

TAMING THE TONGUE

Proverbs 15:1-33; Ecclesiastes 5:1-7; James 3:1-18.

LESSON 107 -- Primary Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Speak not evil one of another" (James 4:11).

Created by God

Long, long ago God made a beautiful place which He called the world. He made the great seas of water and the dry land with its green grass and tall trees. God made many things to grow: there was fruit on some of the trees and there were vegetables of many kinds.

Swimming around in the water were many kinds of fishes. Out in the deep woods were the wild animals where God planned for them to live. Useful animals were created, too, such as cows, pigs, sheep, and horses. God also made the lovely birds that spread their wings and fly in the air. Many other living creatures were made by God, and everything that was created was very good.

The most wonderful work that God made was man, and he was given power over all the animals, the fishes, and the birds. People are not like the dumb animals that cannot speak. At a very young age, a baby learns to talk; then when he is about six years old he goes to school and learns to read and write. By reading books he learns many things.

Power over the Animals

The Bible tells us that every kind of beasts, birds, serpents, and things in the sea is tamed by man. Oxen and horses learn to pull the plough and the wagon. Horses are trained to obey their master by means of a bit in their mouth. By this they know just which way to turn, when to go, and when to stand still. Even the huge elephants in the jungle may be taught to work for the people. Seals, lions, and tigers are sometimes trained to do tricks. Some birds are trained to sing certain songs, and they actually carry a tune.

The Tongue

Although man has learned to trap and tame wild animals yet the Bible tells us that there is one thing that man cannot tame. What do you suppose that is? It is the tongue. Our tongue is a very small part of our body, but it get us into more trouble than any other thing.

Did you ever stand on a dock and watch an ocean liner as it sails out into the blue water? These large ships are steered by means of a very small helm. Carefully, as the pilot follows a chart and compass, he pilots the ship safely across the sea. Or have you ever gone to an airport and watched with interest a huge transport plane flying overhead, and landing, like a giant seagull, on a field at exactly the right place? We see the trains and automobiles come and go. All this teaches us that God has given man great wisdom to build these wonderful things, and to guide them so they go wherever man pleases.

If man can do such great things, why cannot he tame the little tongue? Because the tongue speaks out the things that are hidden in the heart. So if our heart is full of sin we will just naturally speak naughty things. The Bible says that no man can tame the tongue, but how thankful we are that Jesus is able to do so! When we are saved, Jesus helps us to keep a "bridle" on our tongue. Then we will not say mean, hurtful things to others. Children who "talk back" to their parents or teachers need to be saved. There is only one way to be set free from a "sharp" tongue, and that is to be saved through the Blood of Jesus.

When we are saved Jesus helps us to talk kindly to others. When someone corrects us for something, we will give a soft answer instead of speaking sharply. Jesus is not pleased with people who "talk back" to others. When Jesus is in our heart we are happy, and we even have a happy look on our face. Did you ever meet someone who was gloomy and cross? It even makes others feel bad to be around people like that.

By Their Fruits

Some children go to church and Sunday School on Sunday and sing and talk about Jesus. Then on Monday morning they say naughty words and do bad things. That is not pleasing to God. Did you ever see a drinking fountain that had sweet water and bitter water at the same place? Of course you did not. The Bible asks whether a fig tree can bear olive berries, or whether a vine can bear figs. We all know that they cannot. Jesus said in Matthew 7:16, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." So if we are saved, we live and talk like a Christian; and if we are not saved, we talk like a sinner. We do not have to be with someone very long before we know whether he is saved or not.

Peter's Mistake

We read in the Bible of a man whose tongue got him into trouble. This man's name was Peter. No doubt he thought that he really loved Jesus and would not do anything to displease Him. One day he said to Jesus, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matthew 26:33). But Jesus knew Peter's weakness and told him that that very night, before the cock, or rooster, should crow, Peter would deny Jesus three times. A little later, that same night, Jesus gave Peter a word of warning when He said, "Watch and pray." If Peter had watched and prayed, perhaps he would not have gotten into trouble. But just a few hours later we find him telling a lie. A girl said to him as he stood by a fire warming himself, that he was one who had been with Jesus. And what do you suppose Peter answered? "I know not what thou sayest." Then as he went out on the porch, another girl saw him and said, "This fellow was also with Jesus." But again Peter said, "I do not know the man." After a while some others said to him, "Surely thou also art one of them." Again he denied that he even knew Jesus, and he used very bad words. Immediately Peter heard the cock crow, and remembered what Jesus had said to him. He was very sorry that he had not been true to Jesus, and went out and wept.

It is a terrible thing to tell a lie! It was Peter's tongue that told these three lies, but if his heart had been kept white and clean, his tongue would not have spoken as it did. Peter had denied his very best Friend, Jesus Christ. This teaches us that we must keep our heart right with God at all times.

Pleasing God

God gave us a tongue with which to sing His praises. David said, "Oh that men would praise the LORD" (Psalm 107:8). If we use our tongue only to sing His praises and tell others about Jesus we shall not get into trouble. Jesus sees everything we do and hears everything we say. In James 4:11 we are told not to speak evil of another. A good thing to remember is: if we cannot say something good about another, don't say anything.

In Malachi 3:16 we read of some people who loved the Lord and often talked about Him. The Lord heard it and wrote it down in a book. He said, "They shall be mine . . . when I make up my jewels." If we want to have our name in that good book and be one of the Lord's "jewels," let us talk about the Lord at work and at play. Then when we go to church we can praise Him with all our heart in song and in testimony.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the result of giving a soft answer? Proverbs 15:1.
2. Does God see everything we do? Proverbs 15:3.
3. Can any man tame the tongue? James 3:8.
4. How may we know who is a Christian and who is a sinner? Matthew 7:16.
5. How should we act in the house of God? Ecclesiastes 5:1.