

THE WORDS OF A MAN'S MOUTH

PROVERBS 18:4-8; JAMES 3

Text: Proverbs 18:4

Proverbs 18:4

⁴The words of a man's mouth *are as* deep waters, *and* the wellspring of wisdom *as* a flowing brook.

Introduction:

Suppose you drove up to a typical church in America and saw two men talking in the parking lot. You could tell they were having a lively dialogue by their hand gestures and body language. You noticed, as you got within earshot they quieted down and obviously changed the subject and began talking about the weather. Then, as you got where they thought you could not hear them, you could tell they resumed their former conversation. Now you had no idea what they were talking about, but suppose they were talking about someone in the church that they both disliked, and were expressing to each other very explicitly what they disliked about the person. Then it came time for worship service to begin and they walked in, picked up a hymn book and began singing, "*Oh, how I love Jesus...*"

Would the Holy Spirit be able to move freely in that worship service with that sin in the midst? No!

Why, because the Holy Spirit heard every hateful and spiteful word that was said in that parking lot.

All over America churches do not have the moving of God's Spirit to save souls and edify Christians because of Christians who lead you to believe they are right with the LORD, but who grieve the Spirit by having their hearts full of hate.

You say, "Preacher, I love everybody."

I say to you that you cannot love God's people the way you should if you are constantly criticizing, faultfinding, or gossiping about them!

The truth is Samson slew 1000 philistines with the jaw bone of an ass and many today have destroyed with a similar tool – the tongue.

God has given us two ears, and one tongue, to show that we should be swift to hear, but slow to speak. God has set cage of teeth in front of the tongue and lips that can be sealed, to teach us to be wary that we offend not with our tongue.

The Bible tells us:

Ephesians 4:29

²⁹ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

James 3 has a lot to say about our words and the importance of the Christian controlling his tongue.

Someone has said, "Loose lips sink ships."

And it seems to hold true.

The ruin of great ministries and works over the years has many times been the result of loose tongues!

James stated earlier in James 1:26:

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.

In other words our tongue will tell the spiritual condition of our heart.

Notice with me the truth about the tongue:

1. THE TONGUE IS POWERFUL

James 3:1-5

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. 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. ⁵

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

A. The Responsibility Connected With the Tongue

Apparently, according to vs.1, everyone in the assembly wanted to be a leader and a teacher. Maybe they were impressed with the authority and prestige it gave, but they seemed to forget the tremendous responsibility and accountability it holds!

Those who minister the Word of God through teaching or preaching have a grave responsibility!

They must truthfully share God's Word, but they also must practice what they preach.

The mark of a mature Christian is that he disciplines his tongue so as not to offend others! If he can do this he can discipline his body also! (v2).

B. The Remarkability Connected With the Tongue

The tongue is a small member but it is very powerful.

Just as little bits turn grown horses, small rudders guide large ships, and a small spark consumes an entire forest, so the tongue is a small part of the body, but is a great boaster!

"That little bit of flesh between the jaws," as Martin Luther called it, is a concealed and dangerous weapon.

"Remember that your tongue is in a wet place and is likely to slip."

Remember what Solomon said:

Proverbs 18:21

²¹ Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

A wound from a tongue is worse than a wound from a sword; the latter affects only the body,-the former the soul, the spirit.

Not only does the tongue have the power to cause hurt, but it can also help.

James uses the illustrations of the bit and the rudder both are used to direct, which means they affect the lives of others.

A runaway horse or a shipwreck could mean injury or death to pedestrians or passengers. We must never underestimate the guidance we can give by the words we speak.

Proverbs 25:11

¹¹ A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver.

This can only be done as we allow God's Spirit to control and direct our tongues! Both the bit and the rudder are kept under control by a strong hand, so also when the Lord controls the tongue, then we need not fear saying the wrong things!

2. THE TONGUE IS PERVERSE

James 3:6-8

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.

A. The Tongue's Potential

Our words can start fires. Solomon warned:

Proverbs 26:20-21

²⁰ Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. ²¹ As coals *are* to burning coals, and wood to fire; so *is* a contentious man to kindle strife.

