

Reference: **Proverbs 21:23**

Church: Grace AZ Date: 07/08/2018

Guard Your Tongue - Guard Your Soul

Purpose: Urge wise use of words in church, & the lost to come to Christ.

Introduction

First driving lesson – “You just took the controls of a deadly weapon!”

We all came in here this morning carrying a deadly weapon - concealed
So powerful, mankind has never been able to control it unaided
So destructive, entire continents have been brought to ruin by it.
It can corrode, blind, cause serious and lasting internal injuries
Although it’s a lethal weapon, it can also do tremendous good - **church**
Can heal, inspire, encourage, comfort - even be used to raise the dead!
What’s this amazing weapon we all have with us here & now? **TONGUE!**

Proverbs has a lot to say about foolish and wise uses of the tongue.
We’ll use “words” to include texts, FB etc.

Proverbs 21:23 — He who guards his mouth and his tongue, **Guards his soul from troubles.** **[SEE SCRIPTURE SHEET]**

Sounds like it really matters! But does it? – Let’s find out! Outline:

- Foolish uses of Words (Proverbs)
- Wise uses of Words (Proverbs)
- So Does it Really Matter?
- Conclusion

But first we need to remember the source of our words. Jesus said:

Luke 6:45 — The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, **for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.**

So whatever is filling up our hearts will flow out from our mouths
If it’s foolishness, that will come out. If it’s wisdom, that will show
Only God can see the heart, right? But our words are quite revealing!

1. Foolish uses of Words

If our words come from our hearts, what are our hearts like?

Not good at all without Christ:

Jeremiah 17:9 — The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Mark 7:21-23 — For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

1.1. Deceitful Uses

Our deceitful hearts can produce many deceitful uses of words:

1.1.1. Lying

Proverbs 6:16–19 — There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: **17** haughty eyes, **a lying tongue**, and hands that shed innocent blood, **18** a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, **19** a false witness who breathes out lies, **and one who sows discord among brothers.**

Outright lies, half-truths, lies to cover lies – relationships torn to shreds.

1.1.2. Flattering, Smooth

Proverbs 28:23 — Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who **flatters with his tongue.**

Proverbs 6:23–24 — For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, **24** to preserve you from the evil woman, **from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.**

“Flatters” and “smooth” related in the original

I want something from you, so say nice things re: you (may not be true).

1.1.3. Perverse

Proverbs 10:31 — The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but **the perverse tongue will be cut off.**

Wisdom = fear of God; perverse = Leading away from (God, wisdom).

Don't go to church/read the Bible/pray – watch a movie with me

England World Cup Final 8:00 AM 7/15?? It's only once..... but it's heart

1.2. Destructive Uses

Murder (hatred), slander, evil in our hearts (says Jesus) & can be on lips

Destructive use sometimes behind the backs of others:

1.2.1. Mischievous

Proverbs 17:4 — An evildoer listens to wicked lips, **and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.**

Word has to do with destruction, calamity, threat, disaster

People gather round to hear bad news– newspapers! May not be Truth!

We can talk so negatively about others – especially if gains an audience

1.2.2. Slandorous, Backbiting, Talebearing

Proverbs 10:18 — The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and **whoever utters slander is a fool.**

Proverbs 25:23 — The north wind brings forth rain, and a **backbiting tongue**, angry looks.

Proverbs 18:8 — The **words of a whisperer** are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.

Words - falsehood, crafty, covert, slander, talebearing, backbiting
Spoken behind the back usually to damage someone's reputation

See/hear something, jump to conclusions, start/continue spreading it
"A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes." Twain

Proverbs 17:9 — Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.

Destructive use sometimes to the face:

1.2.3. Harsh

Proverbs 15:1 — A soft answer turns away wrath, **but a harsh word stirs up anger.**

Harsh, hurtful words. Perhaps even true. Like "sword thrusts" (later)

1.3. Dumb Uses

Not "mute", but that we talk too much, or talk without thinking
Proud and Foolish hearts (says Jesus) - we can give TMI or speak rashly

1.3.1. Excessive

Proverbs 10:19 — **When words are many, transgression is not lacking**, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.

Proverbs 15:2 — The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, **but the mouths of fools pour out folly.**

"Gush forth", "verbal diarrhea" – can't get a word in edgeways.

1.3.2. Rash

Proverbs 12:18 — There is one whose **rash words are like sword thrusts**, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Speak with defiant disregard of consequences or in hasty, foolhardy way

Proverbs 29:20 — Do you see a man who is **hasty in his words**? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

To hurry, be thoughtless – **"wise in own eyes" – there's an arrogance**
High School Principal – approach any situation with an open mouth

1.3.3. Boastful

Proverbs 27:2 — Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, **and not your own lips.**

Related to excessive and rash speech – **wise in our own eyes**

These are Foolish uses of words in Proverbs. God hates them. Why?

Adam & Eve communed intimately with God in the garden.

Produced an abundance of the fruit of the Spirit – imaged their Father:

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. They had pure hearts; therefore pure, true words flowed. But when they listened to the Devil's lies, their hearts were corrupted. The image of God Who created them was trashed – FOOLISH WORDS. They became liars like their new father, the father of deception and lies. These foolish uses of words are exactly opposite to the fruit of the Spirit: *Anti-love, anti-joy, anti-peace, anti-patience, anti-kindness, anti-goodness, anti-faithfulness, anti-gentleness, anti-self-control. Anti-God!* No wonder the Lord hates them anywhere - especially in His children! We are named after Christ and are being formed in His likeness. We can't be speaking the Devil's language! Need to put this off!

