

# Controlling The Tongue

## Introduction

- Jas 3:6-8      6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.  
7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.  
8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

- I. In this passage James uses three figures to describe the tongue as a very destructive force:
- A. The tongue is a **fire** (6). It has the power to rage out of control, to indiscriminately consume everything in its path. The tongues' flames are often unstoppable — rumors, lies, and gossip are not easily recalled and the damage not easily repaired.
  - B. The tongue is an **untamable beast** (7-8a). It can be subdued and controlled but with no degree of certainty. It has to be constantly guarded and carefully corralled – you cannot relax your vigil for one moment (Illus. Uncle Loyd had a mule called “Tater.” He was rideable, but if you relaxed for a moment he would try to brush you off on the nearest tree.
  - C. The tongue is a **poison** (8). It is often deadly in its nature and totally unconcerned as to who falls victim to its destructive power.
- II. The question, then, of how to control your tongue is an important one! James warned...
- Jas 1:26      26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.
- III. How then shall we order our speech and govern our words in order that our tongue might be controlled and we might please God?
- A. May I suggest that we need to say the **right thing** at the **right time** to the **right person** in the **right way** for the **right purpose**.
  - B. Let's examine that statement a little closer.

## Discussion

### I. Say the RIGHT THING.

- A. The first consideration should be that **our speech be pure...**  
Eph 4:29    29 **Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth**, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.
- B. Our communications with and about one another should be that which is **undeniable true...**  
Eph 4:25    25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, **SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR**, for we are members of one another.

- C. We should speak **only that which needs to be said**. Much is said about others that, in reality, does not need to be said at all...
- Mt 12:36 36 "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.
- D. We should **speak that which needs to be said**. Sometimes silence is a sign of cowardice and great harm can be caused by it. *People often take your silence on a particular matter as your approval of it!!* Sometimes things may need saying and you may be the only one to say it!

## II. Say it at the RIGHT TIME.

- A. **Consider yourself.** To allow the emotion of the moment to move you to speak from anger, discouragement, or embarrassment is terribly unwise, the timing is wrong. (Such could cause you further anger, discouragement, or embarrassment).
- B. **Consider others.** To take advantage of someone in the presence of others, or when they are not present to defend themselves is hardly the Christ-like thing to do.

## III. Say it to the RIGHT PERSON.

- A. If your brother sinned against you, if you have a problem with him – your neighbor, your uncle, or your gossiping cousin is the wrong person to tell...
- Mt 18:15 15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.
- B. At times we do a lot of talking about a person but precious little talking to that person (It is easier to talk *about* someone than *to* them). It should not be this way! We need to ask ourselves: Does the person to whom I am speaking really need to know what I am saying? Am I talking to the one involved?
- C. Respect for Christ's command to go to "him in private" would stop much of the gossip and unkind backbiting that has always plagued the people of God!

## IV. Say it in the RIGHT WAY (manner or tone).

- A. It is terribly difficult to take seriously someone who is always loud and abrasive; someone who is constantly overbearing in manner; someone who is always critical.
- B. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to win a brother from whom you are alienated by approaching him with an angry disposition.
- Pr 17:27 27 He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.
- C. A general rule to follow which is most always successful is "the more serious your problem, the softer your voice"
- Pr 15:1 1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

- D. Very good and sound instruction is often ignored because of the objectionable manner in which it is presented

*(A word to those of us who teach and preach: if someone rejects the truth, let's have presented it in a way that it is the message and its demand upon their lives that they reject, and not the manner in which it was presented.)*

## V. Say it for the RIGHT PURPOSE.

- A. I may well have the right thing to say at the right time to the right person and do so in the right manner, but if I am not speaking for the RIGHT PURPOSE, then I would do well to remain silent.
- B. What is my motivation? Am I speaking to encourage, build and strengthen; or to tear down or lessen someone in the eyes of another? Do I favorably slant the truth to bolster myself and my cause? Am I motivated by personal dislike, jealousy?
- C. BEFORE you speak or listen to injurious, slanderous words concerning another, think about WHY this is being said and whether it accomplishes anything beneficial. It will stop a lot of gossip!
- D. If you MUST discuss someone else's conduct (and sometimes you must), do so out of love and concern for their soul; considering your own soul in the process; let it be discussion that will motivate efforts to restore them back unto God!

## Conclusion

Pr 18:21 "Death and life are in the power of the tongue..."

- I. The tongue can **accomplish tremendous good**. It can be used as a tool for instruction, encouragement, and admonition.
- II. However, the tongue can also **cause devastating damage** – gossip, lying, backbiting, talebearing, and innuendo. All of which have served to destroy the reputation of good brethren and churches in the community. Let it not happen to us!
- III. The tongue CAN BE CONTROLLED, but only with a good deal of genuine effort.