

The Tongue Is A Fire

Imagine a great forest; a place of life a place of beauty.
But all is not as it seems.
Through human carelessness, a spark has started a tiny fire.
Unseen, it quickly spreads. The tiny fire becomes a blaze.
It is dangerously out of control.
Our speech has the same power to destroy.
Inside our old nature, a buried furnace burns.
Now and again hell opens.
In haste or in anger, sparks fly.
That careless word. That thoughtless comment.
That unconfirmed rumour.
That incendiary slur.
And the tongue is a fire.
And so is the keyboard.
That reactionary email.
Now forwarded.
That unkind tweet.
Now retweeted.
Fuel to the fire.
Given the oxygen of an audience.
Harmful words dangerously out of control.
Non-retractable. Unstoppable. Destructive.
And the tongue is a fire.
A world of iniquity.
And what does the speech arsonist leave behind?
The scorched life.
The incinerated reputation.
The poisonous smoke of guilt and regret.
All a result of one tiny spark spat out by the tongue, by the keyboard.
Here, then, is a warning.
Fire safety for the tongue.

Taming The Tongue

Now imagine we could bridle the tongue, as we bridle the horse.
'If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well'.
The horse's mouth is secured with bit and bridle.
In this small way, this large animal is under control.
The reins are in the hands of the rider.
The rider can direct the horse.
They are in control, and the horse gently submits to the will of the rider.
Carefully, the horse treads the narrow path.
And even at a gallop, the rider is in command. The horse obeys.

Without the bit and bridle, without the reins, the horse would be uncontrolled, untamed, at risk of harm.
Imagine we could bridle the tongue, as we bridle the horse.
A controlled tongue makes for a controlled personality.
But can we truly tame the tongue?
Can we consistently trek the narrow path of careful speech?
Too often, careless words gallop away from our lips.
We lose control.
We break free from our master.
And who is our master?
Who holds the reins?
Who is in charge?
Whose voice are you listening to?
Whose voice directs your own voice?
Imagine we could bridle the tongue, as we bridle the horse.
Of course we cannot.
But the One who gave us speech can be the master of our tongue.
The One who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, must be the master of our life.

Pure Speech

Now we come down to the river.
The flow of water speaks to us about the flow of our speech.
Have you ever thought – 'why did I say that?'
I wish I had held my tongue'.
Our words have power to create peace or bring division.
Our words have power to bless or power to curse.
Test the waters that flow from your heart and your lips today.
Is there living water to refresh or salt water to sting?
Living water brings life.
Salt water may make you a Dead Sea.
So where do our words spring up from?
What is their source?
Before a word there comes a thought – but where is the thought from?
Truly, our thoughts spring up from the source of goodness or from the source of evil.
God declares 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways'.
The Lord Jesus Christ always spoke wisely, always spoke kindly and even prayed for his enemies.
He is our example.
He declared:
'Living waters shall flow from the heart of the one who believes in me'.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.
Amen.