Proverbs And The Tongue

Intro: Solomon has a great deal to say about the tongue and its proper and improper use. James emphasizes the great power of the tongue as he writes

James 3:1-12 “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. 2For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. 3Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. 5Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 6And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. 11Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.”

Solomon also realizes the great power of the tongue and writes often of it in Proverbs. He, like James, shows the tongue has great power for good or for evil depending on how we use it.

I. TRUTH

A. The wise are interested in truth.

1. Pro. 23:23 “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding”

2. God is a God of truth.
   a. Deu. 32:4 “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”
   b. Psa. 31:5 “Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.”
   c. Isa. 65:16 “That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.”

3. All lies originate from Satan; John 8:44 “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

4. God’s Word is truth.
   a. John 17:17 “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
   b. 2 Sam. 7:28 “And now, O Lord GOD, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant.”
   c. Psa. 19:9 “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.”
   d. Psa. 119:151 “Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth.”

5. God will never lie.
   a. 1 Sam. 15:29 “And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.”
   b. Tit. 1:2 “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;”

6. Thus, we need to speak the truth; Pro. 23:16 “Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.”
B. Spreading the Gospel to the world.
1. Pro. 10:32 “The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.”
2. Christians have come to a knowledge of the truth.
   a. 1 Tim. 2:4 “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”
   b. Pro. 15:7 “The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.”
3. In teaching others, we must show them the error of their way (make them realize they have sinned).
   a. Pro. 28:23 “He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.”
   b. Without this there will be no realization of their need for a Savior and no repentance.
4. We thus have the obligation to preach God’s Word.
   a. Mark 16:15 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”
   b. 2 Tim. 4:2 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”
      (1) We must preach the Word.
      (2) There is the need for us to reprove, rebuke, and exhort.
      (3) We are to do so with all longsuffering and doctrine.
C. The wise man will not lie.
1. He is concerned with truth, so he will not lie.
2. Lying has become a major problem in our society.
   a. We are taught and encouraged to lie from an early age.
   b. We often call it by seemingly harmless terms:
      (1) Fudging the truth, twisting the truth, bending the truth, little white lies, flattery, etc.
      (2) It is still lying.
3. God does not approve of lying.
   a. Pro. 6:17 “A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,”
   b. Pro. 12:22 “Lying lips are abomination to the LORd: but they that deal truly are his delight.”
4. Pro. 13:5 “A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.”
5. All liars will be lost.
   a. Rev. 21:8 “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”
   b. Pro. 19:5, 9 “A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.... A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.”

II. GOSSIP, SLANDER, ETC.
A. Gossip is destructive to the love, unity, and fellowship of congregations, yet it is often joked about.
1. Hee Haw’s The Rumor Song: “Now, we’re not ones to go round spreadin’
rumors. Why really, we’re just not the gossipy kind! Oh, you’ll never hear one of us repeating gossip! So you’d better be sure and listen close the first time.”

2. “It is not gossip if it is true.”

**B. What is gossip?**

1. Webster’s defines gossip as: “a person who habitually reveals personal or sensational facts about others...rumor or report of an intimate nature.”

2. Neither the KJV nor ASV uses *gossip*.

3. The idea is presented in Proverbs.
   a. Talebearers.
      (1) Pro. 11:13 “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.”
      (2) Pro. 20:19 “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.”
      (3) Gossip is one who reveals secrets (reveals personal or sensational facts) about others.
   b. What is not mentioned is whether or not it is the truth.
      (1) Some try to veil their gossip by saying it is the truth.
      (2) The wise man’s desire is to hide things.

**C. Some of the evils Solomon says about gossip.**

1. They cut deep into the heart of those attacked.
   a. Pro. 18:8 “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”
   b. Pro. 26:22 “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”

2. They cause strife; Pro. 26:20 “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.”

3. They cause strife and separate friends.
   a. Pro. 16:28 “A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.”
   b. The gossip is a froward man.

**D. God’s attitude toward the gossip.**

1. Pro. 8:13 “The fear of the L ORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.”

2. They are evil, wicked.
   a. Pro. 2:12 “To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things;”
   b. Pro. 10:32 “The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.”

3. He brings evil to pass; Pro. 16:30 “He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.”

4. His end; Pro. 10:31 “The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out [cut off—ASV].”

**E. Three things to help us avoid gossip.**

1. Go to the individual, not someone else.
   a. Pro. 25:9 “Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another:”
   b. Mat. 18:15 “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him
his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

2. Simply do not become a gossiper.
   a. Pro. 25:9 “Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another.”
   b. He tells us why.
      (1) Pro. 25:10 “Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.”
      (2) The one we gossip about may end up exposing us and our evil, wicked ways.

