

KEEP THE DOOR OF MY LIPS

PSALMS 141 & JAMES 3

Text: Psalms 141:3 & James 3:1

Psalm 141:3

³ Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.

James 3:1

¹ My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

Introduction:

James is dealing with the Christian and His Behavior.

He begins with sins of the tongue, and because teachers do a great deal of talking he begins with them.

Though he gets the teachers attention here the truths we see in this passage has lessons for each of us to learn.

Notice:

1. THE PRODUCT OF THE TONGUE (VS.1-2)

James 3:1-2

¹ My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. ² For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

The word masters here is an old English word that simply means "teachers."

In Jewish culture teachers were held in great admiration. In the Old Testament, teachers were called "Rabbis."

The word itself means "great one."

Being a teacher of God's Word involves the instructing and directing of other people's lives.

Therefore, such a work is a solemn responsibility.

James urges that believers, especially those young in the faith, not be overzealous or over anxious to impart their knowledge.

They need first of all to study, learn, and grow in spiritual matters.

James says, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

The word condemnation means "judgment."

Preaching and teaching the Word of God is one of the greatest privileges that God gives to man.

However, because it is a ministry that affects the lives of others in such a great way, God will judge the teacher or preacher with more scrutiny.

In other words the judgment of God will be more severe for the preacher and teacher.

With privilege comes responsibility and responsibility brings accountability.

The Preacher and the teacher are to use their tongues to Enlighten, Establish, Exhort, Encourage, and Edify others.

It is a serious undertaking it is to teach others.

If one fails in this matter of teaching and declaring the whole counsel of God's Word, God will hold him accountable for misleading his hearers, whether done through ignorance of the Word or through neglect.

For in many things we offend all... (James 3:2)

The word offend means "to fail, stumble or to err."

The truth of the matter is that no one is exempt in regard to the dangers of the tongue.

No one is perfect and that adds even more weight to James' warning.

James goes on to say, If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. (James 3:2)

The word bridle in verse two means to control or restrain.

James uses this illustration to help us understand how the tongue guides and controls the whole course of life.

We have considered the Product of the Tongue. Note secondly:

2. THE POWER OF THE TONGUE (VSS. 3-4)

James 3:3-4

³ Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. ⁴

Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

A bit in a horse's mouth is such a small thing but just think of the service it delivers.

James says that we use these bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us.

A horse is a powerful creature with a mind of its own. Left to itself the horse goes where it wants to.

But by inserting a small bit in the horse's mouth a rider can control the direction of the horse.

The bit is indeed a little thing, but it controls the horse.

The second illustration is that of a ship being driven every which way by the fierce winds.

By simply moving a very small helm a huge ship can be turned... whithersoever the governor listeth.

With just a small rudder, the Captain guides the vessel where he wants it to go in spite of the strong winds.

A little bit controlled the direction of the horse.

A little rudder controlled the direction of the ship.

Notice in both cases something small controlled the direction of something that was much bigger.

James' illustrations are meant to teach us that our tongue controls the direction of our life.

We have considered the Product and Power of the Tongue. Note thirdly:

3. THE PERIL OF THE TONGUE (VSS. 5-8)

James 3:5-8

⁵ Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. ⁷ For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: ⁸ But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Note:

Our tongue can be brutal. It is compared to a fire.

- Words can devastate

Proverbs 12:18

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

Proverbs 18:8

⁸ The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Jeremiah 9:8

⁸ Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.

James 1:26

²⁶ If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

Note only can word devastate but also:

- Words Can Divide

Proverbs 16:28

²⁸ A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

Proverbs 17:9

⁹ He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

Galatians 5:15

¹⁵ But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

The tongue can build up or break down.

The tongue can bless or become brutal.

We have considered the Product, Power and the Peril of the Tongue.

Note lastly:

4. THE PURPOSE FOR THE TONGUE

A. We must purpose to bring the tongue in under control

1 Peter 3:8-10

⁸ Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: ⁹ Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

Not only must we purpose to have our tongue under control but also:

B. We must pray for God's help

Psalm 19:13

¹³ Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

Psalm 141:3

³ Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.

Not only must we purpose to have our tongue under control and Pray for God's Help but also:

C. We must prepare our heart

Psalm 119:11

¹¹ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Proverbs 15:1

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

Close:

Though we may not all be teachers, we still speak.

May we not use tongue in such a way that would dishonor the Lord.