

SET A GUARD, O LORD BEFORE MY LIPS

The mouth is the avenue from which the heart expresses itself with the help of the mind. As the ear is for accident, so the mouth is for pain it causes to one who is the victim of it. The seed of hatred or other negative emotions are many times planted deeply into the soul of man through words that proceed from the mouth. Words are so powerful that can destroy one's life in a short time. Not only mentally, but also physically, for it is a cause for bitterness and unforgiveness to lodge in the heart. The body, being one connected part, shares in all the results of whatever happens in its emotional as well as the physical members. A child, who constant listens to negative words, pressuring him\her down to conform to the attitude of his parents, will grow insecure and not able to perform to his potential abilities. His future is disturbed with emotional woes. The world around him is a globe empty of love, because the tongue guided his present into his failed future. When the psalmist prayed, Set a guard, O Lord, before my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips (Ps.141:3), he knew first-hand about the consequences of one's tongue. He himself had suffered much at the tongue of his enemies.

James had these to say concerning the tongue: *For we all have stumble and fall and offend in many things. And if anyone does not offend in speech, he is a fully developed character and a perfect man, able to control his whole body and to curb his entire nature. If we set bits in the horses' mouths to make them obey us, we can turn their whole bodies about; likewise, look at the ships: though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the impulse of the helmsman determines; even so, the tongue is a little member, and it can boast of great things. See how much wood or how great a forest a tiny spark can set ablaze! And the tongue is a fire, a world of wickedness set among our members, contaminating and depraving the whole body and setting on fire the wheel of birth being itself ignited by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea animal, can be tamed and has been tamed by human genius. But the human tongue can be tamed by no man. It is a restless (undisciplined irreconcilable) evil, full of deadly poison; with it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who were made in God's likeness! (James 3:2-9).* The more that we move the tongue, the more that we sin against God and against one another. However, there is peace in keeping the tongue under the control of the Holy Spirit of the Lord, for *His presence within us accomplishes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness (Gal. 5:22).* Where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there will be no room for anything contrary to Him, for the presence of God's Holy Spirit controls us, filling the mind with good things, not allowing the tongue to express bullies against one another. Paul recommended us *to think whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is worthy of praise, think on and weigh and take account of these things (Phil. 4:8).* Even in the midst of anger, we are not to take vengeance with words, but let our speech be gracious, seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6a), for we are to represent our heavenly Father's love. The Patriarch Job said, I purposed in my heart not to sin with my mouth (job 31:30-40).

Solomon in his wisdom, inspired by God, gave a true picture of the effects of the tongue in its evil deeds. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they who indulge in it shall eat the fruit of it" (Prov.18:21). We find pleasure to say what we want to say against someone, not realizing that we will hear that which we do not want to hear in the future, as means of harvesting that which we sowed. The Bible says, "These six things the Lord hates, indeed, seven are an abomination to Him; a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that manufactures wicked thoughts and plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies and he who sows discord among the brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19). Woe is me! Should be our cry in the midst of our indifference to the words we speak every day, uttering discord among our brother, inflammatory words, leading one to depression, having sleepless nights, with words hammering the soul to the point of no peace! Suppose that every uttered word is recorded forever, echoing back and forth between mountains, what sound would it express to our ears? In the case of weakness in this matter, a prayer should be directed to the Lord, "Set a guard, O Lord, before my mouth; keep watch at the door of my mouth" (Ps. 141:3).

In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord in His perfect holiness and perfect representation of Whom He is. The description of what he saw, escapes my understanding in my limited human mind, bringing me awe and humility before Him. Who am I, O Lord, to be partaker of Your love, a sinner in great need of your grace, and mercy? Isaiah, absorbed completely in God's holiness, a picture of himself he noticed and cried, *Woe is me! For I am undone and ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts! (Isaiah 6:5)*. In chapter three, Isaiah prophesizes, *For Jerusalem is ruined and Judah is fallen, because their speech and their deeds are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of His glory and defy His glorious presence (vs.8)*. Unclean lips was the reason for Isaiah crying before the holiness of God. Their speech and their deeds provoke the eyes of His glory and defied His glorious presence. As God's people, we are defying the presence of the Lord in the person of His Holy Spirit by continuing to sin with our mouth, causing Him grief. The pride of words uttered is obvious in their slander and humiliation and dehumanization of others. Our Lord YAHSHUA, while hanging on the cross, suffered humiliation and bullies from His people, who continued in their pride and arrogance from the time of Isaiah in their denial of Whom He was. Carrying the sins of the world upon Himself, He was brought lower yet by their words, which continued piercing His soul until death. Their words of blasphemy resounded clearly through the mountains of Jerusalem: "He rescued others from death; Himself He cannot rescue from death. He is the King of Israel? Let Him come down from the cross now and we will believe in and acknowledge and cleave to Him. He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now if He cares for Him and will have Him, for He said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. 27:42-43).

Keep my tongue, O Lord from hitting the soul of men with words that bring them down to depression. *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer (Ps. 19:14)* then I will be found blameless before You and my neighbor. The Lord calls us to unity in every circumstance and experience of life. *Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but readily adjust yourself to [people, things] and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits...If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone... do not let yourself be overcome*

by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:16,18,21). This is a call to restrain our tongue, into submission to the holiness of God in all we do and speak. The Lord is nearby.

THINK ABOUT IT!