

## The Power of the Tongue

### Introduction and Review

- Last week we looked at two kinds of faith: **dead faith** that does not save a sinner & **biblical faith** that does save sinners (v. 14).
- Biblical faith is demonstrated by tangible acts of love toward people – your neighbor (v. 15-17; Mt. 22:39).
- Biblical faith is also demonstrated by obedient actions of love toward God: Demons, Abraham & Rahab (v. 18-26).
- Today we will see that genuine faith is demonstrated by self-control over the tongue & its power (Pr. 18:20-21).

### I. Responsibility for the Power (v. 1-2)

#### A. Judgment (v. 1)

*A teacher is someone who represents God when handling the scriptures (preaching, teaching & counseling) – influence over people's lives in good/evil behavior; unity/division; edifying/destroying... So believers are cautioned not to be hasty or careless in taking the role of teaching since they will be judged with greater strictness (Lk. 12:48).*

#### B. Reward (v. 2)

*Everyone commits sin with their mouth on varying occasions – privately & publicly (v. 2a). “a perfect man” (τέλειος) means completeness in virtue or mature (1:4). As Christians mature in Christ, they commit far less sins with their words & actions (v. 2b). Self-control of speech reveals control over the rest of a person's actions or body.*

### II. Control of the Power (v. 3-5a)

#### A. Examples of control in non-human beings (v. 3-4)

*Horses & ships have extraordinary power but they must be controlled to accomplish specific goals. A small piece of metal on a bridle in a horse's mouth (bits) is used to guide the powerful horse. A small wood or metal blade of an oar (rudder) placed in water under a ship is used to guide a massive & powerful ship. Bits & rudders are used to control this power & guide it for useful purposes.*

#### B. Control in human beings (v. 5a)

*The tongue is compared to bits & rudders – small with great power to influence people & circumstances (v. 5a). Words & conversation influences the speaker & listeners to carry out extraordinary tasks – influence over muscles, bones, heart, lungs, hands, feet, etc.; over the use of food, clothing, money, time, etc.*

### III. Perversion of the Power (v. 5b-12)

#### A. Leads to destruction (v. 5b-6)

*The tongue's influence is often destructive & massive – “fire”. It can create major problems for: the speaker, his/her household, neighborhood, church, school, job; local, national & global (v. 5b-6). The tongue stirs up jealousy, hatred, rebellion, persecution & even war.*

#### B. Beyond human control alone (v. 7-8)

*At creation God gave mankind dominion over animals & we continue to tame all sorts of animal life (Gen. 1:28). But the tongue is more rebellious & dangerous than any animal & cannot be tamed by human effort alone (Gal. 5:23).*

#### C. Inconsistent & hypocritical (v. 9-12)

*Believers are warned about being hypocrites with our mouths: praise/profanity, prayers/vulgar language, songs of worship/ungodly jokes, innuendos, etc. It does not happen in nature (original creation) & should not happen in God's new creation (v. 11). The root problem is the heart (v. 12; Mt. 15:19). Hypocrisy in the heart = hypocrisy with the mouth. We need a clean heart – the work of the HS!*

**ILL:** Current events – doctors purposefully killing people, priests sexually abusing people & school teachers abusing children. People in authority & positions of trust who misuse their power cause serious damage – this should not be!

**APPL:** Likewise in the Christian life, our tongue should not be used for evil purposes. Our tongues should be used for the glory of God & His purposes (1Co. 10:31).

## CONCLUSION

So then my beloved brothers & sisters are you willing to give some serious thought & scrutiny to the way you use your tongue? Are you willing to accept the fact that your words have a significant impact on you & other people? Are you willing to accept the fact that your words can damage the reputation of Jesus? Are you willing to accept the fact that your words reveal what's still in your heart? Do you still use profanity, vulgar jokes, comments or innuendos? Do you say hurtful things to people to stir up conflict? Do you start or continue gossip & destructive information about people? Have you thought about the serious consequences of what you say? You cannot overcome this problem on your own – vows, commitments, resolutions, promises, tears, etc. Controlling your mouth means controlling your heart & only God can do that. You must confess your need to Him; ask Him for help, repentance, faith, grace & power to obey Him. The Holy Spirit, who has delivered countless number of saints throughout the generations, will also help you!

If you are not a Christian, you need your heart changed too. You need a new heart. The Holy Spirit will help you too. But you must be honest with Him. You must honestly confess your sins & your need for Jesus to save you from the power of sin. And you know that you must believe in Christ for your heart to be radically changed...

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