**THE TONGUE - 11  
The Proper - Negative Use of the Tongue**

***JAMES 3:1-12***

**INTRODUCTION** - We have been studying how God expects us to properly use our tongues.   We have noted that a study of the tongue is more than what not to do, but rather there are ways God expects us to communicate with others.  Last week we noted a number of positive uses of the tongue, including praising and thanking God, teaching the lost, teaching the saved (much of preaching), exhorting and encouraging one another, praising those worthy of praise, to confess both Christ and at time our sins and finally, we noted the importance of speaking the truth in love or with a proper attitude.

We must also understand that sometimes when we properly communicate, the message is not necessarily pleasant.  In fact it might be negative or even upsetting to the one with whom we MUST speak, but it has to be done. In our lesson today, we want to notice some of the proper, negative uses of the tongue.

**I.     Reproof and rebuke and correction**

A. ***What is reproof?***  The word means, “to convict, refute, confute”… also, “to find fault with, correct”. (Thayer).  The Greek word here used is sometimes translated rebuked.  
**2 Timothy 4:2** – the word, “reprove” in Timothy’s instructions concerning preaching first uses his word.  
**Matthew 18:15** – “tell him his fault” is this same word.  
**Luke 3:19** – Herod was reproved (rebuked) by John because of his unscriptural marriage  
**Ephesians 5:11** - Rather than having fellowship with the “unfruitful works of darkness” we are to *expose* (reprove) them.  Vs. 13 of this text says that “all things that are *exposed* are made manifest by the light.”  These verses talk about standing up for godliness by refusing to approve of sin.  That means to speak up when you see sin.  
**1 Tim. 5:20** – elders walking in sin are to be reproved (rebuked) in the presence of all so that they(the all) may fear.           
**Titus 1:9** - Which speaks of elders being able to “convince the gainsayer” or “convict those who contradict” (NKJV)  
**Titus 1:13** – Some are to be sharply rebuked that they may be sound in the faith.  
NOTE: Many of these verses address dealing with brethren and those who affect the congregation, but others simply speak of your stand for what is right.  With this we must always realize that there are times when rebuke is a waste of time (i.e. casting your pearls before swine) and move on.  
NEVERTHELESS, there is a time to use our tongues in this manner.  And it is not always pleasant or positive.

b. ***What is rebuke?*** “to put honor upon, the to adjudge…rebuke” (Vine’s).  Kittel similarly defines it but says, “to award honor or blame.”   To express strong disapproval with (Louw & Nida)    Censure (WS Dictionary - II).  
While the definition is similar to that of reproof, it seems to be more specific or more pointed.  In defining the two words Paul instructs Timothy

**2 Tim. 4:2** - The first word (reprove) means to identify the error, while the second (rebuke) means to make the application (i.e. “you are the man”).  
The word is found 29 times in the N.T. with others rebuked Jesus - They obviously should not have rebuked Jesus that way. Be careful before you personally rebuke another – have all the facts in hand.  
Jesus rebuked the wind, demons, a fever and charged many to not tell others about their healings.  
**Luke 23:40** – on the cross, the penitent thief rebuked the other thief  
**Luke 17:3** – of your brother sins against you, rebuke him…  
**Galatians 2:11** – Paul withstood Peter to his face and rebuked him (though the word is not found – this gives the sense of rebuke).  
**Matthew 23** – when Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Scribes, He was rebuking them.

Note, when the tongue is used negatively in this sense, the goal is a POSITIVE result (i.e. change for the better).

