

THE UNRULY MEMBER

BIBLE TEXT : James 1:26; 3:1-18.

LESSON 359 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise" (Proverbs 10:19).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

James 1:26

²⁶ If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

James 3:1-18

¹ My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

² For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.

³ Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

⁴ Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

⁵ Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

⁶ And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

⁷ For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

⁸ But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹ Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Bitter Fountain

1. The uncontrolled human tongue is a terrible evil, James 1:26; 3:1-6;

Psalm 140:3

³ They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison *is* under their lips. Selah.

Romans 3:13

¹³ Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips:

2. All manner of evil-speaking is condemned by the Word of God, James 3:7-12, 14-16.

a. Backbiting:

Psalm 15:1-3

¹ LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

² He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

³ *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

Psalm 50:19-23

¹⁹ Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.

²⁰ Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.

²¹ These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself: *but* I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.

²² Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver.

²³ Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright* will I shew the salvation of God.

Psalm 101:5

⁵ Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

Jeremiah 9:3-5

³ And they bend their tongues *like* their bow *for* lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.

⁴ Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.

⁵ And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, *and* weary themselves to commit iniquity.

Jeremiah 9:8

⁸ Their tongue *is as* an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: *one* speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.

Romans 1:30

³⁰ Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

2 Corinthians 12:20

²⁰ For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you

similitude of God.

¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

¹¹ Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?

¹² Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

¹³ Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

¹⁴ But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

¹⁵ This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.

¹⁶ For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

b. Vain talk

Job 11:2

² Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified?

Job 15:3

³ Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?

Proverbs 29:11

¹¹ A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterwards.

Ecclesiastes 5:3

³ For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice *is known* by multitude of words.

Ecclesiastes 10:12-14

¹² The words of a wise man's mouth *are* gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.

¹³ The beginning of the words of his mouth *is* foolishness: and the end of his talk *is* mischievous madness.

¹⁴ A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?

Titus 1:10

¹⁰ For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:

c. Tale-bearing:

Leviticus 19:16

¹⁶ Thou shalt not go up and down *as* a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I *am* the LORD.

Proverbs 17:9

⁹ He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth *very* friends.

Proverbs 18:8

⁸ The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Proverbs 20:19

¹⁹ He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Proverbs 26:20

²⁰ Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.

Romans 1:29

²⁹ Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

d. Boasting: James 3:5;

Proverbs 27:1-2

¹ Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

² Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

Matthew 6:2

² Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Romans 1:30

³⁰ Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

2 Timothy 3:2

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient

to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3. God will destroy those who speak evil, and will turn their own devices against them, II Peter 2:10-12; Jude 8-10, 14-16; Revelation 21:8; Psalm 7:15, 16; 57:4-6; 64:1-9.

II The Sweet Fountain

1. The Christian's conversation is in Heaven, and his speech is edifying to all, James 3:13, 17, 18;

Psalm 15:3

³ *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

Proverbs 31:26

²⁶ She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

Ephesians 4:29

²⁹ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Colossians 4:6

⁶ Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Titus 2:8

⁸ Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Titus 3:2

² To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

1 Peter 3:10-11

¹⁰ For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

¹¹ Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

Revelation 14:5

⁵ And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

NOTES:

Evil-speaking Condemned

"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasures bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:34-37).

With such language does the Word of God unsparingly condemn all evil-speaking. The tongue of the unregenerated heart pours forth a continual stream of iniquity into the world. Solemn fact indeed that the words of our everyday conversations will return eternally to justify or condemn us before God! (**Jude 1:10** ¹⁰ But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. **Jude 1:14-16** ¹⁴ And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, ¹⁵ To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. ¹⁶ These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.)

Such portions of Scripture teach us that evil-speaking is always associated with rebellious deeds against the government and Person of God. Furthermore, all who speak evil shall be judged

with the same severity as any other rebel against God's Kingdom. If angels are not permitted by God to make railing accusations against that archenemy of men, Satan, how diligent, then, men should be to guard against speaking hastily or speaking evil to anyone or about anyone.