3. Do not be a conduit for the gossip of others.
   a. Pro. 26:20-21 “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. 21 As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.”
   b. If no one listens to gossip and talebearing, then it will cease.
   c. We must have the courage to stop the gossiper.
   d. Three guidelines for monitoring what someone tells you.
      (1) The information must be true.
      (2) Is the information needful.
      (3) Is the information kind.

III. ANGRY SPEECH

A. Anger itself is not sin.
   1. Eph. 4:26 “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”
   2. God became angry at times.
   3. We find “the anger of the Lord” 32 times in the Old Testament.

B. We become more susceptible to sin when we are angry, and it is easy to sin with our mouth.
   1. Pro. 29:20 “Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.”
   2. We must get all the facts before speaking.
      a. Pro. 18:13 “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”
      b. Do not take sides simply because of a friend or something which you hear without finding out what actually happened.

C. It is often best to return a soft answer when one is upset
   1. Pro. 15:1 “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”
   2. Consider the words of the song by Horatio R. Palmer: “Angry Words”

   Angry words! O let them never from the tongue unbridled slip; May the heart’s best impulse ever check them ere they soil the lip.
   Love is much too pure and holy, friendship is too sacred far, For a moment’s reckless folly thus to desolate and mar.
   Angry words are lightly spoken, Bitt’rest tho’ts are rashly stirred, Brightest links of life are broken by a single angry word.

D. Sometimes it is best not to say anything.
   1. Pro. 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.”
2. Ecc. 3:7 “A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;”
3. If something needs to be said, we can always say it later after the anger subsides.
   a. Do not say hurtful things which only lead to greater anger and hurt.
   b. Pro. 15:1 “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”

IV. **BOASTING**

A. **The meaning:**
   1. Part of Webster’s definition is: “to puff oneself up in speech: speak vain-gloriously…to speak of or assert with excessive pride.”
   2. It mainly comes from self-centeredness.
      a. He desires everyone to look at him, not others.
      b. The boaster is going to tell everyone how great he is.

B. **Boasting is foolish**
   1. Pro. 14:3 “In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.”
   2. Barry Gilreath lists three reasons boasting is foolish.
      a. The boaster cannot back it up.
         (1) Pro. 25:14 “Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.”
         (2) He makes great promises (boastings of great things) but there is no substance to the promise.
         (3) No one can guarantee tomorrow so do not boast of it; Pro. 27:1 “Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”
      b. Boasting brings trouble.
         (1) Pro. 21:23 “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.”
         (2) We often boast of things when we cannot produce them or the boasting makes it more difficult for us.
      c. Boasting brings about our destruction.
         (1) Pro. 13:3 “He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.”
         (2) We should keep our mouths from boasting lest we bring destruction upon ourselves.

C. **Solomon’s advice:**
   1. Pro. 27:2 “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.”
   2. Do not boast of your own accomplishments, let someone else speak of it.

V. **WICKEDNESS**

A. **Morally perverse language.**
   1. Pro. 10:31-32 “The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out. 32The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.”
   2. Swanson defines froward(ness) as, “what is morally crooked from a standard, often with a focus on words that are perverse”
B. There is a standard by which speech is judged.
1. Mat. 12:36-37 “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. 37For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”
2. The standard is God’s Word.
   a. The Bible is our standard in every area of life.
   b. We will be judged by the standard of God’s Word.
      (1) John 12:48 “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”
      (2) Rom. 2:16 “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”
      (3) Rev. 20:12 “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

C. Taking the Lord’s name in vain.
1. Exo. 20:7 “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”
   a. Vain speech is speech that is empty or worthless.
   b. God’s name is to be held in reverence; Mat. 6:9 “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”
2. Many attach God’s name to anything and everything.
   a. They bring God and His holy name down to that which is common or profane.
   b. Many who would never cuss will use euphemism’s for God’s name.
      (1) A euphemism is simply a milder form of the word which will not be as offensive.
      (2) Some commonly use terms such as “golly,” “gosh,” “gee,” “gee whiz,” “darn,” “jiminy,” “dickens,” “good heavens,” “for goodness sake,” “my Lord,” “Lordy,” “heck,” “shoot,” “gracious,” “my God,” “heavens to Betsy,” and others.
      (3) These euphemisms are a mild form of cursing and it is using the Lord’s name in a profane way.

