How to Talk

JAMES 3:1-12
8-19-2020

WE NEED TO SERIOUSLY GUARD OUR TONGUES!

I. THE POWER OF THE TONGUE (V. 1-6)

A. IT HAS THE POWER TO DIRECT (V. 1-4)

1. Power to direct others (therefore its use is serious) (v. 1)

2. Power to direct your own life (even though its size is small) (v. 2-4)

B. IT HAS THE POWER TO DESTROY (v. 5-6)

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2. A fire heats things up
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II. THE PROBLEM OF THE TONGUE (V. 7-12)

A. THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN CONTROL (v. 7-8)

B. THE PROBLEM OF SINFUL INCONSISTENCY (v. 9-12)

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INTRO: Solomon said: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" Prov. 18:21

The power of speech is one of the greatest powers God has given us. With the tongue, man can praise God, pray, preach, lead a soul to Christ, comfort, encourage . . . What a privilege!

But that same tongue can tell lies, ruin a man's reputation, split a church, or break a person's heart.

WE NEED TO SERIOUSLY GUARD OUR TONGUES!

I. THE <u>POWER</u> OF THE TONGUE (v. 1-6)

A. IT HAS THE POWER TO <u>DIRECT</u> (v. 1-4)

1. Power to direct <u>others</u> (therefore, its use is serious) (v. 1)

In N.T. times, the potential to teach false doctrine was greater than today because they did not have a completed N.T.

In early church, like today, some (no doubt) loved to talk without really having anything to say. Or even worse, what they said was false and misleading (cf. I Tim. 1:7).

It is an awesome responsibility to teach God's Word.

Teachers had better teach God's word accurately and live it consistently. A teacher who is not well-prepared or whose life is not right will face strict judgment for what was said.

This special strictness is on account of a teacher's <u>influence</u> over

other persons.

All men (especially teachers) must recognize the eternal significance of what they say.

We need to realize that "to speak is to teach" - Everytime you speak you are teaching.

--Every word is vital!
A Bible teacher is a doctor of the mind and heart.
We will give an account for every useless word we utter (Mt. 12:36).

2. Power to direct your own life (even though its size is small) (v. 2-4)

He is saying: We all stumble (into sin) in various manners (ex. thoughts [evil motives, evil intentions, evil desires], and actions [we either neglect to do, or do wrong]). . . . But the hardest area to control is your tongue.

"Perfect" = complete, mature.
Your spiritual maturity is measured by your speech.

Our mouths have the potential to control our entire life.

Our mouths are the easiest areas to slip up (an when you do, all your tongue is doing is manifesting what is in your heart).

It is amazing that a 1 lb. bridle controls a 500 lb. animal.

Your guide (direct) that which is large by controlling that which is small.
Illus. Steering column that went out on my V.W. --small but significant!

Just as the bit when turned gives direction to the rider, the direction of a man's whole life may be turned by the use he makes of his tongue.

What you say will determine the course of your life!

The tongue has the power to direct (for good) but it must overcome your contrary old nature.

V. 4 - The bit must overcome the wild nature of the horse, and the rudder, the winds and currents

Sin on the inside and pressures on the outside are seeking to gain control of the tongue.

Illus. of the power of just a few words. Just a simple "Yes" or "No" from the lips of a parent can greatly affect the direction of a child's life.

Your words are especially important to the lost. Example -

On April 21, 1855, Edward Kimbell went into a Boston shoe store and led young D. L. Moody to Christ. The result was phenomenal.

Beware of what you say! Your words have the power to direct for good or bad.

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

Prov. 12:22 - "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight."

B. IT HAS THE POWER TO DESTROY (v. 5-6)

The tongue is the world's smallest but largest troublemaker.

Our words can start fires (Prov. 26:20-21 - "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where thee is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.")

(NOTE: On the other hand, they can start fires of revival).

V. 6 - Children say: "Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me." But that is not true! Evil words have the power to destroy!

Sins of the tongue:

1) gossip [when you hear gossip,
   1) stop the conversation;
      2) ask the person to go to the one he/she is talking about to straighten it out]

2) foolish jesting

3) slang ["minced oaths" – ex. substitutes for God ("gosh," "golly"); Jesus ("Gee whiz")]

4) cursing [remember when you hear it -- silence is consent.]

Our tongue has the potential to destroy much good.

Prov. 16:28 - "A whisperer separateth chief friends."
Prov. 17:9 - "He that repeateth a matter separateth very friends."
Prov. 18:8 - "The words of a talebearer are as wounds"

A careless word does destroy as much as a deliberately wrong word. An arsonist and a careless camper can do the same amount of damage.

1. A fire starts off small (v. 5)

   A little spark can ruin an entire forest.
   Illus. Chicago's fire (8:30 p.m., Oct. 8, 1871) started from a cow kicking over a lantern, which started a barn on fire. Result = 100,000 people left homeless, 17,500 buildings destroyed, 300 people died, it cost the city $400,000,000.

2. A fire heats things up
   (The uncontrolled tongue expresses the unrighteousness of the world)

   Like a fire, the tongue can heat things up. (Ps. 39:1, 3)

   Prov. 17:27 NASV - "He who restrains his words has knowledge; And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding."

3. A fire defiles
   (The uncontrolled tongue stains the whole person)

   "Defile" = "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man (ex. food); but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."

   Ex. The Temple was burned and thus defiled (in O.T. by Babylon; 70 A.D. by Romans).

   Ex. My home on Arch Street that was burned. The smoke, water damage, and fire itself ruined everything.

   Appli: Fiery words can defile a marriage, a home, a S.S. class, a job relationship, friendship, etc.

   But this verse is teaching that it will totally, 100% defile your whole

person. We can't sin with our lips and come away without burnt, defiled character.

