

There is a story out there of a preacher who had to confront one his church members. He called the congregant into his office to address the fact that they were a gossip. They went around sharing the secrets of others and sometimes spreading other people's business (especially the juicy bad stuff). He told the individual what the problem was and then offered up an exercise to help the person understand the consequences of their actions

He pulled out a copy of the Sunday paper. Obviously, this is an old story because it involves a paper. He instructed the person to tear every page of the paper, including the ads, into tiny pieces. After doing so, the congregant returned, a little confused but certain they were done.

The pastor then told the person to put all the pieces in a garbage bag and put it in their car. He instructed them to drive down the road throwing handfuls of the torn newspaper out the window until it was all gone. (Another indicator that the story is old. Littering is a big no-no now).

The person left and did as instructed. Still bewildered by the exercise, the person returned again to the pastor's office. It was then that the pastor told the person to go back out, gather up all the pieces, and piece the paper back together.

You can imagine their response: "That's impossible," they said.

"So is undoing the damage your tongue has caused," the preacher replied.

With that image in mind we turn our attention to examining our mouth.

Scripture: James 3:1-12

Examining Ourself: The Tongue

I. **Domineering Power of the Tongue**

A. Little Part, Big Power

1. Bit

- a) Small piece of metal or rubber placed atop the horse's tongue
- b) Necessary for making the horse useful
- c) Used to steer the horse

b. Rudder

- i. Small (Relative to the size of the ship) piece of metal at the stern of a boat
- ii. Necessary for the ship to be useful
- iii. Controls the direction of the boat

c. Tongue

- d) Small muscle
- e) Powerful tool of communication
- f) Death and life are in the power of the tongue

II. **The Destructive Potential of the Tongue**

A. Destroy like a fire

1. 5b

- a) "See" - "Pay close attention!"
 - b) Small source can lead to great destruction
 - b. 6 (Prov. 16:27)
 - i. Tongue is fire
 - (1) Fire feeds on itself as long as the triangle exists
 - (2) Break the triangle
 - ii. Defiles the entire body
 - 1) What it doesn't destroy it contaminates
 - (a) Smoke
 - iii. Tool of Satan
- B. Devour like an animal (Ps. 57:4)
 - 1. 7
 - a) Animal taming
 - (1) Whales & dolphins
 - (2) Snakes
 - (3) Lions, tigers, & bears
 - 2. 8
 - a) Man cannot tame it
 - b) God can via Jesus Christ & the Holy Spirit
 - (1) No one was able to restrain him anymore, even with chains (Mark 5)
 - (2) "The secret of a tame tongue is not self-control but Christ-control."
 - c) "Restless"
 - (1) Fights against restraint
 - (2) "Unstable" (1:8)

III. **The Duplicitous Perversity of the Tongue**

A. The Contradiction of the Tongue

- 1. Bless God
 - a) Highest form of blessing
 - (1) Prayer
 - (2) Praise
 - (3) Proclaiming the gospel
 - b. Curse Man
 - b) Not necessarily profanity
 - c) Destructive words

B. The Consistency of Nature

- 1. H₂O sources
 - a) Sweet & Bitter
 - b) Salt & Fresh
 - b. Horticulture
 - i. After its own kind
 - (1) Gen. 1:11-12
 - (2) Matt. 7:16-18

Prov 11:9; 10:20-21; 11:11; 12:13-14, 19; 14:3; 16:13, 24; 17:20; 18:4, 6-7; 19:1; 24:26, 28; 25:11, 23.

The point Scripture makes is unmistakable. The tongue is powerful. The man who can control his tongue can control the rest of his body.

This morning I ask you to allow God to make you aware of the power of your tongue and ask him to teach you how to use it for his honor and glory.