D. Filthy communication.
1. This is the use of indiscreet, gutter language.
2. Christians are not to use such language.
   a. Col. 3:8 “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.”
   b. Eph. 4:29 “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”
3. Our society.
   a. At one time filthy communication was limited to certain ones (generally referred by as the language of the sailor).
   b. It has become common in our society.
   c. “Gone With The Wind”
      (1) When Rhett Butler made his famous statement it has been reported that people gasped and some even fainted.
That single word opened the floodgates of filthiness.
(a) Now much worse is heard in the movies and television numerous times daily.
(b) It has also made its way into people’s everyday speech.

4. The wise will control their tongue to make sure that their speech does not denigrate to the level of the sailor but build others up.

VI. **Encouraging Words**

A. **Discouragement.**

1. It is to deprive of spirit and confidence, to dishearten, to instill hesitation or doubt into someone.
   a. Tell someone how bad or sick he looks, and shortly he will be sick.
   b. Tell someone how great he looks and you will see a spring in his step.

2. Words have an effect upon others.

B. **Discouragement is a major tool of Satan, and a great problem for Christians.**

1. Satan used words to discourage the children of Israel to fail to go into the promised land (Num. 13).
2. God gave encouragement to Joshua; Jos. 1:6-7 “Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.”

C. **Solomon realized man become discouraged and words can instill the proper spirit and courage in him.**

1. Pro. 12:25 “Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.”
   a. The anxieties (filled with cares and burdens) make the heart stoop.
      (1) We have seen one whose shoulders are slumped and his head bowed because of heaviness of heart.
      (2) This is one who is discouraged.
   b. A good word lifts him up so he is no longer slumped over but his heart is glad.

2. Proper words spoken at the right time produce great good and joy; Pro. 15:23 “A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!”
3. A hearty counsel will rejoice the heart; Pro. 27:9 “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel”

D. **When brethren are discouraged, we need to encourage them with kind words of comfort and cheer.**

1. We can do much for the cause of Christ by giving encouragement to brethren as they face difficulties of life.
2. We can encourage them to work harder for the cause of Christ by the words we speak.
VII. **GOOD WORDS**

A. **It is a challenge to know what to say and how to say it.**
   1. It is a constant learning process.
   2. We struggle to speak words that are good and profitable for the moment.

B. **Solomon recognized the need for good words.**
   1. Pro. 15:23 “A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!”
      a. Everyone has felt the struggle to say the right thing to comfort one who has lost a loved one.
      b. Everyone struggles to say the proper words to those who are not Christians we are trying to win.
   2. Pro. 16:24 “Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.”

C. **Proper speech is a source of strength and growth.**
   1. Pro. 15:4 “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.”
      a. Wholesome is something which is healthy, or Swanson says “a change of state as a figurative extension of the healing process”
      b. The proper type of words (good words) change the state and bring about the healing of the person.
      c. Swanson adds, “this change of state may include a change in physical health, but it is not the focus.”
   2. Pro. 12:18 “There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.”
   3. Pro. 25:11 “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”
      a. Michael Light points out: “Oftentimes in Bible studies or in sermons, we struggle in the attempt to speak the truth in a fashion that will assist the hearer in grasping the point. At funerals and in hospitals, the words of comfort sometimes seem to ring hollow, and we then realize the truthfulness of this passage. We desire the ability to speak words that are fit for the occasion. And when we do, this passage helps us realize the value of such efforts from heaven’s point of view.”

D. **Good words are sometimes offensive to the one hearing them.**
   1. Christ always spoke good words, but often they were offensive to those who heard them.
      a. Jesus’ rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees (Mat. 23).
      b. Mat. 15:12 “Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?”
      c. While offensive, they were necessary for their spiritual well-being.
   2. Our speech will sometimes be offensive to those hearing it.
      a. We still must speak the Truth.
      b. Many fail to say what needs to be said.
         (1) They do so under the guise of “love” (they love them too much to offend them).
         (2) They show they do not possess the love of God.
(3) When the disciples told Jesus He had offended the Pharisees;
(a) Mat. 15:13-14 “But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 14Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”
(b) They needed to hear their true spiritual condition, and while offensive to them, it was the loving thing to do.

Conclusion: Pro. 18:21 “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” We see the truthfulness of this constantly. Have a rumor go around about someone and see what happens to that person’s reputation. In a political campaign, what the use of words and what those words will do to a candidate running for office. We all know what will happen if a candidate makes several gaffs in the words which he states—his political career might be over because of the power of the tongue.

Yes, death and life are in the power of the tongue so we need to make sure that we use our tongues for life. While we should try to destroy Satan, evil, wickedness, false teachers, worldliness, etc., with the power of our tongue, we should do everything within our power to make sure that we uphold the truth of God’s Word, spread that Word to a lost world, and encourage those who are saved to continue in faithfulness to God by the proper use of the tongue.