

## CHARACTER AS REVEALED BY OUR TONGUE

### INTRODUCTION:

1. An excellent indicator of a person's personality and spirituality is not abstinence from playing cards, dancing, or playing the horses but tongue control.
  - A. Swear words disclose a profane heart.  
Impure stories emanate from a filthy heart.  
Murmurings come from a thankless heart.  
Criticism unveils a jealous heart.
2. Two of the Ten Commandments have reference to the tongue:
  - A. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."
  - B. "You shall not bear false witness."
3. Of the seven things listed in Proverbs which God hates - three have to do with our tongues.
  - A. A lying tongue.  
A false witness that speaks lies.  
And he that sows discord among brethren. (Prov. 6:16-19)

### **I. GOD HOLDS EACH OF US RESPONSIBLE FOR THE USE WE MAKE OF OUR TONGUES.**

1. THE PROBLEM WITH TALEBEARING:
  - A. Lev. 19:16: "You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord."
  - B. Rom. 1:29-30: "Being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents."
  - C. Prov. 11:13: "A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter."
  - D. Exodus 23:1: "You shall not circulate a false report. ..."

Newspaper Item: “Miss so and so entered the local hospital for the removal of a rumor.”

“If you your lips would keep from slips,  
Five things observe with care:  
Of whom you speak, to whom you speak,  
And how and when and where.”

- E. Prov. 16:27-28: “An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire, a perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.”
- F. Prov. 26:20-22: “Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body.”
- G. Talebearing is forbidden for at least Three Good Reasons:
- (1) The tale may not be true.
  - (2) It may not be necessary to relate it.
  - (3) The tale may not be kind - but malicious.

“If you are tempted to reveal  
A tale to you someone has told  
About another, make it pass  
Before you speak, three gates of gold.

These narrow gates: First, “Is it true?”  
Then, “Is it needful?” In your mind  
Give truthful answer. And the next  
Is last and narrowest, “Is it kind?”

“And if to reach your lips at last  
It passes through these gateways three,  
Then you may tell the tale, nor fear  
What the result of speech may be.”

## 2. THE PROBLEM OF IDLE WORDS.

- A. Matt. 12:34, 36-37: “Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ... But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the

day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Note: “The text preceding Jesus’ startling statement on careless talk contains an example of idle words. The reason Jesus gave this solemn utterance was that the Pharisees had spoken idly. After Jesus had cast out demons, the Pharisees suggested that He did it by the prince of demons, Beelzebub, and implied that He was, therefore, a magician and deserving death. So preposterous was this accusation that it misfired. Jesus easily disposed of it by showing that if He were expelling demons by the prince of demons, then Satan’s house was divided against itself. The only possible excuse for such a remark on the part of the Pharisees was that they made it without thinking. It was an idle word, thrown out in the heat of controversy on the principle that any stick is good enough to beat a dog.”

Someone has well said: “We shall have to answer, not for wise words spoken in jest, but foolish words spoken in earnest.”

B. We must get our thoughts well collected before we put the tongue in gear.

- (1) Prov. 10:19: “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.”
- (2) Ecc. 5:3: “For a dream comes through much activity, and a fool’s voice is known by his many words.”
- (3) Prov. 17:27: “He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.”
- (4) Psalms 141:3: “Set your guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.”

A careless word may kindle strife  
A cruel word may wreck a life  
A brutal word may smite and kill  
A gracious word may smooth the way  
A joyous word may light the day  
A timely word may lessen stress  
A loving word may heal and bless.

Unknown

- (5) Prov. 29:20: “Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”
- (6) Prov. 30:32: “If you have been foolish in exalting yourself, or if you have devised evil, put your hand on your mouth.”
- (7) Prov. 29:11: “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.”
- (8) Prov. 21:23: “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.”
- (9) Prov. 18:7: “A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.”
- (10) Prov. 18:13: “He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.”
- (11) Prov. 17:20: “He who has a deceitful heart finds no good, and he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil.”
- (12) Prov. 15:4: “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.”

Note: An empty wagon makes the most noise.

### 3. THE PROBLEM OF A LYING TONGUE.

A. John Ruskin has an excellent sentence just here:

“The essence of lying is in deception, not in words; a lie may be told by silence; by equivocation, by the accent on a syllable, by a glance of the eyes attaching a peculiar significance to a sentence, and all these kinds of lies are worse and baser, by many degrees, than a lie plainly worded.”

B. God’s Word does not take the sin of lying lightly.

- (1) Prov. 12:22: “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight.”
- (2) Prov. 26:28: “A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, and a flattering mouth works ruin.”

- (3) Prov. 25:18: “A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow.”
- (4) Prov. 21:6: “Getting treasures by a lying tongue is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death.”
- (5) Prov. 19:5,9: “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies will not escape. ... A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies shall perish.”
- (6) Col. 3:9: “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.”
- (7) Prov. 17:4: “An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue.”
- (8) Prov. 17:20: “He who has a deceitful heart finds no good, and he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil.”

## II. THERE IS TREMENDOUS POWER IN KIND, CONSIDERATE, AND COMPASSIONATE WORDS.

1. Prov. 10:20: “The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little.”
2. Prov. 16:24: “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.”
3. Col. 4:6: “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”
4. Psalms 19:14: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.”
5. Prov. 25:11: “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”
6. Prov. 18:21: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”
7. Prov. 31:26: “She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness.”

8. Prov. 15:1: “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

### III. MANKIND REACHES SPIRITUAL MATURITY WHEN HE CAN CONTROL HIS TONGUE.

1. James 3:1-14: “We all make mistakes in all kinds of ways, but the man who can claim that he never says the wrong thing can consider himself perfect, for if he can control his tongue, he can control every other part of his personality. Men control the movements of a large animal like the horse with a tiny bit placed in its mouth. Ships, too, for all their size and momentum they have with a strong wind behind them, are controlled by a very small rudder according to the course chosen by the helmsman. The human tongue is physically small, but what tremendous effects it can boast of. A whole forest can be set ablaze by a tiny spark of fire, and the tongue is as dangerous as any fire, with vast potentialities for evil. It can poison the whole body; it can make the whole of life a blazing hell .... (Phillips, Trans.)
2. Prov. 16:32: “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.”
  - A. There is room for improvement in every one of us in this area. Let us all strive to be more charitable to one another in our speech.