

Guarding the Tongue – Part 3

Sermon 11 in the James Series

James 3:1-12

You can see James uses illustration after illustration to show the amazing power of the tongue, even though it is so small

And the destructive power of the tongue – especially the tongue that is out of control – although NO ONE can perfectly control it.

I. The Tongue – A World of Iniquity

A. The Tongue and Total Depravity

Romans 3:10-19 – written later by Paul – but he has many of the same ideas as he reflections on the total depravity of man.

Turn to Psalm 140:3

The Romans passage is a collection of various verses from the Psalms and also Isaiah.

However, both Rom 3 and James 3 are referencing -- Psalm 140:3

In addition we can see **Psalm 10:3,7** in James 3.

v. 3 -- For the wicked **boasts** of his heart's desire;
We find the boasting of James 3:6
But interestingly James turns the bless God and curse man around
He blesses the greedy *and* renounces the LORD.

v. 7 -- His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression;
Under his tongue *is* trouble and iniquity.

Turn to Matt. 12:36

We are DEEPLY in NEED of God's grace when it comes to the matters of the tongue.

The context is Christ speaking to the Religious leaders – the ones who are in grave danger of committing the unpardonable sin.

Matt 12:34-37

B. The Tongue and God's Law

1. Think of the first 4 commandments – which are directed toward God – and summed up with “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind.

No other Gods

Do not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Let us go to **Rev. 2:18-20**

I want to focus on that one accusation of Jezebel – “eat things sacrificed to idols”.

An idol is nothing.

We see that in 1 Corinthians.

But – here is where speech and heart intersect.

According to G.K. Beele, and other scholars – the sin that is figuratively called the sin of Jezebel – in regard to idols has to do with a problem going on in Thyatira.

A trade city.

In the Roman Empire – worship of the gods was part of patriotism.

They also had THE TRADE GUILDS.

Much like our modern trade unions – in many places you could not work unless you were part of the guild.

BUT – to be part of the guild – you had to go along with the heathen worship and give alligence to the particular god or gods of that guild.

Now, the Jews had special permission from the Roman government to be exempt from many of the Roman worship.

The Christians at times benefited from that too – because in the Romans eyes – they were another form of Judaism.

But – very soon – the Jews are claiming – to the Romans that the Christians ARE NOT part of their religion.

Also, political pressures in Palestine – and the Jewish rebellion was making it such that the Romans would not have this kind of favor to the Jews for long.

What appears was happening in Thyatira was:

“Jezebel” was saying – you can go to the heathen feasts.

You can be part of the trade guilds.

You do not have to give up your position.

You can SPEAK THE WORDS of worship to the false gods – just mean them and don’t worship in your heart.

5. Honor your father and mother – do not curse.

6-8. Murder, Adultery, Stealing – sometimes planning, plotting and strategy is employed – especially adultery, which is a sin that also involves another.

9. False witness – obviously a sin of the tongue.

10. Coveting – a sin of the heart – that often expresses itself by the tongue.

II. The Tongue in Proverbs

Speaking or hearing by the wise and by the foolish make up the greatest part of the book of Proverbs.

Let's just look at some specific examples.

1. The problem of ANGER

Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

Angry words produce an angry response.

We **MUST** correct our children.

We are negligent if we **DO NOT** correct our children.

Ask yourself – is it really effective when you start yelling and screaming in anger at your children?

No, it just makes them angry.

There is a time to raise your voice

There is a time to be stern

There is a time to let them know you mean business

But, if you're just **BLOWING UP**

If you're just letting off steam

If you're letting off steam, you're really just full of hot air!!!

In the home

In the work-place

Any place – **ANGER PRODUCES ANGER.**

But something positive is taught here too.

You have the power to be a peace-maker.

You can have calming power on the anger of others.

A **SOFT ANSWER** – is not always the easiest answer to give, but it is the best answer when anger is involved.

Prov 16:32

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

How can you give a soft answer?

How can you remain calm when others are angry?

It's not easy.

It's harder than winning a war.

It has to be by God's grace and looking to him.

We need to have the utmost respect for those who can control their anger and rage. But there is a flip side to all of this:

Prov 25:28

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

A city without walls in Bible days was a city without defense.

There is no defense for the man who can not control himself.

The best way to control angry words is not to say them.

-- Think before you speak.

-- Once you become angry, resist the temptation to speak, for you will only regret what you say.

Sometimes the very best word to say is "Not a word at all".

2. The value of keeping silent**Prov 29:20**

Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

How much hope do you have for a fool?

-- There is nothing good about being a fool.

-- But there are some people who are worse off than fools.

-- A man "hasty in his words" is one of them.

THINK before you speak.

And when you speak, remember, you speak every word before an all-seeing, all-hearing, and all-knowing God.

Prov 17:28

Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

We get ourselves in trouble, often, because we have a tendency to think WE HAVE TO SAY SOMETHING.

