

## Set A Guard , O Lord • Psalm 141:3

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Churchill*

1. It was said that no one was better at giving a cutting insult than Winston Churchill
2. Everyone knew there was no love lost between he and Lady Astor; their dislike of each other was very public
3. On one occasion, Lady Astor met him in an elevator - it was obvious he'd been drinking
  - a. she said with a kind of gloating glee, "Why Sir Winston, you are drunk!"
  - b. to which he replied, "M'lady, I may be drunk, but you are ugly! Tomorrow I'll be sober!"
4. On another occasion, Churchill and Lady Astor were engaged in verbal sparring when she said, "If I were your wife, I'd put arsenic in your tea."
5. His response, "If I were your husband, I'd drink it."

#### B. *The Power of the Tongue*

1. We laugh at these clever digs that Churchill made and that we hear from others today
2. But the fact of the matter is, the tongue possesses a tremendous power
3. Karl Marx once said, "Give me 26 lead soldiers, and I will conquer the world."
  - a. he was speak of the letters of the alphabet
  - b. letters go together to form words
  - c. and words when put together in the right combination have the power to either inspire or discourage
  - d. they have the power to heal, or wound - give life, or take it!
4. Proverbs 18:21 says

**Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.**

#### C. *What Are You Eating?*

1. So, how does the fruit you're eating taste?
2. Is life bitter to you, or sweet?
3. The answer to that is largely answered by asking yourself what kind of seeds you are planting in the words that issue from your mouth

### II. TEXT

#### A. *V. 3*

**Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.**

1. The setting of this psalms is that David is once again beset with trouble at the hands of his enemies
2. They have stirred him up and he is tempted to take matters into his own hands

- and go after them
3. So he calls out to God; "Lord, help me because I am really ticked and ready to go off on these guys and say and do things I know I will later regret."
  4. Ever feel that way? That's exactly what David is experiencing!
  5. In v. 5 he says,

**Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; Let my head not refuse it. For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked.**

- a. he doesn't have a problem with someone who really cares about him taking him to task
  - b. in fact, David prays for the grace to receive it and be helped by their loving criticism
  - c. but the gossip, criticism, and slander of the wicked, of those who just want to harm him have driven him to the edge of patience
6. So - what is his prayer?
  7. **Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.**

### ***B. Applicable To All***

1. This is a word that applies to everyone of us here this morning - and we all know it
2. There isn't a person in this room who cannot with great sincerity say . . .

**Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.**

4. Who among us hasn't in the last week said something we regretted?
  - a. who here hasn't wished they had said something when they should have but was tongue tied
  - b. and many of us just plain have a problem with our mouths!
    - 1) whether it's a problem with profanity, or angry, hostile, unkind words spoken to our loved ones -
    - 2) our speech is a continual cause of sorrow and distress to us
5. If you were given \$10 for every kind and edifying word you've spoken, but penalized \$10 for every unkind, hurtful word you've uttered, and then bought a house with the balance, what kind of home would you now have or would you be homeless?

**Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.**

### ***C. God's Word Has A Lot To Say About The Tongue & Our Speech***

1. God's Word Has A Lot To Say About The Tongue & Our Speech
2. Let me give just a brief sampling
3. Proverbs 4:24

**Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you.**

4. In Proverbs 6:16-19 of the 7 things that are an abomination to God, 3 of them are related to our speech . . .

**A lying tongue, A false witness *who* speaks lies, And one who sows discord among**

brethren.

5. Proverbs 10:11& 19

**{11} The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, But violence covers the mouth of the wicked.**

**{19} In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips *is* wise.**

6. David understood this, and so while he was all worked up and ready to go into a rage, he instead sent up a quick prayer to heaven and asked the Lord to help him not fly off at the mouth
7. One piece of sage advice most of us have heard is: When angry, count to ten before you say anything
  - a. another says: When REALLY angry, count to a hundred, then say nothing!
  - b. why? Because in the multitude of words, sin is not lacking, but the one who restrains their lips is wise
  - c. you can't be sorry for something you said, if you never said it!
  - d. and it's better to regret that you didn't say something, than to regret what you did say, because words once spoken, can *never* be recalled
  - e. the old children's retort to name calling:

Sticks and stones may break my bones  
But names will never hurt me  
--simply isn't true
  - f. the wounds from sticks and stones heal, but words wound the soul, and sometimes in ways we never recover from
  - g. when Karen Carpenter died of anorexia, an investigation was conducted
    - 1) it was discovered that the reason why she became anorexic was earlier in the Carpenter's musical career
    - 2) a reviewer had referred to her as "Richard's chubby sister"
    - 3) these words, casually thrown out by a man who was merely seeking to be clever entered into Karen's soul and ended up killing her

**Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.**

#### ***D. The Power Of The Tongue - James 3:1-12***

1. Listen to what James says about the power of our tongue

**{1} My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**

**2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he *is* a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.**

**3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.**

**4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.**

**5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!**

**6 And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and**

it is set on fire by hell.

