

## A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH

### Int.

1. Aim: To show that the tongue is really a matter of life or death.
2. Pro. 18:21 "Death and life are in the power of the tongue; and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."
3. The use of the tongue is also a matter of spiritual life or death.
  - a. Jesus said that eternity is on the line with every word one speaks - Mt. 12:36,37  
 "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
  - b. The Bible warns against the dangers of a foolish tongue -
    - i. Pro. 10:11,12 "The mouth of a righteous [man is] a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked. Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins."
    - ii. Pro. 13:2,3 "A man shall eat good by the fruit of [his] mouth: but the soul of the transgressors [shall eat] violence. He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: [but] he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction."
4. Someone has said, "If you talk by the yard and think by the inch you will get kicked by the foot."
5. James said "But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Jas. 1:19
6. James also gives a long explanation about the tongue and it's importance in Jas. 3:2-12

## Discussion

### I. THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

- A. Illustrations - v. 2-5 V. 2 "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body."
1. **Bridle** - a few ounces of metal and leather can control a ton of muscle and flesh. The Tongue is that strong. V.3 "Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body."
  2. **Rudder** - A small piece of material on a ship guides it whither it goes. It's very small in comparison to the rest of the ship. So it is with the little tongue. V.4 "Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires."
  3. **Fire** - A small spark of fire can start an enormous fire. A few words uttered by our little tongue can do a great deal of damage. V. 5 "Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!"
- B. Description - v. 6-8 "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. 7. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."
1. The Tongue is a fire - it can burn to the quick of one's soul - destroying fervor, friendship, fellowship, faith, etc.

2. The tongue is a world of iniquity - it is considered the sum of evil because of what it is capable of generating when improperly used.
3. The tongue is like the wild beast - it is chaffing against confinement, pacing from wall to wall, fighting restraint.
4. Gal. 5:15 "But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!"
  - a. Wild beasts fight with each other until one or both are killed and destroyed
  - b. Illustration: Saw on PBS: Pack of wolves had killed a large animal and had eaten till they were full. A coyote came near and tried to eat some of the dead animal. But the wolves would not allow this so they chased him away and caught the coyote and tore him to pieces.
  - c. Beware lest we be consumed by one another with words.
5. The tongue is full of deadly poison - Rom. 3:13 "Their throat [is] an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps [is] under their lips:"

C. Inflictions - v.5,6

1. Kindles much wood - defiles the whole body.
2. Sets on fire the wheel of nature.
3. Comprehensive and far-reaching consequences.

## **II. VARIED USES OF THE TONGUE**

### A. Improper uses of the tongue

1. All through the book of James the writer condemns certain uses of the tongue

- a. Blasphemy - 1:13-17
- b. Prejudice - 2:2-13
- c. Faith without works - 2:14-26
- d. Selfish supplications - 4:1-10
- e. Acclamations of arrogance - 4:13-16
- f. Criticism - 5:7-11
- g. Profanity - 5:12

2. Context of James 3

a. Boasting - v.5

(1) Such is an abomination to God -

- (a) Pro. 6:16,17 "These six [things] doth the LORD hate: yea, seven [are] an abomination unto him: 17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,"
- (b) Prov. 8:13 "The fear of the LORD [is] to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."
- (c) Prov.16:5 "Every one [that is] proud in heart [is] an abomination to the LORD: [though] hand [join] in hand, he shall not be unpunished."

(2) Examples of man who used his tongue for boasting

- (a) Herod - Acts 12:2-23
- (b) People said he is god
- (c) Eaten of worms

## b. Slander - v. 9-12

(1) "Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; little minds discuss people."

(2) James says that one who slanders is placing himself on a level with the Divine - Jas. 4:11,12

(3) Illustration "I'm Sorry 'Taint so!" - [at end of sermon]

## B. Proper Uses of the Tongue

## 1. In the book of James he also considered favorable uses of the tongue

a. Prayers of faith - 1:5-8 5:13

b. Words seasoned with time - 1:19

c. Words of humble submission to God - 4:15

d. Preaching regardless of the consequences - 5:16

e. Honesty - 5:12

f. Confession - 5:16

## 2. Context in James 3

## a. Teaching

(1) V. 1: "be not many of you teachers"

(2) They will receive heavier judgment

(3) He did not say that to keep us from teaching, but to tell us to be careful that we teach correctly.

## b. Praise of the Lord and Father - v.9 and 5:13

(1) God is deserving of the glory in the church - Eph. 3:21

(2) His children should "...offer up a sacrifice of praise...continually, that is, the fruit of the lips." Heb. 13:15

## Conclusion

1. Pro. 13:3 "He that guardeth his mouth keepeth his life; but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction."
2. How do we guard the tongue?
  - a. Closely observe "when" we speak - Pro. 15:23 "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word [spoken] in due season, how good [is it]!"
  - b. Watch "How" we speak - Pro. 16:23,24 "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. 24 Pleasant words [are as] an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."
  - c. Be careful to "whom" we speak - Pro. 20:19 "He that goeth about [as] a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips."
3. One minute of silence is worth an hour of explanation.
4. Think twice before you speak and you will speak twice as better for it!
5. The second most deadly instrument of destruction is the gun - the first is the human tongue. - William George Jordan

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Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Sunday Evening March 1, 2009  
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**I'M SORRY 'TAINT SO!**

—A Soliloquy

A told me, that B told him, that C told him, that D told him, that somebody told him, that P stole a pig. Gladly did I receive the report, gladly did I repeat the report! —Far and wide I scattered it! But now I have learned that it is not so—that P did not steal a pig. I'm sorry 'taint so! It would be better for me if P had stolen the pig. Why do I say what I say?

1. As it is, I lipped a lie. With falsehood I had fellowship.
2. When I lipped a lie, I became a link in a long chain of liars—A and B and C and others. I dislike my connection. Who wants to be a link in such a chain?
3. I am embarrassed, greatly embarrassed! I am finding it hard to face the friends to whom I lipped a lie.
4. When I lipped a lie, I assumed a painful obligation—the obligation of making amends, of making corrections. Will I ever be able to do this? Oh, how can I?
5. Because I repeated a lie, my reputation was lowered. In painful isolation I now stand.
6. When I lipped a lie, I broke the golden rule. I have a feeling of guilt. Wherever I go I carry a heavy heart.
7. When I learned that I lipped a lie, I was seized by the demon of fear. I am not as brave as I once was. Falsehood is a father of fear.

Between P and me a peculiar relationship prevails. Under the circumstances both cannot be innocent, both cannot be guilty at the same time. Since P is the innocent person, a heaviness of guilt falls upon me.

So, I am disappointed. I am sorry, so sorry 'taint so! Poor me! I do not feel as good as I once did. Oh how I wish that P had stolen the pig! I would feel much better.—A. Lie Lipper.

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