

Be In Control of Your Words!

Introduction

Welcome to My Thoughts and the second of six segments in our Words Are Powerful series, Be in Control of Your Words. Previously, I spoke about being careful with speaking words. It is very important to be careful, but being in control is the focal point of this segment.

I was reading my daily devotional and this Scripture really caught my attention. Proverbs 29:11, **“Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.”** In the past, I have been guilty of not holding back my anger and I’m sure you can identify this. We are not perfect. There are times we would like to take back what we said and our negative actions towards others.

Anger and Strife

The proverb explains that only fools will vent their anger on others. Anger leads to strife, which never works out for the good. The meaning of strife is angry or bitter disagreement over ordinary everyday issues. Another word for strife is conflict and no winners.

We all have many stories we could tell about our anger and strife. These stories will always lead to how it causes a division between friends, coworkers, families, and churches. Our stories are too numerous to tell, but there is one way to remove anger and strife in our lives. It all has to do with our tongues.

Learn to Harness Your Tongue

Grab your Bibles and turn to the **Book of James, Chapter Three, verses 1-12**. Some background about James. He is Jesus’ half-brother, lived in the same household, and was not a believer until he saw the miracles Jesus performed. He knew that his brother was the Son of God. James discusses how the tongue is powerful, perverse or wicked, and polluted or corrupted.

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

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.

³ Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.

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.

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

⁶And 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.

⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

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

⁹With it we bless our God and Father, and with it, we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.

¹⁰Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

¹¹Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening?

¹²Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

The Tongue is Powerful

The first five verses of our passage from the Book of James show how the tongue is a powerful member of our body. He mentions that many of us should not be teachers as we will be judged much more strictly than others (**v. 1**).

The reason for his assumption is that we all have issues controlling our tongues. If we could, we would be perfect and in control of ourselves (**v. 2**). Easier said than done, right? We all have a bad habit of stumbling because we all fall short of God's glory (**Romans 3:23**).

The Three Analogies of the Tongue

In verse three, James speaks using three analogies of a bridle, a ship's rudder, and a spark to show us how to control our tongue. My wife spent some years riding and caring for horses on a farm in Pennsylvania. To control what the horse does, she used a bridle. On this bridle is a small bit that she would put in the horse's mouth and can control the horse's entire movements.

I know from my 20+ years serving in the United States Navy, our ships are massively large compared to the rudders that control their movements. Some have only one rudder, but most have two or more to steer ships through all sorts of weather. We have ships that are very fast and some that are slow. Without rudders, the Quartermaster would not have control of any of the ship's movements.

The last analogy James used is a spark to cause a forest fire. In the summertime, mostly on the west coast, there are many fires that have consumed forests and cities. They are caused by a

spark either through weather or someone being careless. Sparks can cause millions of dollars in damages, and casualties in human lives, and take a significant amount of time to control.

These three analogies that James discusses are very powerful just like the tongue. The tongue is a small part of the human body, but it is powerful. Your tongue can cause life and death (**Proverbs 18:21**), and it can expose anger, which brings about strife. Your tongue can form words that are uplifting and fruitful or they can tear someone down. It leads us up to the second thing James talks about the tongue.

The Tongue is Perverse

The word perverse means to deliberately act unreasonable or unacceptable. Our tongue is influential. It can be satanic and infectious. The tongue is a whole world of wickedness that corrupts the entire body (**v. 6**). What is worse is that it will lead your life in the wrong direction if used recklessly.

Not just is the tongue an uncontrollable fire, but it is also like an untamed beast. As James mentions in verse seven the nature of wild animals such as birds, reptiles, and fish are tamed by humans, but no human has been able to tame the tongue. The reason is that it is a restless evil and just as Psalm 140:3 states, **“The tongue’s sting is like a snake; the venom of a viper drips from their lips.”** What the Psalmist means is that the tongue spits out words that are of hate and gossip.

The Tongue is Polluted

Lastly, **the tongue is polluted** or another word would be corrupted. What I am about to say goes for everyone, even Christians. Our tongue is so uncontrollable and corrupted that it will one minute speak praises and good words to people and the next minute speak cursing words and wishing evil upon people (**v. 9-10**).

As James ends this passage in verses 11-12, he uses natural elements to explain how polluted our tongues are by comparing fresh or sweet water to salt or bitter water. He continues the comparison by stating could a fig tree bear olives or a grapevine bear figs? We all know that the answer is no. James’ point is very clear that we should never use our tongues as an instrument of inconsistency.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we need to control our tongues. One way is to not indulge our evil desires and clothe ourselves with the presence of Jesus (**Romans 13:14**). J. Ronald Blue declares, “Small and influential, the tongue must be controlled; satanic and infectious, the tongue must be corralled; salty and inconsistent, the tongue must be cleansed.” Amen!

I am Dale Van De Bogart and I approve of this message!

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