Illustration:

A fire can begin with just a small spark, but it can grow and destroy a city. A fire reportedly started in the O'Leary barn in Chicago at 8:30 p.m., October 8, 1871; and because that fire spread, over 100,000 people

were left homeless, 17,500 buildings were destroyed, and 300 people died. It cost the city over \$400 million.

Listen to Solomon's words in Proverbs 15

Proverbs 15:1-4

¹ A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. ² The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness. ³ The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good. ⁴ A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life: but perverseness therein *is* a breach in the spirit.

Like a fire, the tongue can "heat things up." A hot head and a hot heart can lead to burning words that later we will regret! Fire not only starts small and grows, and creates heat; it also defiles. Words spoken carelessly, unwisely, destructively, can set ablaze the whole sphere of our existence, affecting seriously our family life, church life, and community life.

And who is behind these perverse words?

James 3:6

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.

Satan Himself

Behind every word that is unclean, untrue, angry, divisive, unkind, is Satan himself!

Not only is the tongue like an uncontrolled fire, but also like an untamed beast.

Mankind has over the years learned to tame the wild beasts, but God says, "*..the tongue can no man tame...*"

No man can tame the tongue, but God can! God can take our tongues, like he did with the apostles at Pentecost, tame them and control them. He can light the fire and control it, so the tongue can be a mighty tool for winning the lost and edifying the Church!

But, for this to happen the heart must be right with God! Why?

Matthew 12:34

³⁴ O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

If our heart is filled with strife, envy, hatred, Satan will light the fire. But if the heart is filled with love, God will light the fire!

B. The Tongue's Poison

We must guard our words because the tongue is:

James 3:8

⁸ But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

The word "*unruly*" means "*restless, unstable.*" It is hard to hold and we cannot depend upon its words being right words! Like a serpent, which James mentions in vs.7, it is armed with venom, a deadly and death-bringing poison!

The deceptive thing about poison is that it works secretly and slowly, and then kills.

How many times has a person interjected poison into a conversation hoping it would spread and get the person they wanted to hurt?

Our daily prayer should be:

Psalm 141:3

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

The tongue is POWERFUL, PERVERSE and finally the ...

3. THE TONGUE IS POLLUTED

James 3:9-12

⁹ Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. ¹¹ Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter? ¹² Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

A. The Inconceivability (vs. 9-10)

Matthew Henry wrote: “How absurd is it that those who use their tongues in prayer and praise should ever use them in cursing, slandering, and the like! If we bless God as our Father, it should teach us to speak well of, and kindly to, all who bear his Image.”

How utterly sinful it is for us to bless God as our heavenly Father with the very tongue we use to curse any man created in the image of God! Such actions shut out the presence of God in our lives.

B. The Inconsistency (vs. 11)

James 3:11

¹¹ Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?

James shows us the inconsistency of the tongue. It can bring forth fresh and bitter water.

In nature, it is totally inconsistent for a spring to bring forth fresh and salt water. Even so, in the life of a Christian, it is inconsistent for us to come to Church, sing praises unto God, and then go home and scold, fault-find, and criticize with our tongue! If you think you can sing praises to God on Sundays and engage in any form of evil speaking on weekdays, you are a liar!

Listen to what we read in 1 John:

1 John 4:20

²⁰ If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

We have no right to utter an unkind, ill-tempered word against anyone who has wronged us!

We are to be forgiving and loving.

Ephesians 4:31-32

³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

1 Peter 4:8

⁸ And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Close:

The way we use our tongue shows what kind a person we are!

Luke 6:45

⁴⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

The tongue is not the problem; it is the heart! James, in the closing verses of this chapter, shows us how to control our tongue. When James speaks about a wise man, he is speaking of one who is controlled by the Holy Spirit of God! His character will be humble.

James 3:13

¹³ Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

James 3:17-18

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

In closing let me give you fifteen words that can transform your life:

“Please”; “Thank You”; “I’m Sorry”; “I Was Wrong”;
“Please Forgive Me”; “I’m Praying For You”.

If you will use these words from your heart, God will use you to be an encouragement and blessing to others!

What kind of person are you: "The Tongue Will Tell!"