**THE TONGUE – 8**

***Sins of Silence***

***James 3:1-12***

**INTRODUCTION** - As we conclude this portion of our study dealing with sins of the tongue, we want to notice a different category.  We have notice the many different ways that we can misuse our language, be it gossip, blasphemy, dishonesty (lies), hatred, dissatisfaction (complaining & criticism), profanity, arrogance (bragging), and excessive talking.  One might think that we ought not to say anything for fear of sinning with our tongues.  But, we need to also know that it is possible for us to sin by NOT saying something.   There are times when we ought to speak up and we need to be aware that at such times God expects us to speak up.  Today we notice those times when we by be sinning by NOT speaking up.

**I.** **There is a time to speak -**

a.  **ECCL. 3:7** - There is a time to speak and a time to keep silence.

b.  God gave us our tongues to use.  While we have seen the great potential for abuse, He intended for us to use it for good.  There is much good that can be accomplished when we use our tongues properly.

c.   Obviously, when we speak of sins of silence we are noting those times when speaking up could have negative consequences – either to ourselves or to others.  But we have to speak up anyway.  We will see some examples of this in a few moments.

d.  Consider the example of Jesus.  At times He kept silent, yet at other times He spoke up, even when those to whom He spoke didn’t want to receive it.  
**ISA. 53:7** – Listen to the prophet

**MATT. 26:62-63-** As he stood before the high priest

**MATT 27:11-14** - When He stood before His Jewish accusers

**LUKE 23:8-9** - As He stood before Herod

**MATT. 21:27** - On another occasion, He refused to answer His accuser’s questions, because He knew their motives.  
***But He spoke up when He needed to***:    
**LUKE 11:11-14** - When His enemies accused Him of casting out demons in the name of the Devil

**LUKE 20:34-48** - When presented with false doctrines – such as those of the Sadducees.  
**JN. 6:60-67** - He spoke up when doing so meant that some would follow Him no more  
**MATT. 15:12-14** - He spoke up even though it “offended” the Jewish leaders.   
**MARK 14:61-62** - Finally, as He stood before His accusers and the time had come – He admitted plainly whom He was – even though it meant His condemnation.

**II.** **Sins of Silence -**

1. ***When we fail to encourage –***  
   **1 THESS. 5:11, 14** - Christians are expected to encourage others.  The words edify, comfort, all exhort include encouragement. Both mention comfort and edifying one another.   
   **HEB. 10:24-25** – calls upon us to exhort one another and be there for one another.  We are called upon to NOT abandon our brethren who need us.  
   A failure to encourage others COULD lead to sin.  I am not saying that anytime we fail to lend words of encouragement it is automatically sin, but sometimes there is a brother (or neighbor) who simply needs us to come to them and comfort them and we, because of strained relations or bitterness toward another, choose to say nothing.  It might be one who used to be a close friend, but in time that relationship has weakened or even evaporated.  They NEED us and we might be the BEST source of encouragement in their difficult times, but we CHOOSE to not be there.  Perhaps we even rejoice in their suffering and misery.  We have no sympathy for them.    
   On the other hand, perhaps we have simply become so self-absorbed in our own lives that we simply are not interested in encouraging those that we need to encourage.
2. ***When we fail to share God’s word with others***.  
   **MATT. 5:13-16** - Christians are expected to preach and teach others.  We have noted that there are different levels of ability when it comes to teaching God’s word (some do more damage than good in a particular situation).  But the fact is we all ought to be doing something.  It starts with a godly example which ought to lead to opportunities to speak up about God.    
   **PROV. 11:30** - While winning souls requires wisdom.

**COL. 4:6 - S**peech that is seasoned with salt and grace [tactful] there comes a point when we need to take that step to fish for one’s soul.  We need to speak up and introduce the Lord to others.  There may be many reasons why we fail to take advantage of such opportunities.  And determining the right time requires wisdom and judgment, BUT too many of us let EVERY opportunity slip by simply because we don’t want to say anything to anyone else.  Could some of these times of silence involve sin?

