

To guard our tongue successfully...

3. We must believe God's conclusion.

a. God's conclusion is based on wisdom.

- 1) God knows that if we guard when our mouth opens and guard what our tongue says, this will guard our soul from many troubles.
- 2) He tells us in (Proverbs 13:3), "**He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.**"
- 3) A guarded tongue is a blessing. (Proverbs 15:4) "**A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.**"

b. Experience supports God's conclusion.

- 1) The old saying, "**Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me,**" is simply not true. Each of us has been hurt by someone's words. Cutting words may take longer to heal than physical injuries.
- 2) Mean, spiteful, vengeful words have destroyed countless marriages. Many friends have turned into enemies, all because of words that should never have been said.
- 3) Unguarded words, severely hurt others, but like a boomerang, they will come back to trouble your soul.
- 4) Jesus said, (Matthew 12:36) "**But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.**"
- 5) Another great trouble caused by an unguarded tongue is the humiliating need to seek forgiveness from those we have hurt. Though it is a trouble, it is essential!

Conclusion: If your words have cut like a sword rather than healing like an ointment, you have harmed others, and brought trouble to your own soul. If that is the case, stop making excuses. Ask God for forgiveness and beg him to help you learn to guard your tongue like you would guard the cage of a deadly snake. Then humbly seek the forgiveness of those you have hurt.

Guarding our tongues is no small matter, and I urge you to seek God's help humbly and seriously.

Song: Cleanse Me - 166

Guarding Your Tongue

17 December 2023 PM – Text: Proverbs 21:23 – Topic: Tongue

Introduction: In years past, while door knocking, I have been run to the street more than once by unfriendly dogs. I remember on one of those occasions, the owner called out, "He is just a pup. He won't hurt you." However, that old pup was determined to have me for lunch because the owner did not keep him chained up. I am grateful for the dog owner's laws that have helped to reduce this danger. Dog owners are now responsible for keeping their dogs from harming innocent people.

Solomon, in our text this evening, addresses a common and far more dangerous critter. Every one of us has one, and all too often, it is not carefully guarded. That dangerous critter is our tongue. Read Proverbs 21:23.

Transition: This verse challenges us to guard our mouth and our tongue. The question is, "What must we do in order to do this successfully?"

To guard our tongue successfully...

1. We must know our tongue's potential.

a. Our tongue can be destructive.

- 1) Consider what God says about the tongue.
 - a) (Proverbs 18:21) "**Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.**"
 - b) (Proverbs 10:19) "**In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.**"
 - c) (Proverbs 12:18) "**There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.**"
 - d) (Proverbs 15:2) "**The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.**"
 - e) (Proverbs 26:28) "**A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.**"
- 2) Richard Wardlaw in his excellent commentary on Proverbs makes these applications.

- a) "Openly uttered and secretly whispered words may break hearts, may ruin characters, may sever friends, may bring individuals and families to beggary and disgrace, may spread alienation and discord..., may be even as barbed daggers that take away life...
- b) ... A word of slander brought out in a moment of irritation or thoughtlessness, may cost a man the humiliation of submissive apology, or the annoyance and expense of litigation, and the reparation of heavy damages.
- c) ... The recollection of a hasty expression, along with the effects which have arisen from it to those to whom at the time no harm was meant, may inflict severe and long-continued self-reproach, with all its accompaniments of mental disquietude and distress.
- d) ... The foolish utterances of an unguarded hour may go far to shake the credit of years of discretion. The recollection of that hour of folly ever returning upon the mind of previous admirers, and, if not absolutely obliterating their former estimate of a man's sound sense and dignity, operating at least as a serious drawback on their respect for his character.
- e) ... It leads to inward deep remorse, arising from a consciousness of having spoken inconsistently with our Christian profession and principles, and the thought of having given an unfavourable impression of our religion, and failed of an opportunity of honouring God." Lectures on the Book of Proverbs, Vol 3, format and underline added.

b. We cannot tame our tongues.

- 1) The Holy Spirit had the Apostle James dedicate much of James 3 to the topic of the tongue.
- 2) He stated in (James 3:8) "**But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.**"
- 3) We must treat our tongue like a dangerous dog and keep it chained all the time. We must never trust our tongue.

To guard our tongue successfully...

2. We must heed God's warning.

a. We must guard WHEN we speak.

- 1) God tells us that there is "... **a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;**" (Ecclesiastes 3:7). (Proverbs 18:13) "**He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.**" Answering before carefully listening, thinking, and praying, is not the time to speak.
- 2) The words in James 1:19 are to be our motto. "**Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:**"
- 3) The Psalmist knew that he needed God's help when he said, (Psalms 141:3) "**Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.**" If you often speak when you should be quiet, this needs to be your prayer.
- 4) (Psalm 39:1) "**I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.**"
- 5) (Proverbs 17:28) "**Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.**"

b. We must guard WHAT we say.

- 1) Even when the time is right for us to speak, we must guard our words. Many words are not fit to be said. (Colossians 3:8) "**But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.**" Before you say it, ask yourself, is it true, is it exaggerated, is it kind, is it selfish, is it loving, is it needful to say, does it edify, would I like it said of me, would Jesus say it? (Proverbs 17:27) "**He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.**"
- 2) Again, James writes, (James 1:26) "**If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.**" If we do not guard our tongue, we are not right with God.