**II.    Exposing false doctrine and false teachers –**

a. ***Warnings*** – sometimes we need to expose false doctrines. In fact, it is one of the responsibilities of a preacher and of elders.  
**Matthew 7:15, 16:6** - Jesus warned His disciples about them – Jesus warned them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (the influence of their false teachings and corruption).   
**1 Timothy 4:6** - Paul tells Timothy to “instruct the brethren in these things…”  Vs. 1-5 of the text are a warning against false teachers and some of the false doctrines they will teach.   
**2 Timothy 4:2-3** – again Paul tells Timothy to exhort with all longsuffering and teaching because false teachers will come along.  Implied in his preaching is exposing these false things.  
**Titus 1:9** – elders are not only to exhort but also to “convict those who contradict.”  That too involves exposing false doctrine.    
**Jude 3** - a message NOT written just to a preacher.  Vs. 3 calls for contending for the faith once for all delivered.  It was in jeopardy because of false teachers.

b. ***Sometimes name-calling is needed*** – exposing false teachers either by name or doctrine.    
There is a time to be specific in identifying a particular teaching or even a false teacher or brother.   
**2 Timothy 4:14-15** – speaks of Alexander the Coppersmith.

**2 Tim. 2:17** – Paul gives specific examples of false teachers AND what they taught – Hymenaeus and Philetus.  
**3 John 9** identifies Diotrophes as a troublemaker.    
**2 Thess. 3:14, Rom. 16:17** - There are also passages that speak of marking or noting others –   
***BUT one should never do this just because he can***.   The purpose is preservation of the truth.

**III.    Proper Criticism**

a. Proper criticism - We frequently equate criticism with sin.  Most of the time it is, but there is good criticism. It is negative in that it points out faults – but the intent is to improve and build up.  It is called constructive criticism.

b. **Acts 6:1** - Sometimes it is not solicited, but needed anyways. Sometimes, we need to complain to get the right thing done.  The Hellenist widows were being neglected.  
**Gal. 2:11** - Paul was critical of Peter.

c. **Exodus 18:14-18** - Sometimes, we simply observe something where one could improve and we have suggestions.  Moses was overwhelmed judging the people in the wilderness when his father-in-law came and talked with him about it.  NOTE also that he came with a suggestion – not just the complaint!  Is there a lesson for us in that as we “criticize” others?

d. NOTE: We should all welcome proper criticism!  Even if we are not seeking it.

**IV.    Delivering bad news.**

a. Not all news is good.  There is plenty of bad to be told today.  And holding it in is NOT good for anyone.  We need to face our problems and tragedies.  Someone has to say something.  
Job was presented a series of devastating reports. **Job 1-2**  
Eli was told of the death of his sons.  **1 Samuel 4**  
David was told of the death of his son**. 2 Samuel 12**  
**Luke 22:31-32** - Jesus warned Peter that he would be sifted as wheat, but Jesus prayed for him.

b. Prov. 17:5 - Let it be delivered with compassion.  We should never rejoice in delivering such news (cf. ***“He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.”***   
Consider the example of Jesus – though He warned Peter of what would happen, He also assured him of restoration.  
If ever there is a time to consider **Col. 4:6**, let your speech be with grace, it is here.

**V.    Rules to consider in negatively using your tongue**

a. Remember the rules of kindness – it is so important!  
**1 Cor. 13:4** – love is kind.

**1 Peter 3:8** - calls for us to be tenderhearted.  When we have something bad to say, it

b. Consider timing – sometimes WHEN you say something is just as important as what you say.

c. Examine your motives – be careful!  Make sure you have humility and godliness in your heart as you reveal such things.

d. Consider how necessary it really is.  Sometimes, we should let something go (perhaps a slip of the tongue, etc.) rather than pursue it (NOT saying to ignore sin or false doctrine, etc.).  If someone made a mistake and they know it is a mistake – LET IT GO!  Don’t rub salt in the wound!

e. Remember that there are far more examples and instances of the positive use of the tongue than the negative.  Most sins of the tongue (if not all) are negatively using our tongues – i.e. doing damage to another, deceit, complaining, etc.

**CONCLUSION** –

Thus we can see godly examples of using our tongues.

Let us strive to avoid misusing our tongues.

Let us strive to use it as God intended for us to do.