**THE TONGUE - I**

**INTRODUCTION** -

Today we begin a study of the tongue.  In times past we have mentioned the tongue and even presented a lesson or two specifically addressing it.  But in this study I want spend considerable time examining what God’s word has to say about this member that can have an influence on who we are, how we treat others and ultimately our eternal destiny.  As you study the Bible you will be surprised at how much it has to say about the tongue.  Today, we want to talk about what the tongue is and how powerful it can be.

In future lessons we want to examine sins of tongue noting in great detail various categories of sins including sins of blasphemy, dishonesty, dissatisfaction, gossip, arrogance, profanity and silence.  In each of these we want to examine the original meanings, examples both biblical and contemporary, the damage they cause as well as godly principles that will help us overcome these sins.  After this we want to notice how to properly use the tongue including restraint, praising God, teaching others, encouragement, rebuke, communication, and other things.  We will conclude our study with some observations on learning to control and use our tongue properly.  I estimate this study to be at least 10 lessons, but I might not preach all lessons in succession (I welcome your input as I begin this series).

Today we want to notice some general observations about the tongue.

**I. WHAT IS THE TONGUE?**

a.   As used in this study we are referring not to the physical member in the mouth used to taste food, chew and formulate sounds.  Instead we have reference to the words and ideas we communicate.
In this study we are concerned with the latter meaning as it relates to developing our relationship with God.  As we will see in this study, both what we say and what we don’t say, as well as HOW we speak will have a bearing on our salvation.

b.   ***Our tongue is a gift from God*** – it is one of those traits that  sets us apart from the animals.  While animals have tongues like us, none have the ability to communicate with the degree that we can.  This ability is one of God’s gifts to us – a gift to be used as a wise steward.   He expects us to use it to do much good.

c.   *And there are* ***degrees of ability*** *with the use of our tongues* – some can be teachers, while others should not.  Some can more easily debate for God while others do more damage.  Some know how to say the right thing at the right time, while others do damage instead of good.  Some can make you laugh while others cannot.  Whatever our abilities, we need to use it ALL to God’s glory, cf. Matthew 25:14-30, the Parable of the Talents.

d.  ***The godly tongue can be used*** for the betterment of mankind, to encourage and inspire others, to comfort and console the hurting, to soothe the troubled and make the sad heart happy again.  It can be used for the glory of God in song and prayers, to correct those in error, to teach the lost, to build-up the saved, to bring back the wanderer.  It can build relationships, communicate ideas and teach in all areas of life.  All such things are good and we ought to thank God for this blessing daily.

e.   ***BUT, the tongue can also be*** abused with devastating consequences.  The tongue has started wars, divided families, destroyed friendships, maligned the innocent, and changed the direction of the world (consider Satan’s lie to Eve).  It has been used to slander God, teach false doctrine, encourage false teachers, twist those teaching the truth, cause persecutions, divide the Lord’s body and many other sinister things.
No wonder we are warned that we will give account for every word we speak.

f.    **The tongue is related to our spiritual hearts** -   Not the physical organ, but the center of our spiritual being.
**MATT. 12:33-37** - Jesus spoke a tree being known by its fruit.  There are good and bad trees and they are to be determined by examining their fruit.  What is fruit? The product of one’s actions.  HERE Jesus specifically identified one source of fruit – our words.  Vs. 36-37 warns that by our words we will be either justified or condemned.  AND He said, we will answer for EVERY word we speak.
**MATT. 15:10-20** - Jesus elaborates on this.  Having condemned the insincerity of binding Jewish traditions, Jesus speaks of that which comes out of the mouth defiling a man.  What He had reference to was the abuse of the tongue – included in things that come out of the heart are blasphemies, false witness, etc.

**II.** **WE NEED TO LEARN TO CONTROL OUR TONGUES -**

a.   In this study we will see the damage an uncontrolled tongue can do.  We will also see the benefits of learning to control our conversations.  We start by noting that we are COMMANDED to control our tongues.

b.   **JAMES 1:26** - “*If any one among you thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless*.”  NOTE how our religion is vain or empty if we fail to bridle (control) our tongues.

*c.*    **ECCL. 5:6** - “Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?”

d.   **PSALM 141:3** - David requested that God “*set a Guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips*.”
**PROV. 18:6-7** – “*A fool's lips enter into contention, And his mouth calls for blows.  A fool's mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul.”***PROV. 18:13** *– “He who answers a matter before he hears it; it is folly and shame to him”*

e.    **JAMES 1:19-20** - *“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God*.”

**III.** **BIBLE PASSAGES DEALING WITH THE TONGUE -**

a.   There are many passages that speak of the tongue in general.

b.   There is NOT a word we speak that God does not know about.  **MATT. 12:37** – “by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”
**PSALM 139:4** - “For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.”

c**.   COL. 3:17** - “*Whatever you do, in WORD or deed, do ALL in the Name of the Lord*.”   Is your speech, “in the name of the Lord”?

d.  Solomon had much to say about the tongue.

                              i. **PROV. 15:1-2** - “A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.  The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.”

                             ii.   **PROV. 10:19-21** - “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; The heart of the wicked is worth little.  The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom.”

                            iii.   **PROV. 21:23** - “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles.

                             iv.   **PROV.20:15** - “There is gold and a multitude of rubies, But the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.”

e.   **1 PET. 3:10** - “For ‘He who would live life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit.”

f.    **COL. 4:6** - “let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”

**IV.** **THE POWER OF THE TONGUE -**

a.   The tongue is a very serious and powerful instrument.  We have already noticed the potential damage and good the tongue can do.  Let us notice some passages that refer specifically to its power.

*b.*   **PROV. 18:21** – “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.”*

c.   **JAMES 3:1-12** – a warning to teachers in which the author describes just how powerful this little member is.  (Tonight we want to examine this text in more detail)

d.   Just as the tongue can do evil, it can also do much good.  God used the tongues of men and words to communicate His message to us.  We need to keep His words in our hearts – **DEUT. 6:4-7**

e.   The seriousness of the tongue is sometimes underestimated.  We know of its power as we read scripture but we seem to trivialize its consequences.  It can safely be said, as James did 3:2 that EVERYONE here has some sort of problem with the tongue.  Either we say too much or we say too little or we say the wrong thing, or a combination of all three.
Understanding its power and influence – are we letting Satan influence how we use it?

**CONCLUSION -**

Truly, God’s word has much to say about the tongue.

In coming weeks we are going to address some unpleasant topics.  At times these lessons will seem personal.  But I will guarantee that everything you hear that seems to apply to you will also apply to someone else, often to many of us.

I am taking the amount of time that I am to present this series because of what James 3:2 says: If we can control our tongues, we can control our whole bodies.

It seems to me that we need to understand our tongues in such great detail that we will be aware of what is good and bad and make efforts to eliminate the bad part and emphasize the good part.  Why?  So that we can learn to control everything else!  Then, as  Peter said in 2 Peter 1:8, For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

There are SO MANY problems that be solved and prevented if ALL OF US would just learn to speak only in ways pleasing to God.  May God help up learn to control our tongues.