It’s Always Needed

(by Shane Williams)

I heard a story of a man in the mid 1950’s entering school to study engineering. A professor told the entering freshmen class to buy the best slide rule they could afford. The reason: *“You will be dependent on it all your ‘professional life.’”* Well, of course, it wasn’t too long before the slide rule was replaced by the calculator. We’ve seen those same sorts of things in fairly recent years: 8 tracks, cassette tapes (almost), and even VHS tapes! Things that today we consider essential may quickly become obsolete. Tomorrow they may be discarded as antiques that cannot provide the help we need.

At least one thing from the past, however, will always be needed and never become obsolete: the Bible, God’s Holy Word. No matter how much technological change or progress takes place, the Book will remain the one sure means for getting the right answers to the complicated questions: our origin, purpose, needs, & final destination.

**Psalm 119:105**, ***“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”***

**Psalm 18:30**, ***“As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.”***

**Psalm 119:160**, ***“The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.”***

**1 Peter 1:23**, ***“For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.”***

 Make sure you keep your Bible around. Use it! You’ll always need it.

**Speech Patrol**

(by Bubba Garner)

David is going through a shy stage. When somebody says hello or speaks to him, he almost immediately puts his hand in his mouth or disappears behind my legs. But put him at the dinner table and ask him about Simba or Lightning McQueen, you can’t get him to be quiet long enough to eat his food. I suppose he comes by it honestly. His daddy struggles, too, with knowing when to speak and when to remain silent.

Tongue trouble is, in fact, a lifelong struggle. You never reach the age or level of maturity where you have completely conquered it. Remember, James warned that ***“no man can tame the tongue”*** (**James 3:8**). Anyone who thinks otherwise dangerously underestimates its power and potential. Solomon said that death and life are in its hand (**Proverbs 18:21**) and that the one who guards his mouth is able to keep his whole soul from trouble (**Proverbs 21:23**).

The first twelve verses of James three constitute James’ sermon on the tongue. This section first appears to be a lesson for teachers; let not many of you be *“masters”* (KJV), for few can master the tongue. But the applications reach to include anyone who speaks. He suggests some things to help you get a hold of your tongue before it gets a hold of you.

**Realize that a little bit goes a long way.** When you think about all of the organs and muscles that make up your body, it is easy to overlook the tongue. It is not as big as the heart or the lungs or the liver. Indeed, it is a ***“small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things”*** (**James 3:5**). With a tiny bit in his mouth, you can bring the whole horse under your control. With a small rudder, a captain can steer a ship through a storm and overcome the elements. *“How much more ought we to be able to govern ourselves”* (William Wordsworth)! It is no wonder that James said, ***“If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue… this man’s religion is worthless”*** (**James 1:26**). The difference between right and wrong is very often found in a few words.

**Understand that what you say can blow up in your face.** ***“See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity”*** (**James 3:5-6**). That’s an interesting metaphor, isn’t it? Words are like fire. All it takes is one careless match, one slip of the tongue, and a flickering flame becomes a raging inferno. And once it starts to spread, good luck trying to put it out. You might be able to correct the matter with the people you told. But how will you ever track down the people they told, and the people they told… And what about the damage? Can you take what has been burned and ruined and put it back together? The righteous do not ***“take up a reproach against a friend”*** (**Psalm 15:3**). It’s one thing to not spread something around. It’s quite another to refuse to even pick it up.

**Don’t think that words will never harm you.** The old *“sticks and stones”* adage says they won’t. But James assures us of just the opposite. ***“The tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body”*** (**James 3:6**). The trouble with the tongue is not just that we use it to hurt other people. It’s that we end up hurting ourselves even more. Poor speech can destroy reputations that took years to build. It can cause influences that were strong and reaching to come crumbling down in a matter of minutes. And if you somehow escape this life unscathed by your words, don’t count on the Lord letting them slip by. Jesus said that ***“every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment”*** (**Matthew 12:36**). The inevitable result of all lying, gossiping, and slandering is death by your own poison.

**Be sure that you can’t talk out of both sides of your mouth.** ***“From the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way”*** (**James 3:10**). Nature will not allow the same fountain to bring forth both fresh and bitter water. Neither will it allow a fig tree to produce olives or a vine to produce figs. Why, then, can’t we see the inconsistency of using our tongues to praise God and curse men made in His image? If a double-minded man is ***“unstable in all his ways”*** (**James 1:8**), wouldn’t the same be true of the one who is double- tongued? These things ought not to be this way! David referred to his mouth as the ***“door of my lips”*** (**Psalm 141:3**). More often than not, it is a door that needs to be kept shut.

***Therefore… as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."***(**1 Peter 1:13-16**)