

9. The Tongue, The Little Trouble Maker

Four men of the cloth, taking a short break from their heavy schedules, were on a park bench, chatting and enjoying an early spring day. "You know, since all of us are such good friends," said one, "this might be a good time to discuss the problems that are disturbing us." They all nodded in agreement. "Well, I would like to share with you the fact that I drink to excess," said one. There was a gasp from the other three. Then another spoke up. "Since you were so honest, I'd like to say that my big problem is gambling. It's terrible, I know, but I can't quit. I've even been tempted to take money from the collection plate." Another gasp was heard, and the third clergyman spoke. "I'm really troubled, brothers, because I'm growing fond of a woman in my church—a married woman." More gasps. But the fourth man remained silent. After a few minutes the others coaxed him to open up. "The fact is," he said, "I just don't know how to tell you about my problem. "It's all right, brother. Your secret is safe with us." So the last man confessed his vice like this, "OK, mine is GOSSIP and I cannot wait to get out of this place."

Probably this portion of James is the most convicting section to many of us. Because we have tendency to let our tongues have their own control.

We gossip about somebody, we tear down another person so that we can be exalted, we murmur against God's provision, we complain about the system we are in. The list can go on and on.

We are quick to judge, quick to lash out with our tongue, quick to put our thought into action, then we regret.

A. WANT TO BE A BIBLE TEACHER?

James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

This is the best advice for those who are in the position of Bible teaching. This is one of the reasons why I tried to squirm out of God's call for teaching. Even though I was honored, I was scared to say "Yes" to the Lord for His call. What this verse meant was those who are called to be teachers of the Bible will be judged more strictly because of their influence to their congregation. A different version translates "a stricter judgement" as "greater degree of condemnation ('krina' in Greek).

But does it mean the rest of you guys are excluded? NOT!!! You people also are countable for your own tongues. Once we said it, we cannot retrieve it.

Matt 12:36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

B. PERFECT MAN

James 3:2-4 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. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.

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.

So far I haven't seen anyone who have all the word come out of his and her mouth under control all the time. I met a handful of godly mature people who think many avenues before they say. Obviously I am not one of them and am shamed about it. With His help, I will be able to control this little trouble maker better.

Sins and Power of Tongue

James 3:5-6 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 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.

Gossip:

Prov 11:13 A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.

Prov 16:28 A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends.

One man had told so many malicious untruths about the local rabbi that, overcome by remorse, he begged the rabbi to forgive him. "And, Rebbe, tell me how I can make amends." The rabbi sighed, "Take two pillows, go to the public square and there cut the pillows open. Wave them in the air. Then come back." The rumormonger quickly went home, got two pillows and a knife, hastened to the square, cut the pillows open, waved them in the air and hastened back to the rabbi's chambers. "I did just what you said, Rabbi!" "Good." The rabbi smiled. "Now, to realize how much harm is done by gossip, go back to the square..." "And?" "And collect all your feathers."

Some of you may think that gossip is not harmful and no big deal. You can say that until you become the end of the juicy gossip topic.

You may say, "Hey, what I tell about that man is not a gossip. Because it is truth." It might be truth. But if you think that gossip is harmless, I have a question to ask you, "If Jesus is here and listening to your juicy gossip, what would Jesus do?"

Garbled messages provides the perfect fuel for gossip sessions and just the right ingredient for slanderous slams. Exaggerate this detail or rearrange that fact, and you've got a recipe that'll make more mouths water than hot fudge on a rainy night.

Gossip has one purpose. It brings down other person whom we are gossiping about. We might say, "To pray intelligently, I'd like to share this with you." And here goes your gossip of the week. Is it really necessary to share a whole thing to someone else? Could you not simply ask to that person that you need a prayer for unspoken request?

If we have a problem with someone, instead of talking about that person to others, we should take this to the Lord and ask His guidance in that matter. If the Lord leads you to talk to that person, do it quietly in godly. If person do not listen to you, take another person with you to confront that person. If he still doesn't listen to the Lord, take it to the church and publically rebuke that person. But not gossiping!!!!

USING GOD'S NAME IN VAIN

This not only applies to those people who have foul mouths, but also those who would like to say this phrase. "God told me to tell you..." I believe in God and I believe God still speaks to people's heart through the Word of God or through counselors, pastors, elders, deacons, another godly people, or sometimes just tell you. Many times I find people who like to push their way to others have tendency to

use this "God told me to tell you...". If God didn't tell me to tell you about whatever I want to tell you, I become a big liar. And that is using God's name in vain. So next time, you are lead to tell someone from the Lord, use this phrase. "I believe that the Lord told me to pass His message to you." It gives you room to be wrong by saying "I believe".

James 3:7-8 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

The tongue is the main expression of our personality, and usually calls forth an immediate reaction, of one kind or another, in others. Mean words have wrecked many a home, divided many a church, and sent unnumbered millions to despair and ruin. Yet we know many very religious people who seem never to make even the slightest effort to control their tongue.

Anyone who loves to gossip about somebody has a few things in common: First, they are immature. If they were mature, they wouldn't gossip about somebody. Second, they are coward. If they were not coward, they would have gone to the person to confront and discuss. Third, they want destruction of those people whom they are gossiping about, not edification.

James 3:9-10 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

Let's watch out for that false accusation we might make with our selfish motives. We might think that we are doing God's favor by going after our brothers whom we think they are wrong.

Under the excuse of praying intelligently, people start to pass juicy information, whether they are true or not, sprinkled with a little twisted facts here, a little exaggeration there, church gossips come into life. And they become bigger and more juicier than ever before as they get passed from one to another.

What is the best and favorite subjects for gossips in the church? Pastoral staff for they did or not doing.

More often than not, we forget that we can have differences between us and the pastoral staff in preferences of how to run church. May I remind you a portion of the Bible verse from the NT?

1Tim. 5:17-20 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

The elder here is the teaching pastor. If you have a problem with the pastor, you go talk to him directly. However, please don't share your opinion with anyone else except consulting with God's Word. If you still believe that the pastor is wrong, go talk to him personally. Don't spread your opinion as truth against the pastor.

James 3:11-12 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

We cannot prevent others from gossiping, but we can stop that might start from our own lips. I'd like to suggest a simple formula applied before speaking of any person or subject that was perhaps controversial.

T —Is it true? Did you check the sources of gossips?

H —Is it helpful? Does it build up the person whom we talk about or tear down?

I —Is it inspiring? Can I put it against the Word of God and is it OK to say?

N —Is it necessary? Is it another idle words that I am going to be accountable to God?

K —Is it kind? If I was that person, would I like to hear that?

If what you and I are about to say about others does not pass those tests, we should keep our mouths shut! Then that gossip won't go anywhere.

APPLICATIONS

1) Gossip is not from God.

When we gossip, please realize that we are being used by satanic force to hurt one of our own. Let's not do that. Instead let's build up and encourage one another with kind words and pray for one another so that we may be healed.

2) Please remember this verse from the mouth of Jesus before you gossip.

Matt. 12:36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.