



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

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STUDY 14: THE DANGER OF UNBRIDLED TONGUE

James 1:26

It is worth remembering that one of James's major reason for writing this epistle was to reprove Christians, of his generation for their degeneracy in faith and manners (James 1:26, 27; 2:1-8), including the proper use of the tongue. The eternal truths in this epistle are still applicable to those in contemporary times as it was to those in James' generation.

And "the tongue is a little member" (James 3:5). Its use or misuse can determine our destiny (Proverbs 18:21; James 1:26-27). God spoke and created the world. The devil equally spoke and Adam sold the world into slavery. No wonder James told his audience that sweet and bitter water ought not to come from the same source (James 3:10-11). A man's life truly can be measured by his words. Sometimes, the contemporary situations a person encounters may be the consequence of words spoken in the past. The Scripture encourages believers to expose unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11-13; Titus 1:13; James 5:19,20) but at the same time warns against tale-bearing, backbiting and busy-bodying in other men's matter (Leviticus 19:16; I Peter 4:15).

CHARACTERISTICS OF UNBRIDLED TONGUE

James 3:5-8, 4:11; Jude 8-16; Acts 12:21-22; Numbers 12:1-2; Matthew 12:34,36-37.

James described the tongue as a little fire that devastates the course of nature, and full of deadly poison. "False, filthy and foolish" characterise the words of those whose mouths speak great swelling words. The subtle among them murmur and complain about things they know not (Jude 8-15). Many get into this danger by:

- (a) jesting (Ephesians 5:4)
- (b) drawing conclusions on half facts (John 7:51-53; Proverbs 18:13,17)
- (c) basing interpretation on appearances (John 7:24).
- (d) attempting to justify self and impress others to win their affection and acceptance (James 3:5; Galatians 1:10).
- (e) exaggerating facts, twisting pictures and multiplying words to make their points (Proverbs 26:25).

Unfortunately, like Dathan and Absalom, they always have hearers and followers, who may be in the majority and whose words cause strife and division in the church and community. Words that do not foster unity, cooperation, comfort or gentleness in line with scriptural requirements come from graceless hearts (Matthew 12:34, 36-37). Either loud as Nebuchadnezzar or common as the devil when tempting Eve, we should look beyond the means to the motive.

CONSEQUENCES OF UNBRIDLED TONGUE

James 1:26; Jude 11-15; II Timothy 2:26; Psalms 34:21; Proverbs 11:3; Ezekiel 18:4.

Talkativeness is not consistent with the gravity of the Christian message and living. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin" (Proverbs 10:19). Besides, every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment (Matthew 12:36). Generally, a talkative is:

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- (1) a sinner (James 1:26), therefore separated from God.
- (2) Fearful of the future.
- (3) Insecure in their heart, the way of peace they do not know.
- (4) Presently, object of eternal and external woes (Acts 12:23; Number 12:9-10)
- (5) Grieving the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:29-30).

What insincere lives they continually live for not owning up to their true self as demanded by scriptures.

CONQUEST OF UNBRIDLED TONGUE

James 1:27; Romans 8:24,25; Matthew 11:12

To some believers, such tendencies as talkativeness is one of the "little foxes that spoil the vine" (Songs of Solomon 2:15). They stand on their way to progress and happiness in life. However, despite its deadly grip, this and other sinful habits can be conquered through the deliberate effort of man and the grace of God. The following steps may prove useful:

1. Identify and acknowledge the sinful habit and assess their potential dangers through thorough self examination (I Corinthians 11:28; II Corinthians 13:5; Psalms 26:2).
2. Understudy (so as to be able to monitor) the full manifestations of the habit (Psalms 19:12, 90:8; Matthew 22:29).
3. Resolve to hate and determine to overcome the habit (Psalms 51, 66:18).
4. "Where there is no wood the fire goeth out". It takes more than one person to fight, backbite or gossip. Nehemiah refused to abandon God's work just to listen to rumours. Sever links, reckon yourself dead (Colossians 3:5), watch for open invitations to indulge in the misuse of the tongue (Romans 6:11; Job 31:1; Nehemiah 6:4-9).
5. Focused (effective fervent) prayer coupled with fasting (Isaiah 40:28-31; Mark 9:29; Luke 18:1).
6. Envision a change and let your mind dwell upon the new habits (Proverbs 4:23, 23:7; Philippians 4:8).
7. Daily cultivate the new habit through patient practice (Ephesians 4:3, 2,1; I Thessalonians 4:11; Romans 12:17; Philippians 2:1; Proverbs 10:19b; I Timothy 4:12; Colossians 4:5-6).
8. Abide by the Word of God (Psalms 119:11).
9. Assume the believers office as the royal priest (I Peter 2:9; Malachi 2:7)
10. Consecrate for the holiness, integrity and determination to pray like the Psalmist "Set a watch, O Lord before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3).

There is power of life and death in the tongue. Your tongue will take you to heaven or away from heaven.