Paul, following the teachings of the Word of God, made apology to the high priest whom he did not recognise, although it seems that he would have been justified in his saying. (**Acts 23:2-5** ² And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. ³ Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? ⁴ And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? ⁵ Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. **Exodus 22:28** ²⁸ Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people. **Ecclesiastes 10:20** ²⁰ Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter..)

Serpent's Tongue

One of the devil's sharpest weapons is idle gossip about another. Satan is the "accuser" of the brethren (**Revelation 12:10** ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.); and a person is being misled by the devil when he idly repeats evil things about another, even though they be true.

The business of a Christian is other than publishing the faults of a brother to the world; or even his sin, if it be that he has sinned. The Word of God says: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1, 2). It is impossible to misconstrue such a statement and call it license for anyone to gossip about another's failure or sin. It is the devil's business to destroy men's souls; and talk about people's lives that is not edifying, nor to the glory of God, is only assisting the devil.

"A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Proverbs 11:13). Furthermore, "a froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends" (Proverbs 16:28). These are but a few of the statements in the Word of God, which can be quoted regarding idle and malicious gossip. It is no wonder, then, that James, inspired of the Holy Ghost, said correctly and with the proper emphasis: "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (James 3:6).

Boasting

Boasting is also an evil of the human tongue to be classified with vain talk, talebearing, and backbiting. The Bible states: "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him" (John 7:18). Pride is a damning sin, and boasting of self is a fruit of the tree of pride. The purpose of boasting is nothing less than that self should be prominently considered, exalted, and given pre-eminence. In most instances those who boast are unqualified for the things, which they so loudly claim, and that is why they boast. There is a boasting in the Christian warfare, which is both right and proper. The Psalmist expressed it, "My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad" (Psalm 34:2). The Christian can boast mightily of his Great Redeemer, and of His mighty works to the sons of men. But any carnal boasting is sin!

The Name of the Lord

The Christian has a defence from idle tongue wagging. God has promised to vindicate His people from all the false accusations the devil might bring against them. The Word of God declares:

"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is save" (Proverbs 18:10). The righteous can flee to God, and His divine protection will cover them against every calamity, including that of the libellous tongue.

A study of the sixty-fourth Psalm will teach us the methods of the wicked, and God's victory over them. "Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words: that they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not." And what is the defence of the righteous in such times? "But God shall shoot at them [the wicked] with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away" (Psalm 64:7, 8).

Haman, who was in the king's favour, became jealous of Mordecai and thought to do him harm. He cunningly plotted his own exaltation and Mordecai's destruction. His scheme was set at nought by the Lord, and the very thing he had thought to bring upon Mordecai came upon himself. And the honour he had thought to give himself was given to Mordecai instead. (**Esther 7:10** ¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.) So does God turn the tongues of the wicked upon themselves and destroy them with their own wickedness.

During the past generation it has been the boast of dictators that if a lie was told often enough the world would eventually believe it as the truth. The world also quotes for truth the saying that a lie can travel halfway around the world while truth is but "getting its boots on." Such statements may be accepted for the truth by carnal-hearted people, but truth cannot be downed by lies. Neither can any manner of evil destroy the truth. Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). No lie the devil has ever told, or will yet tell, will ever change the Son of God or the Truth of God in the slightest degree. Truth is from God; and truth, no matter what its subject matter, cannot be separated from God, for He is the source of all that is true and good.

All evil and evil speaking have their origin with Satan. Jesus told those who were opposing His Word: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). Therefore, to tell a lie or a falsehood of any kind is proof that one is serving the cause of the devil. God will not at all countenance lies, and all liars will be kept out of the Kingdom of God. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Revelation 21:27; 22:15).

The Christian's heart is full of the good treasure of the Lord, and he will speak in the manner that is pleasing to his Lord. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:17, 18).

QUESTIONS

1. What makes the tongue an unruly member?
2. Why does the Bible say the tongue is set on fire of hell?
3. Who is the father of all lies and evil speaking?
4. What will happen to all who speak evil?
5. How should Christians talk?
6. Why cannot Christians participate in idle gossip?
7. Who is the accuser of the brethren?
8. What defence does a Christian have against gossip and malicious slander?