**1 COR. 9:16** - Consider Paul’s statement - “*Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel*”   
**ACTS 8:4** - Consider the example of the disciples in the first century - they went everywhere preaching the word.

c.   ***When we fail to defend the truth or condemn error***.   
**MATT. 7:6** - There are some who we should not waste our time with when it comes to God’s word.  Jesus even said not to cast our pearls before swine and dogs.    
**1 PET. 3:15** - But often times, our failure to defend the truth is simply a result of our weak faith or cowardice.  Could there be times when our failure to speak up and defend the Lord involves sin?  Consider the COMMAND - Are we willing and able to defend our faith?    
**2 JN. 9-11** - Tells us that if someone comes, NOT bringing the truth that we ought not to leave the impression that we approve.  This would be seen both by our actions and our words.  
**2 TIM. 2:25** - Tells us that in humility, we are to correct those in opposition.

***d.***  ***When we fail to rebuke those in sin***If we truly care about the souls of others, we will do our best to help them overcome sin in their lives.  Paul did this, often at great personal sacrifice.  His first letter to the Corinthians was filled with rebuke.

**2 TIM. 4:1-2 *-*** Timothy was told by Paul to preach the word always, and to reprove, rebuke and exhort

**GAL**. **2:11** - Consider the example in Galatians where Paul rebuked Peter to his face for not being straightforward with the gospel.

**GAL. 4:16** - Later in that book, he told the Galatians, “Have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?    
**1 TIM. 5:20** - He was told to rebuke those who were sinning, “in the presence of all.

e.  ***When we fail to warn.***    
**EZEK. 3:17** - Consider the concept of a watchman.  He was made a watchman and held accountable.  Consider the danger of a silent watchman – when there is no watchman, people are more alert.  But when a watchman fails to warn of impending danger – the is a false sense of security.  WE must guard against giving such a sense to others.  
**ISA. 56:9-10** - Where the leaders are condemned for their blindness and ignorance, and the fact that they slumber and do not bark (warn others).  
Friends, if we see someone in danger, we are NOT their friends if we let them proceed.  WE understand this physically, but do we apply it spiritually?    
**PROV. 13:24** - Think of the example of a parent which says that one who loves his son disciplines him promptly.

f.   NOTE how in each of these examples, our failure to speak up MIGHT involve sin.  Each of these occasions requires wisdom and knowledge, and only you know the reasons why you didn’t say something.  Only you know whether your failure to speak up is sinful or not.  We cannot make that judgment for you.  And YOU must be the one to carefully weigh your own words.

**III.** **Overcoming Sins of the Tongue -**

1. **PSA. 141:3** - The key in all these sins we have examined in our study is simply to weigh your words before you speak.

**PROV. 4:7** - With everything, we need wisdom. The challenge with many of the categories of sins we have discussed is the fact that often, they are proper emotions taken to extremes or mishandled.  Sometimes, the LINE that we should not cross is not all that clearly defined.  Therefore we NEED wisdom.

b.  **Change your attitude** – in every lesson we have mentioned the need for REPENTANCE where the sin was present.  If you find your life filled with ungodly attitudes, you need to address them.  Before you properly serve God, you must remove the “demons” that rule in your life.

c.  **Develop godly attitudes –** every one of these sins, as we have noted has been rooted in some ungodly attitudes (discontent, hatred, pride, etc.).

**JAMES 3:2** - Imagine how our lives would change if we could learn to master godly attitudes and eliminate the ungodly attitudes from our lives.

1. **Avoid sources of temptation** –

**PROV. 6:27** - don’t associate with the gossip, known liars or grumblers.  Don’t listen to the profane trash so prevalent in our society.  You cannot play with fire and not be burned by it.    
**1 COR. 15:33** - Paul warned us that evil companions (whatever or whoever those companions might be) corrupt good morals.

**1 COR. 5:6** - Earlier, Paul had warned the church that a little leaven leavens the whole lump   
**ROM. 12:16** - Associated with this is also the need to associate with those who are godly.  Paul tells us to associate with the humble.

**CONCLUSION** –

If we are guilty of sins involving the tongue we need to repent!

Remember – Silence is not always golden.