

THE ANATOMY OF A CHRISTIAN STEWARD

VI. A Tongue That Tells

James 3: 1-12

Astronaut Michael Collins, speaking at a banquet said, "The average man speaks 25,000 words a day, and the average woman 30,000." Then he added: "Unfortunately, when I come home each day I've spoken my 25,000... and my wife hasn't started her 30,000."

Perhaps we all speak too much. A wife was asked if her husband talked a lot and she gave this answer: "Can he talk! He was in Miami and when he got home his tongue was sunburned."

We need to be careful what we say and when we say it. A football fan talking to his girlfriend said, "See that fellow playing full back? I think he'll be our best man next year." She quickly said, "Oh, darling, this is so sudden."

Careless speech can cause all sorts of trouble and offend God and others. Proverbs 6:16-19 says there are seven things God hates: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that run to mischief, a false witness, and he that soweth discord among the brethren." Three of these have to do with the tongue. Also notice that two of the Ten Commandments have to do with the use or abuse of the tongue.

The book of James has more to say about the tongue than any other book in the Bible. All five chapters deal with the tongue in various ways. Chapter three says more than any others. Read it! You will like it or hate it depending on your own life.

First, he deals with the Potential of the tongue. He points out the tongue can guide life. Just as the bits in a horse's mouth controls it, so the tongue controls one's life. Control the tongue and you can control the passions of life.

Then James says the tongue can harm lives. The illustration of fire is used. A little spark can ignite dry, brittle leaves and destroy an entire forest as we have seen in California, Oregon, and elsewhere. Think of the harm done by the tongue of fire. Lives ruined and reputations destroyed by an evil tongue.

Some years ago I was bowling with a friend. I approached the line, let loose of the ball and it headed for the gutter. I began to apply "body English" to try to influence its roll, but with no effect. My friend laughed at me and said, "It's hard to control the ball after it leaves your hand."

The same is true of the words we speak. They are difficult to control after they leave our lips. Only time will tell the good or evil they will bring.

Next the Holy Spirit deals with the Power of the tongue. It can either bless or curse depending on its use.

It can bless by confessing Christ Jesus as Savior. In Romans 10 we read, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10)

And Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32)

It can bless by encouraging and comforting. Our world is filled with lonely, empty, discouraged people who are hungry for a kind and loving word. There are those who are hurting and crying out for words of comfort that only a caring Christian can give. You can be that person.

It can bless by witnessing. A teenager once said to me – "I am a Christian because Barbara told me about Jesus and what He meant to her." You can do the same for one you know. He will put His words in your mouth. Jesus said, "It is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." (Matthew 10:20)

The tongue can bless by testifying. Wallace Chappel reminds us: "After Christ comes in your life and wonderfully changes things, you will want to testify that it is true. And make no mistake about it – your testimony counts for much." The little girl who said, "Since Jesus came, I feel clean inside," can share her heart's purity with others. The washwoman E. Stanley Jones tells about, who exclaimed, "I ain't what I ought to be and I ain't what I'm gonna be, but I'm heaps better than I used to be," can tell the people how it is that she is different.

Our research has shown that testimonies in **STEWARDSHIP ENRICHMENT** have greater influence on personal commitments than any thing other than the Word of God. Remember, "People's hearts are moved by people whose hearts have been moved."

Use this power and influence by telling how excited you are about **STEWARDSHIP ENRICHMENT** and the vision it will fund.

*Lord, the testimony, which you have allowed me to have bursts from my heart.
My tongue cannot not tell of your love.*