

- (9) How does this evil transformation occur? Paul describes this by the lust for having one's "ears tickled." This phrase is made up of the present middle participle of **κνήθω (knēthō)**: "the lust to hear something pleasing" and the noun, **ἄκοή (akoē)**: "the ear" ["itching ears": NASB].
- (10) When absolute truth is rejected, the lust pattern is free to apply his desire of the moment which varies among individuals.
- (11) The verb "itching" is metaphorical indicating that reversionists' lust patterns vary, but each person is free to apply whatever resource satisfies his urge of the moment.
- (12) We see this tendency presently in our society. Progressives have collectively assumed certain standards that are generally accepted among them as the "way things ought to be, not the way things are now."
- (13) These cultural deviations are in stark opposition to the establishment standards of society that have predominated from the beginning of our republic.
- (14) Those who comply with the "new normal" are considered "righteous" while those who hold to the culture's long-established standards are verbally berated and often violently threatened or even assaulted.
- (15) Here is an excellent description of Paul's use of *knēthō* as a metaphor in 2 Timothy 4:3:

Figurative of curiosity, that looks for interesting and juicy bits of information. This itching is relieved by the messages of new teachers.³

- (16) The "itching" referred to here is an idiom that also gets very close to the idea of Paul's meaning here:

"itch for, have an." Also, itch to. Have a persistent restless craving for, as in *Dean has an itch for excitement, or Chris is itching to go around the world.* [Late 1500s]⁴

³ Walter Bauer, *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), s.v. "κνήθω."

⁴ Christine Ammer, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997), 346.



- (17) This is demonstrated by moving away from sound, doctrinally based theology in search of “new teachers” who satisfy the itch to scratch the lust patterns of the individual.
- (18) This drift away from the inculcation of truth in exchange for emotional stimulation is sanctified by associated catch phrases that puts a happy-clappy façade of nonsense.
19. It is through this process that Paul confirms the fallacy of deviations from truth. The person so involved “will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4:4).
20. Here is the expanded translation of the passage:

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when reversionists will not listen willingly to sound doctrine; but according to their own lust patterns will accumulate to themselves false teachers, because they have an itch to satisfy their own desires,

v. 4 in fact, they will continue to turn away their ears from the truth [ἀλήθεια (*alétheia*)] and instead glom on to myths [μῦθος (*múthos*)] of the cosmic lie. (EXT)

21. Paul, in his observance of historical downtrends, is able to accurately forecast that parishioners of the first century and beyond will depart from the absolutes of biblical truth, having been won over by the allurements of emotionalism and the flexibility of relativism:

A theory that knowledge is relative to the limited nature of the mind and the conditions of knowing; a view that ethical truths depend on the individuals and groups holding them.⁵

22. Note that the Law of Freedom is observed here. Paul does not claim those who withdraw from doctrinal churches do so with condemnation.
23. He instead indicates that the cause is due to reversionism, preferring emotionalism and relativism to the absolutes of inflexible truth.

⁵ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (2014), s.v. “relativism.”



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. It may be manipulated successfully guide the entire vessel, or not.
 3. Some ships are propelled by sails which requires the manipulation not only of the rudder but also the winds, the latter illustrate the changing environment in which the believer functions.
 4. If the pilot does not understand how to adjust rudder and sails requires inculcation of principles of navigation that must be learned initially academically and then by application.
 5. Without doctrine, a believer's tongue is largely uncontrolled by the 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 is 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 the disaster a single flame can ignite in 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 subject has to do with his condemnation of using the tongue wrongly and the chaos words spoken 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 use of the tongue can cause by selecting not a Koiné Greek word, **καυχάομαι (kaucháomai)** “to boast, glory, exult,” which can be used in both the good and bad 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 considered 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.”
 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 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 is placed in 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. See 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.