4. A fire spreads
(The tongue's destructive force ruins a whole life and the lives of others)

A fire not only defiles you, but it spreads to others--to everyone that comes in contact with your life.

The more fuel you give it, the faster and farther it will spread.

5. A fire is started from fire
(The tongue's destructive force is set on fire by the demonic forces of Hell)

We shouldn't call wrong language "gutter language"; rather - "pit language," because it comes right out of the pit of hell!

You must realize that while the tongue can be set on fire of hell, it can also be touched (if you will) by a live coal from God's altar and cleansed! (Is. 6:5-7)

II. THE PROBLEM OF THE TONGUE (v. 7-12)

A. THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN CONTROL (V. 7-8)

"Beasts" - wild animals (ex. dogs, lions, tigers)

"Birds" (ex. parakeets, etc.)

"Serpents" _ex. boa constrictors; snake charmers, etc.)

"Sea creatures" (ex. dolphins, whales)

"Unruly evil" = a restless evil. Picture of a wild animal pacing back and forth, looking for what it may devour. The tongue never rests (by itself) from doing evil. Ex. evil, aggressive words; loud.

"Full of deadly poison" = picture of a snake. He is calling the tongue an uncontrollable, venomous serpent (cp. Rom. 3:13 - "The poison of asps is under their lips")

"Poison" - deceptively mild words. Like venom it slowly sinks in, then kills! Don't use innuendos, jokes, etc. designed to hurt others.

Without God's transforming power, the tongue will not stop (rest) from speaking evil, nor will anything drain it of its poison.

No man is able to tame the tongue (not you, nor others).
Appli: Give up trying to improve your speech and give in to surrendering to the Holy Spirit.

Just as a skillful and strong hand is needed to keep a horse under control and a ship on course (v. 3, 4), we need God's power to control our tongues.

Ps. 141:3-4a - "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to any evil thing."

David knew that the heart is the key to right speech. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (Mt. 12:34)

The change we need is not plastic surgery on our lips but a real open heart surgery by God on our hearts!

Illus. of a girl who did nothing but gossip. "She came to the pastor one day and said, "Pastor, the Lord has convicted me of my sin of gossip. My tongue is getting me and others into trouble." The pastor knew she was not sincere because she had gone through that routine before. Guardedly, he asked, "Well, what do you plan to do?" "I want to put my tongue on the altar," she replied with pious fervor. Calmly the pastor answered, "There isn't an altar big enough," and he left her to think it over." (Wiersbe, p. 89)

It is one miracle of grace that a man's vocabulary can be radically changed when he comes under the power of the saving Christ! (Colson, p. 51).

Illus. of E.R. Jordan (don't use his name) who was a cursing sailor until saved. Now is a preacher! Only God could do such a change!

B. THE PROBLEM OF SINFUL INCONSISTENCY (v. 9-12)

The unspiritual tongue is capable of going from one extreme to the other (ex. like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde)

V. 9 "Bless" = to speak well of; to praise

"Curse" = lit. to speak down upon, to insult
(gossip, slander, belittling)

Eph. 4:29-30 - "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. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Illus. Some drugs (ex. strychnine and opium) can be poisons (if used in a wrong way) or can be cures (when controlled by wise doctors)

The tongue can be used to bless or curse, wound or soothe, heal or harm.

"Made after the similitude of God" = this shows that we should have real appreciation for the worth (value) of every human being.

When you injure a man, you sin against the Creator.

As a dad, if you were to curse my son or daughter you would offend me more than if you were to curse me. It's the same way with God . . . If you knew that God loves others as much as He loves you, you wouldn't curse them.

Many people can speak with perfect courtesy to strangers, and even preach/teach love and gentleness, and yet snap with ungraciousness and impatient anger at their own family at home.

Blessing and cursing should not come out of the same mouth. ~A single mouth ought to produce a single message!"

An ungodly (devilish) message ought not to come out of a saint of God.

Prov. 10:11 - "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life; but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked."

Prov. 13:14 -"The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."

Prov. 18:4 - "The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook."

Water may give <u>life</u> or death (ex. flood).

Sweet water <u>cleanses, gives life</u>, etc., but bitter (salt) water burns (illus. Dead Sea - no cuts on body) and does not give life.

<u>One</u> fountain either has bitter water or sweet water, not both.

Nature produces after its kind (examine your faith!) Your works will reveal its genuineness -- NOTE context 2:14-26.

You don't go to a sweet water source to get bitter. Illus. the Dead Sea will never produce fresh water (until God miraculously changes it). The Sea of Galilee will never produce salt water.

Appli: How easy it is to sing hymns at church, smile, greet each other, etc. - then after the service, get into the family car and argue and fight all the way home!

Conclusion:

*Wisdom from **Proverbs 15** on how to use my tongue:*

1. Speak **<u>soft (gentle)</u>** responses (v.1)
2. Speak **<u>well thought out</u>** answers (v.2)
3. Speak solutions that bring **<u>help & healing</u>** (v.4)
4. Speak with **<u>insight, perception & wisdom</u>** (v.7)

5. Speak by offering advice **at the right time** (v.23)
6. Speak with **kindness & pleasantness** (v.26)
7. Speak with **restraint & self-control** (v.28)
8. Speak with **encouraging**, positive body language & encouraging content (v.30)

Some words that can change your life: "Please" "Thank you" "I'm sorry" "I love you" "I'm praying for you" "Can I help you in any way?"

Wash your mouth out with the soap of the Word of God by the scrubbing power of the Spirit of God.

"Be sure your heart is in gear with the Holy Spirit before you let out the clutch on your tongue" (Colson, p. 56).

The bottom line is this: Seek to please God by everything you say!

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer."
(Ps. 19:14)