

Sunday, August 28, 2022 am

CLOSER TO GOD 2022 (26)

Pursuing Holiness (4)

Is Your Tongue Holy?

We are in the midst of a study about pursuing holiness. This is essential if we are to draw closer to God. We have been discussing holiness in some detail and the past 3 lessons have been more practical in our pursuit of holiness. We have talked about our disposition, our attitudes and some actions that will be present if holiness is our goal. In these lessons, we have noted that pursuing holiness will affect every area of our life – our disposition and attitude, our words, our deeds, where we go, our appearance, our time management, our entertainment choices, our interaction with others, etc.

Having addressed our disposition and attitudes, today lets focus on our tongues – the way we talk. What are some rules to consider to help us use our tongues as we pursue holiness?

I. The power of the tongue

- a. It is sobering to consider how powerful words can be. Nations have turned to and from evil intentions because of words. Words have altered the moral landscape of cultures. Words have destroyed or saved families, friendships and lives. Words have condemned and rescued – both physically and spiritually. Thus, we need to be careful about what we say.
- b. There are so many passages and thoughts associated with the Bible and our conversations. Books and entire classes have been devoted to a study of this important and powerful subject. Consider:
 - i. Matthew 12:34 - *Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*
 - ii. James 1:26 – *if anyone thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.*
 - iii. James 1:19-20 - *So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*
 - iv. James 3:1-12, the primary text on the tongue that tells us how dangerous it can be.
 - v. Proverbs is a wealth of direction concerning the tongue –
 1. Proverb 18:21 - *Death and life are in the power of the tongue.*
 2. Proverbs 13:3 - *He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.*
 3. Proverbs 25:11 - *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver.*
 4. Proverbs 21:23 - *Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles.*
- c. If we are pursuing holiness, how we use our tongues will play a pivotal factor in that.

II. Rules to consider in controlling the tongue

- a. **Remember self-control –**
 - i. You have to believe you can control what you say. Speaking when you lose your temper is no excuse to say, “I can’t help it, that is just the way I am”.
 - ii. It may not be easy, but you CAN control your tongue IF you choose to. BTW, one of the best ways to LEARN self-control is by controlling your tongue!
 - iii. Last week we talked about self-control and self-discipline. Here we put them into action.
 - iv. James 3:2 notes that if you control your tongue, you can control your whole body.
- b. **Control what goes into your mind –**

- i. Proverbs 15:26 says, *“The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD, But the words of the pure are pleasant.”* We need to work at bringing even our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 10:4-5).
- ii. What you see and hear will influence what you think and say.
- iii. That was the EXACT point of Jesus in Matthew 12:34 (above). Consider Matthew 15:18-20 which speaks about what proceeds out of the heart is what defiles a man – things like evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, etc. Jesus is noting that these actions begin with the mind.
- iv. Philippians 4:8, *“...meditate on these things”*
- v. We need to be keenly aware that our choices of entertainment, our friends and other factors WILL have an impact on the way we think and talk.
 - 1. Proverbs 6:27 says, *Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned?* While speaking of a man lusting, the principle applies here to the tongue as well.
 - 2. Consider the example of gossip – gossip is the unnecessary repeating of details about others, especially private matters, usually without their consent. NOTICE I did not define whether it is true or not. That is irrelevant! Gossip is a sin (Proverbs 20:19 – a talebearer that reveals secrets; Proverbs 11:13 notes that he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter, etc.) Consider this: IF you never listen to gossip, then you cannot be guilty of spreading it. So don’t let it into your mind. Proverbs 26:20 says, *Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.*

c. **Weigh your words carefully –**

- i. James 1:19. Be swift to hear and slow to speak. One of the ways to ensure our conversation is holy is to think before we speak. As the saying goes, “put your mind in gear before you put your mouth into motion.”
- ii. Colossians 4:6, *“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt that you may know how to answer each one”*
- iii. Proverbs 15:28, *The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.*
- iv. Consider also Proverbs 10:19, *“In the multitude of words, sin is not lacking. But he who restrains his lips is wise.”* While it may not be wrong in itself, the one who is always talking is in danger of sinning with his words.
- v. An example of this: Ephesians 4:26 – be angry and do not sin. Understand that anger is not sinful – it is a prime emotion we have. But like everything else, we have to control it. When you are angry, you need to pause and think before you say something. How many relationships are damaged because of words spoken in anger?

