

THE MECHANIC AND THE CARDIOLOGIST

A mechanic was removing a cylinder-head from the motor of a Harley motorcycle when he spotted a well-known cardiologist in his shop.

The cardiologist was there waiting for the service manager to come and take a look at his bike when the mechanic shouted across the Garage, 'Hey Doc, want to take a look at this?'

The cardiologist, a bit surprised, walked over to where the mechanic was working on the motorcycle.

The mechanic straightened up, wiped his hands on a rag and asked, 'So Doc, look at this engine. I open its heart, take the valves out, repair any damage, and then put them back in, and when I finish, it works just like new. So how come I make \$39,675 a year and you get the really big bucks (\$1,695,759) when you and I are doing basically the same work?'

The cardiologist paused, smiled and leaned over, then whispered to the mechanic."Try doing it with the engine running."

The story, reminded me of what my grandmother used to tell me when I spoke without thinking—*open mouth, insert foot* and I added from personal experience—*suffer the consequences!*

James 3 1-8 gives us a biblical view of the most powerful muscle of all—the tongue. History reveals the power of the tongue. With the tongue great kingdoms have been created and destroyed. With the tongue orders are pronounced on life and death. With the tongue man best demonstrates his greatest moments of wisdom and worst moments of stupidity. Families/homes have been either helped or devastated by words formed with the tongue. The tongue has tremendous power.

The Bible as a whole emphasized the controlling of the tongue. James writes more strongly about the tongue than any other New Testament writer, as he illustrates this power with vivid pictures. He shows us the related dangers of indiscreet speech that none can deny.

The bit in the horses' mouth – a horse by nature is wild, unruly and large and often weighing as much as 2,000 pounds. It may have a fiery temper that man has learned to subdue and its movements regulated by the means of a bit of metal weighing only a pound or so placed in its mouth.

James also likens the tongue to the rudder of a ship. I wonder what James would think about the huge supertankers and oceanliners of today, but the principle of the rudder has not changed in these two thousand years. Then as now the rudder controlled the ship.

It is said that a Greek philosopher once asked a servant to provide the best dish possible. The servant prepared a dish of tongue, saying, “It is the best of all dishes because with it we may bless and communicate happiness, dispel sorrow, remove despair, cheer the fain-hearted, inspire the discouraged, and say a hundred other things to uplift mankind.” Later the philosopher asked the servant to prepare the worst dish he could think of. The servant prepared a dish of tongue, saying, “It is the worst because with it we may curse and break human hearts; destroy reputations; promote discord and strife; set families, communities, and nations at war.” He was a wise servant. Solomon said, “Whoso keepeth his tongue, keepeth his soul from trouble.”

James goes even a step further as he shows the vicious nature of the tongue. We see it come out in form of gossip. James uses several metaphors in verses 6-7 to illustrate his point. He likens the tongue to fire because while fire can have good uses in helping mankind through household uses, it can also be destructive if out of control. It can in a restless fury consume forests, homes and even cities. Verse 5 says, *So also, the tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do. A tiny spark can set a great forest on fire.*

In verse 6 James shows how the tongue can defile the whole body by polluting a person’s whole personality, soils his whole nature, and leave a deadly stain upon him. It can work against the wholesome character of man by destroying any good that may remain. Under Satan’s influences the tongue can be brazen and frightening. *And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness that can ruin your whole life. It can turn the entire course of your life into a blazing flame of destruction, for it is set on fire by hell itself.*

James continues by saying that the tongue is like a wild animal, only worse (v.7). *People can tame all kinds of animals and birds and reptiles and fish, (v. 8) but no one can tame the tongue. It is an uncontrollable evil, full of deadly poison.* The poison spewing from an untamed tongue is lethal at any dose.

James doesn’t just drop the bomb shell and leave it at that, he shows us that with consistency in our lives our hearts will change. With the tongue James says we can bless God. This is the highest purpose of the mouth—to bless God. Or the tongue is often used to curse. Inconsistency is often seen in men and women between their words and their deeds. A pithy adage is, “Your actions speak so loudly I can’t hear a word you say.” Talk is cheap. Actions are not. Actions do speak more loudly than words, and thus our words and deeds need to be consistent toward God and man—attitude adjustment.

Remember in verse 2 James says, *We all make many mistakes, but those who control their tongues can also control themselves in every other way.* Ask God to help you be consistent in the use of your

tongue. This is possible only when God's wisdom controls our words and our actions. (v.9a) *If you are wise and understand God's ways live a life of steady goodness so that only good deeds will pour forth.*