

JAMES 3:5-6

A biblical study of the tongue

INTRODUCTION

When have words caused lasting hurt in your life? Or greatly encouraged you? Words shape our lives, our homes, and our legacies. The tongue is very powerful. Before punches are thrown or actions commence, words go first. The Bible does not minimize the tongue – it magnifies it.

God calls us to steward speech because speech reveals the **HEART**. A Spirit-governed heart produces a life-giving tongue. We are to let our speech be always with grace. Is this possible?

The aim of this study is to understand God's view of the tongue – its power, its divine purpose, its destructive potential, and its proper submission to the Holy Spirit. Pay close attention.

1. A Powerful Tool for Good

God created the tongue as a tool of life, truth, and praise.

Key Verses:

Important Note – When guided by the Spirit, the tongue becomes a source of life and healing. The “tree of life” connects Eden as a life-giving source.

Proverbs 18:21 – Death and life are in **the power of the tongue**: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Proverbs 12:18 – There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but **the tongue of the wise is health**.

Proverbs 15:4 – **A wholesome tongue is a tree of life**: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

Psalm 34:12-13 – ... that he may see good? **Keep thy tongue** from evil, and **thy lips** from speaking guile.

Psalm 19:14 – **Let the words of my mouth**... be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength...redeemer.

- ✓ God designed speech to be a blessing to others, to help, and to praise the Lord.
- ✓ The tongue is meant to cooperate with God's purposes, not undermine them.

Applications:

- Are your words building up or harming others?
- Does your speech align with or betray your identity?

Important Note – Our words should edify (build others up, **Eph 4:29**), not tear down.

2. A Dangerous Weapon of Destruction

The same tongue can become a **WEAPON** of destruction.

Key Verses:

Important Note – The tongue possesses disproportionate power compared to its size. James teaches how careless words can cause widespread damage. “**Set on fire of hell**” shows its potential for evil.

James 3:6 – **And the tongue is a fire**, a world of iniquity... **setteth on fire**... and it is **set on fire of hell**.

James 3:8 – **But the tongue can no man tame**; it is an unruly evil, **full of deadly poison**.

Proverbs 6:16-19 – **A lying tongue**... a false witness... he that **soweth discord** among brethren.

Proverbs 21:23 – **Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue** keepeth his soul from troubles.

Psalm 52:2-4 – **Thy tongue** deviseth mischiefs... **loveth evil more than good**... **loveth all devouring words**...

Important Note – Words cannot be taken back once spoken.

Important Note – The tongue's defiling nature affects not just the speaker but contaminates the entire person. Jesus said what comes out of the mouth is what defiles a person – **Matthew 15:11**.

Some sins of the tongue:

- **Lying** – Proverbs 12:22
- **Gossip / Tale-bearing** – Proverbs 18:8
- **Slander** – Psalm 101:5
- **Flattery** – Psalm 12:2-3
- **Boasting** – James 4:16
- **Piercing words** – Proverbs 12:18
- **Perverseness** – Proverbs 15:4
- **Guile** – Psalm 34:13
- **Cursing** – Romans 3:14

- ✓ The tongue reveals our sinful nature; it is a weapon with mass destruction potential.
- ✓ The tongue is untamable by human effort alone; this proves our need for God's grace.

Telling falsehood; deceit; not speaking truth
Communication of secrets maliciously
False tale or report maliciously uttered; injurious
False praise; seeking favor and influence
Talking ostentatiously about self; vaunting
Harsh; cutting; having an effect of harm, hurt
Cross temper; uncomplying, unaccommodating
Cunning; duplicity; deceit; hypocrisy
Denouncing evil or misery against; to abhor, detest

WARNING: Religious appearance without controlled speech is vain – **EMPTY** religion.

James 1:26 – *If any man among you seem to be religious, and brideth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

Applications:

- What is your speech like? When life gets squeezed, what does your tongue say?
- What is God speaking to your heart right now about this?

3. The Heart Connection & Accountability to God

A cleansed, sanctified heart produces gracious speech...

... Jesus Christ changes the source, not just the symptoms!

Key Verses:

Matthew 12:34 – ... can ye...speak good things? for **out of the abundance of the heart** the mouth speaketh.

Luke 6:45 – A good man out of the good **treasure of his heart** bringeth forth that which is good...

James 3:9-10 – Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing... these things ought not so to be.

Colossians 4:6 – Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt...

Ephesians 4:29 – Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good...edifying

- ✓ God does not just tell you to "talk better" – He changes your **HEART** as you surrender it.
- ✓ The Holy Spirit governs your speech when Christ governs your heart; pray for His help!

Jesus: **1 Peter 2:22-23** – WHO DID NO SIN, **neither was guile found in his mouth...**

Job: **Job 1:22** – **In all this Job sinned not**, nor charged God foolishly.

Job 2:10 – But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh... **In all this did not Job sin with his lips.**

Important
You are the body of Christ – your mouth is **His mouth!**

Applications:

- Jesus said the words that come out of your mouth reveal your **true** heart condition.
- Every word spoken this week will either glorify God, edify others, or reveal our hearts.

Matthew 12:36-37 – ... every idle word that men shall speak, **they shall give account thereof...**

Important Note – The tongue does not operate independently but serves as an outlet for what fills the heart. This means tongue control requires heart transformation rather than behavioral modification. The sobering reality of judgment for "every idle word" elevates the importance of speech to eternal significance. Words serve as evidence of spiritual condition and will be used in final judgment.