

Sermon or Lesson: James 3:5b-8 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Our Tongue - Great Inclination For Comprehensive Evil

INTRO: Have your inappropriate words ever ignited a firestorm or catastrophic out-of-control chain of events? Even though you may have said only a few inappropriate words, did those words play a key role in eventually bringing into effect a huge lasting impact of damage?

In our study passage for today, God has a lot to say about our tongue.

READ: James 3:5b-8

In the previous verses 3-5a, the tongue was being characterized as a small-sized part being able to effectively influence the direction of its very large whole. And it is able to enormously inflate, "making great boasts". (v.5a)

v.5b - READ

[Lesson Question: What dynamics of the tongue are being cited here in verses 5b-8 and what does each dynamic look like in our daily lives?]

SECTION POINT: The tongue has great destructive potential.

-- In v.5b the tongue is being compared to a small spark that ignites a great forest. So, another emphasis is being added, that the tongue has great destructive potential and effect.

- - - - Do your words frequently destroy, burning and cutting through a person like a hot sharp knife through soft butter?

v.6 - READ

SECTION POINT: The tongue is a world of evil.

-- In verse 6, the tongue, along with its great destructiveness, is now being directly described in graphic terms, rather than being compared to other phenomena in life.

-- "The tongue also is a fire", possessing great inclination to and masterful skill at igniting, spreading, consuming, destroying. (cf. Proverbs 16:27)

- - - - Do you use your words to antagonize, disrupt, take over, belittle, harass, distort, abuse, and etc.?

-- The tongue is "a world of evil among the parts of the body", singled out and distinguished from all other body parts as being intrinsically and comprehensively evil.

- - - - Do you regularly spew evil, or foolishness, or griping, or malice out of your mouth? (cf. Proverbs 12:23)

- - - Rather than use guns and bombs, do you use your words to strike at other people, perhaps to get revenge or control over them?

-- The tongue "corrupts the whole person", like an aggressive cancer, exerting unlimited expanding influence that infects, invades, overwhelms, negates, and replaces any potential for righteousness in the person with wickedness.

- - - - To be honest, do you find that moral filth pervades most all of your daily life, throughout the day and the night in your thoughts, and in your words and actions when you have opportunity?

- - - - During the day, do you watch for, seek out, or even invent opportunities to speak evil? Do you do this out of habit, or compulsion, or personal gratification?

-- The tongue adversely and supremely dominates throughout the person's whole life, consistently destroying righteousness and producing wickedness along the way as it sets the course of the person's life.

- - - - Has your mouth gotten you in trouble repeatedly throughout your life?

- - - - With your sinful words have you brought damage to relationships that were important to you?

- - - - On occasions, have your sinful words unexpectedly changed the direction of your life?

- - - - Has your sinful speaking ever brought you closer to God? Or has it moved you farther from God?

-- The tongue "is itself set on fire by hell", being affected, recruited, activated, enhanced, manipulated, enslaved, controlled, fueled, and empowered in essence by the Kingdom of Darkness, the evil of hell.

- - - - Do you ever have times or occasions when you lose control over the evil words and their pouring out of your mouth? Do the evil words come out of your mouth so fast and so caustic that later you have difficulty remembering them all?

vv.7-8 - READ

SECTION POINT: The tongue is un-tameable and restless in spewing evil.

-- Man is able to tame all kinds of wild creatures, "but no man can tame the tongue." In other words, no man has the power or the will-power to tame his tongue, to transform its nature so that it is no longer independent and destructive.

- - - - Have there been any times in which you tried to bring your ongoing evil speaking under control and extinguish it? Did you get successful results? Temporarily or permanently?

-- The tongue cannot be tamed because it is "a restless" or "unrestrain-able" "evil" (Strong's #0183) and it is "full of deadly poison". (cf. Proverbs 12:23; Matthew 12:34)

- - - - Do you find that you cannot wait to spew out what is really on your mind, eagerly longing to unload your evil thoughts, or intentions, or desires, or ambitions, or cravings,

or motives? In other words, do you have "a world of evil" (v.6) eagerly wanting to come out and be unleashed?

BIG IDEA: God says your tongue, the speaking you do, has great natural capacity, inclination, and activities for comprehensive evil.

CLOSING APPLICATION:

- - Maybe it is time now to "tame" your tongue, to bring it under control comprehensively.
 - - Repent and turn away from the evil you have been speaking.
 - - Submit your speaking to the lordship of Jesus Christ.
 - - Henceforth, "keep a tight rein on your tongue" (v.1:26) so that righteousness rather than wickedness is spoken by your tongue.
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Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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