There have been many situations where I wanted to say something, and didn't either because someone stopped me, or by God's grace I stopped myself, and afterwards, I WAS VERY, VERY GLAD.

- There can be regret over words that should have been spoken.
- Most of our regret is over words that ARE spoken.

3. The Danger of Gossip

Prov 18:17

He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

It's a principle that is universally true, like so many of the Proverbs. The Book of Proverbs is God's book of all the things your parents should have told you, but probably didn't know themselves.

You hear one side of the story, and you believe their side.

But every dispute has at least two sides, and if we are going to discern the truth, we need to hear ALL sides.

This is why "gossip" is so powerful and so destructive.

I do not think it would be an exaggeration to say that gossip is the number one problem faced by every local church.

How do I know if I am engaging in gossip?

Gossip is not corrective.
Gossip has no positive value.

Gossip is an invitation to “take sides” and “come to MY side, which is the right side.”

Gossip intentionally makes another person look bad.

How do I know if something is gossip?

It can rightly be called gossip when you are simply talking about somebody’s faults and you have no intention to try and help them with their sins

That is a check on ourselves.
We have no remedy – we just want to expose.

AND WHAT ABOUT HEARING GOSSIP?

Once you have received words of gossip, there really is nothing constructive you can do with them so the best thing is to make sure you do not hear them.

How can you I stop someone from gossiping to me?

This is very effective and very Scriptural.

Ask them:

1. Have you spoken with sister so & so or brother so & so?
According to the Bible, you should be telling this to them, not to me.
2. You talk to them, and if they will not listen to you, then you can come back to me, and TOGETHER we will go and talk to them.

This is following the Matt. 18 principle of interpersonal relationships and church discipline.

First, you go alone.

Then you take one or two witnesses – if it still can’t be resolved

Finally, you tell it to the church.

If they really want to correct the problem – they will take positive action.
If they merely wanted to gossip – that will stop the problem right there.

What did they say of Christ
“Never a man spake like this man”.

C. Rules For Proper Communication

Here are some practical guidelines to make sure our speech IS with grace --
These principles are applicable for husbands and wives, but really they go
for all interpersonal relations and dealings with our children, or parents, or
co-workers, or neighbors, etc.

1. Keep your communication honest. Eph. 4:25, 29-31

Tell the truth, and you never have to remember what you said.
Be committed to being an honest in all your speech.
Can you really glorify God by lying?

However this should be tempered by humility and discretion.
Some Christians have done more harm than good by trying to be honest and
have become brutally honest.

2. Keep your communication tactful.

You don't need to speak your mind on every subject.
If you DO think you need to speak your mind at all times – that
is a sign of PRIDE.
Pride?
How can it be PRIDE to tell people what I think?
How can it be PRIDE to tell people the truth?

Do you really think you are wise enough to always be right?
We are talking about TACT.
We are talking about knowing WHEN to speak and when to be quiet.
Let your speech BE WITH GRACE – seasoned with salt.

3. Keep your communication under control.

Outbursts of anger and passion are sinful.

Words are destructive.

Do not underestimate the power of a little word spoken in anger.

It can go down into the soul of a person and break their spirits.

Can you think of hurtful words that caused you great pain?

Prov 12:18 -- There is one that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.

God's remedy to harsh words -

Prov 15:1 -- A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

Proverbs 30:33 -- For *as* the churning of milk produces butter,
And wringing the nose produces blood,
So the forcing of wrath produces strife.

Do we really think we can gain love from our spouse by yelling at them?

Do we really think we can teach our children self-control by yelling at them?

-- They will learn more by our actions than by our words.

-- If they see us out of control, how can we teach them self-control?

4. Keep your communication positive

This is the heart of Col. 4:6 – GRACIOUSNESS

The OT says the same thing.

Prov. 25:11 -- A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

There are 1,000 people in this world willing and ready to criticize us.

On the job, on the freeway, in stores, people have no problem criticizing you and telling you what they think about you.

We should try to accomplish our communication with our loved ones in a positive manner.

With all these people trying to tear us down, should we be trying to build up our loved ones, our friends, our fellow church-members?

Satan is the great destroyer.

We should be instruments of healing.

We can do a GREAT AMOUNT OF HEALING or a GREAT AMOUNT OF DESTRUCTION with our tongues.

Proverbs 18:21 -- Death and life are in the **power of the tongue**,

Do you want your speech to be WITH GRACE?

Think of God's grace.

Do you want to be a witness for Christ?

Meditate UPON Christ.

Do you want to have graciousness in what you say?

Think on positive things not NEGATIVITY.

Philippians 4:8

I'm not talking about "the power of positive thinking".

You know what the power of positive thinking will get you?

It will get your Crystal Cathedral sold to the Catholics!

But what we dwell upon will GREATLY affect our speech and our attitude.

PRAY

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Benediction: Philippians 4:8