

The Tongue

Socrates once said, "Nature has given us two ears, two eyes, and but one tongue to the end that we should hear and see more than we speak." The inspired writer James wrote, *"let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"* (James 1:19). Both of these statements are summed up simply in Proverbs 10:19, *"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise."* Why is that? Why are there some many statements, nay, warnings discussing the tongue? This two can be answered with a quote, *"With great power, comes great responsibility."*

James the third chapter is a discussion of the power inherent with in the tongue. Admittedly James says, *"we all stumble in many things If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body"* (James 3:2). Across the world, everyone agrees that there is power in the tongue. What is the tongue comparable to?

James gives us several examples to illustrate the power the tongue has: *"Indeed, we put bits in horses mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!"* (James 3:3-5). Here in Ocala, we have the benefit of seeing the first example first hand. Here in the "horse capitol of the world" the example of the bits in the horse's mouth makes a large impact on us. The horse is a grand beast of great power! Just by watching a horse, you are struck by its muscles. Even when standing still, a horse's muscles will twitch and show its great power. A bit is such a small thing. This small object, when placed in a horse's mouth controls it entirely. Even the greatest ships have small rudders to control there movement through the water. Every fire begins with a single, small spark.

What makes this power so great and so dangerous is every wields it. From the oldest to the youngest, biggest to the smallest, the smart to the ignorant all have the same great responsibility to use their tongues wisely. The tongue can be used in a positive or a negative way.

The negative is obvious. The proverbs reiterate time and time again the negative powers of the tongue: *"May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, And the tongue that speaks proud things"* and *"the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness."* (Psalms 12:3, Proverbs 15:2). These are but two examples. James describes the tongue is, *"a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison"* (James 3:6-8).

The tongue is capable of good things. Paul writes in the book of Romans, *"whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"* (Romans 10:13-14). The only way

that people can be saved, is if they are told what they must do. Talking or preaching is the most common way to exchange information and in this case, the steps of salvation. The writer of proverbs stated that, *“The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; The heart of the wicked is worth little... There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health”* (Proverbs 10:20; 12:18).

Truly, *“life and death are in the tongue”* (Proverbs 18:21). The choice comes down to us. Speech is nothing more than the expression of the heart. Christ stated, *“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”* (Matthew 12:34). We cannot say anything without thinking it first. When we use our words in an evil way, it reveals our hidden, evil thoughts. When we use our words in spreading the Gospel or any other work of God, it exposes our hearts of gold.