**7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.**

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

**9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.**

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

**11 Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening?**

**12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.**

2. He paints a pretty bleak picture here: He make sit sound almost like there is no escape from a corrupt tongue

3. But don't take James wrong - he isn't giving a theology of the tongue here: He is simply describing the kind of power it possesses and how it is incompatible for one who blesses God to also curse man who is made in the image of God

4. The real point we are to learn from this is found in v. 8 - No man can tame the tongue!

5. David knew this - that's why he prays

**Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.**

a. he cried out to the Lord to help him in this

b. he recognized his own responsibility but after other attempts to control his speech and their subsequent failure, he knew that apart from the Lord's enabling grace, he would fail

6. Many of us are in the same place

a. our speech is all too often coarse and harsh

b. and it grieves us without end

c. we make resolutions to be more kind and gentle, to be less profane and coarse

d. but then something happens and out the trash flies

e. this is a pattern we've rehearsed again and again

f. and we've come to the place where we wonder if we'll ever be any different

g. and the answer is "Yes" if we will learn one simple truth:

h. our speech is a direct reflection of what is in our hearts!

i. the key to cleaning up our speech is to clean out our heart

## ***E. Cleaning Out Our Hearts***

1. In Luke 6 Jesus said,

**43 "A good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.**

**44 "For every tree is known by its own fruit. For *men* do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.**

**45 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.**

2. It's critical that we understand what Jesus is saying here
3. Out of the fullness of our heart, our mouths give utterance
4. The sounds may be formed by air passing through our vocal chords and then shaped by our throat, mouth and tongue
5. But the ideas that prompt the selection of what words we will speak lie in our hearts
6. Our speech is the first fruit born by the inner life
7. We have to grasp this truth if we are ever to see a change effected in our speech
8. If you are grieved and struggling with your speech, don't seek just to stop it by not saying what it is that you dislike
9. Get at the root - ask the Lord to reveal your heart and what it is that is driving the tongue to spew such poison
  - a. in Ephesians 4:25, Paul writes . . .

**25 Putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.**

- 1) interesting that the apostle would have to write something so obvious to believers
  - 2) but the fact is, there are some people who have a real problem with truthfulness
  - 3) most people shade the truth now and then - but there are others who make it a regular habit of being deceptive
  - 4) if this is a problem for you, take a careful look at your heart and realize the real root of lying
  - 5) Jesus said that Satan was a liar and the father of lies
  - 6) to lie and live a life of deceptive practice is to line up under the devil, not God
  - 7) this is something parents need to teach their children very early because it is in our childhood that people learn to lie
- b. many men struggle with profanity: is it driven by a desire to appear macho?
- 1) or do you merely want to blend in to a profane world
  - 2) maybe being accepted by your peers at work or school is hinged on your use of certain vulgarities
  - 3) A golfer had a terrible day on the links.
    - i) On the last hole he actually went into a tantrum, cursing and swearing, and beating the ground with his club.
    - ii) finally recovering himself, he looked woefully at his golf buddies and muttered: "I guess I'll have to give it up."
    - iii) they asked, "Give up golf?"
    - iv) he replied, "No, not golf - the ministry."
- c. maybe your problem isn't profanity so much as it's harsh and hurtful words hurled at your mate or children
- 1) you need to stop it, that's clear
  - 2) but why do you do it?
  - 3) is there bitterness and unforgiveness there?
  - 4) are you trying to get even?
  - 5) listen to what Ephesians 4 says about this

**26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,**

**27 nor give place to the devil.**

- i) unresolved conflicts result in bitterness
- ii) and this bitterness is just that - it will produce a poison in your soul that will find a way out
- iii) so, be angry, but don't let your anger spill over into sin
- iv) instead of just stuffing anger down and letting it turn into bitterness
- v) deal with things as they occur and settle them early - don't let the sun go down on unresolved anger
- vi) because if you do, you give the enemy a foothold to bring division and pain

6) Paul goes on in Ephesians 4 and says . . .

**29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.**

**30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

**31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.**

10. Notice what comes first in that list - bitterness, wrath & anger

11. Clamor and evil speaking come after

12. The point is that the key to our speech is our heart

13. And the way God sets a guard on our mouths is by sending an Inspector and Cleanser of our hearts

14. Just 2 psalms before this, David prayed, (Psalm 139:23-24)

**23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;**

**24 And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.**

15. If you struggle with your speech, that is a prayer you should echo

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. *Every Word Is Being Recorded***

1. Do not think that words are just unimportant things - they are not

2. God considers them very important

3. In fact, Jesus said (Matthew 12:36-37)

**36 "I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.**

**37 "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."**

4. It has been estimated that most people speak enough in one week to fill a large 500-page book.

a. that means in an average lifetime this would amount to 3000 VOLUMES or 1,500,000 pages!

b. it's a frightening thought that by these words we shall either be "justified"

or "condemned."

### ***B. All Important Words***

1. Ultimately, there is one word by which all of us will be justified or condemned
2. You see, if this one word has not been uttered by our lips, then all our other words will be brought before us in the Final judgment
3. And like a towering and air tight case, our own words will bear testimony against us
4. But there is one word - one answer to all our lies and sin and broken promises and hateful speech that dispels it like a light turned on in a dark room
5. That word is a name, and the name is Jesus!
6. Jesus said, "If you confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father in heaven
7. "But if you do not confess Me before men, I will neither confess you before Him."
8. Your confession of Christ erases all sin
9. Your embracing Him frees you from all bondage
10. Your receiving Him delivers you from all judgment

### ***C. To Those Who Have Received, But No Moment***

1. For those here who have received Jesus but have no moment of public confession that you can look back to -
2. We want to give you that opportunity this morning
3. On this day when we are looking at the power of the tongue, we want to give you the opportunity to exercise it's power and see your confidence in Christ rise as you make a public profession of Him
4. And see that power change your eternal destiny from death to life, from sin to forgiveness, from darkness to light, from bondage to freedom