d. **Resolve to use your tongue for good –**

- i. One of the glaring problems with our wicked society is continually speaking with harsh, hateful and even blasphemous words at time. As a society we continue to be bitterly divided and in any given subject we find incendiary and cruel language being used. People use words to slander or hurt those who disagree with them. Our entertainment is filled with vulgarity language and blasphemy, etc. Such language is not helpful in ANY environment – whether in entertainment, politics, the home, society and sadly, even in churches at time. Paul warned against “biting and devouring one another” lest we be consumed (Galatians 5:15). Paul also warned us to *let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from us* (Ephesians 4:31).
- ii. Instead, if we are pursuing holiness, we will use our words for good. Here are some examples:
 - 1. Praising and worshipping God – Hebrews 13:15, Colossians 3:16, etc.

2. Defending your faith – 1 Peter 3:15
 3. Encouraging and exhorting others – even when it is a properly placed rebuke, it is still designed to build up so it is good. Ephesians 4:29 - *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.* , Hebrews 3:12-13 – exhort one another daily...
- e. **Remember kindness –**
- i. Again, this was something we addressed two week ago as we spoke of attitudes. Here we seek to apply it as we pursue holiness.
 - ii. Proverbs 31:26 – The virtuous woman, *opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness.*
 - iii. 2 Timothy 2:24-26 – the “servant of the Lord” needs this disposition – not quarrelsome, but gentle, patient, correcting (e.g. rebuking) with humility, etc.
 - iv. Proverbs 15:1 says, *A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.*
 - v. Think about HOW you speak to someone. Sometimes the manner of delivery says more than the actual words. Two people can say the exact same thing and be perceived completely opposite, just by the way they present it. Far too many think that as long as something is the truth they can run roughshod over anybody. We have seen that such is not true!
- f. **Be consistent –**
- i. We need to be faithfully serving God at all times. This goes back to the disposition we addressed last week. AND it applies with our speech.
 - ii. James 3:8-12 describes the inconsistent tongue. Notice vs. 10, *“My brethren, these things ought not to be so!”*
 - iii. Speaking of false prophets, Jesus spoke of their inconsistency – Matthew 7:15-20. He noted that a good tree does not bear bad fruit. Think about that when our speech is inconsistent!
- g. **Pray for God’s help and strength –**
- i. Prayer is not the answer to everything, but it is PART of the answer. As we have noted continually, we need to be people of prayer. Praying always – Ephesians 6:18, cf. Luke 18:1.
 - ii. If we are struggling with our speech, we go to God for help and strength. Again, we know He cares about us!
 - iii. David prayed about his speech - Psalm 141:3, *Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.* Psalm 19:14, *“let the words of my mouth and the mediations of my heart be acceptable in Your sight...”*
 - iv. The model prayer of Jesus in Matthew 6:9-13 reminds us to pray that He lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Certain, a wicked tongue is from the evil one.
- h. **When you do sin with the tongue, repent and ask for forgiveness –**
- i. Do NOT lie to yourself and say you will not slip up with the tongue – James 1:2 notes that if you never stumble in word, you are a perfect man (not lacking in any moral quality). To whom does that apply here????? But stumbling in word is not the same as continually misusing our tongues. BUT, as with any sin, when we do, we need to repent.
 - ii. Ephesians 4:31-32 – let evil speaking (and the other things we have mentioned) be put away from you. To put something away like this involves repentance (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:11).
 - iii. Ask for forgiveness and resolve to overcome whatever that sin might be.

If we are to pursue holiness, we need to be controlling our tongues. God is watching and so are others. How we speak is a pretty good indicator of where our heart is, and how close we are to God. What about you? Are you using your speech for or against Him? Think about it!