Proverbs also shows us a better, wiser, more fruitful way to use words

2. Wise uses of Words

2.1. Satisfying Use

2.1.1. Gracious

Proverbs 22:11 — He who loves purity of heart, **and whose speech is gracious**, will have the king as his friend.

Grace underlies all the fruits of the Spirit – the King of kings as friend!

2.1.2. Kind

Proverbs 31:26 — She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the **teaching of kindness is on her tongue**.

Kindness, lovingkindness, mercy. **Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit**

2.1.3. Healing/Gentle

Proverbs 12:18 — There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, **but the tongue of the wise brings healing**.

Proverbs 15:4 — **A gentle tongue is a tree of life**, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

The leaves of the tree of life heal the nations. **Gentleness is Spirit's fruit.**

2.2. Swaying Use (Persuasive)

2.2.1. Sweet

Proverbs 16:21 — The wise of heart is called discerning, and **sweetness of speech** increases persuasiveness.

Words of a wise person are *pleasant, agreeable* – **goodness, kindness**

2.2.2. Judicious

Proverbs 16:23 — The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips.

Insightful, prudent – wise and therefore appealing – self-control

Can you see how these wise uses come from a new heart

Restoring the situation that was in the Garden – beginning now!

The Spirit lives in hearts and is producing His fruit? Pleasing to the Lord!

Thus wise use of words commanded of God’s children –changed hearts!

Ephesians 4:29 — Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

3. So Does it Really Matter?

How serious is this really? It’s interesting but is it such a big deal?

We have 1000 ways to excuse ourselves when we speak foolishly:

It was “just a little white lie” “I was just kidding!” “I didn’t mean it!”

“Everybody knows that’s what I am like! It’s just me!”

But Jesus thinks it is very serious – listen to your Lord speaking:

Matthew 12:36-37 — “But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. 37 “For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

James agrees:

James 3:5-10 — So also the tongue is set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, **8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.** 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

This couldn’t be more serious! That is why our text today says this:

Proverbs 21:23 — He who guards his mouth and his tongue, **Guards his soul from troubles.**

What do our words reveal about our heart condition? Honestly?

Do we bless God and in the next breath tear a brother/sister apart?

There are 1000s of ways to use words foolishly – need to self-examine

In workplace or school, with friends, neighbors, family or in the church

Do we join in with slander, gossip, backbiting? Say hurtful things?

Use flattery? (social media especially – gasoline on a flame)

Husbands/wives – have we cut our spouses down behind their backs?

Parents – how easy in the heat of the moment to let fly an angry blast!

Young people– do you meet and tell tales about others/parents?

Dear friends, our words **can** get our souls into troubles!

What shall we do? James says no one can tame the tongue – can we?

“Maybe I will take a vow of silence!!” That has some merit, at least:

Proverbs 17:28 — Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.

But we can’t just bite our tongues and say nothing, good or bad

Stop sending any messages with our phones – and we don’t have to:

While it’s true that no human being can tame the tongue, God can!

Isaiah:

Isaiah 6:5-7 — And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” **6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”**

And look at our Savior– as an encouragement, not example to crush us

1 Peter 2:21-23 — For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **22** He committed no sin, **neither was deceit found in his mouth.** **23** When he was reviled, **he did not revile in return;** when he suffered, **he did not threaten,** but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

My testimony confirms it – not putting myself forward as a paragon

We have the same all-powerful Spirit dwelling in us as Jesus!

We have a command to spread the good news! The joy of Christ!

The message of hope, new hearts, new life. Our words will be used!

Our words can also be soothing ointment to our brothers and sisters

We must stand out from the world in this area!

We want the Spirit’s fruit in our hearts and on our lips, All the time!

Not just a special effort for Sunday mornings! Then go “off-duty”

In Christ, we can choose wise uses of our words and reject the foolish!

We will fail, for sure, but let’s be done with excuses

We will stumble & fall, but promise: if we confess, His blood cleanses us

And we can **do** things to increase His fruit in our hearts and on our lips:

Bible Reading, Praying, Fellowship, Communion. More Spirit in heart.

We are **so far** from being helpless or powerless!

By God’s grace, the lethal weapon in our mouths **can** be disarmed!

More than disarmed – employed to do the opposite!

WWII Bombs used to collect coins to help servicemen

4. Conclusions

Brothers/sisters:

Examine yourselves and see how you are using words

Do they put the fruit of the Spirit on display – do they please God?

Let's commit (with God's help) to be a church that uses words wisely!

Here are some questions we can ask before speaking that may help us:

(Based on what we have seen this morning)

- Do I need to say something?
- Is it true (not deceitful)?
- Is it edifying (not destructive)?
- Have I counted to 10, thought (not dumb - rash/excessive)?
- Is it kind/gracious/loving/healing/peacemaking?
- Will it win people over (not drive them away)?

Never met Jesus? You need a new heart to have a wise tongue

And only Christ can give you a new heart

Has your tongue gotten you into trouble?

Used deceitful, destructive, dumb words? Gossip, backbiting, flattering?

You know it's wrong; you regret it afterwards

Maybe you have tried to control it but never succeeded

Without Christ, taming the tongue is impossible for you

But what is impossible with men and women is possible with Him!

Turn from your sin and plead with Him now to save you, cleanse heart!

Put a new song on your lips and wise words on your tongue!

Pray, then communion where we can confess word sins and seek grace