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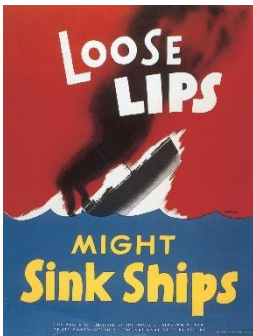


WEEK THREE - EXHIBITING WISDOM, NOT JUST TALKING

Reading: James 3:1-18

Practical Christianity, the life of faith, should impact every area of our lives, none more so, than our mouths! *James 1:26* "If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are just fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless." **OUCH!** It doesn't make for easy reading.

During WW2, there were many posters displayed warning people to watch what they said. It was understood that there were dangers in speaking about things when you



didn't always know who was listening. One of the slogans was "Loose lips might sink ships". Everyone knew that the whole nation depended on ships being kept safe for their supplies and protection. Perhaps it's a good thing social media was not around! Today, some don't seem to grasp the extent of social media and think they're just posting something for their friends. Sadly, many people have been

hurt to the extent of taking their lives. James uses the analogy of a ship's rudder, when describing the tongue; it is extremely small compared to the size of the vessel but is capable of turning a huge ship where the pilot wants it to go, even though the winds are strong.

The other analogy he uses is that of fire. The tongue can be like a spark, capable of setting on fire a great forest. We have many times seen on our TV screens the devastation that can happen because of fire, loss of homes, possessions and lives. What we say can wreak havoc in peoples' lives. Once something has been said it can never be 'unsaid'. Do we throw our words to the wind, with no thought as to consequences.

- Have you experienced something being said, or written about you which has caused a great deal of pain?
- How did you deal with it?
- Do we always think before we speak?

We've probably been amused when politicians or celebrities say things they shouldn't, unaware that the microphone is still switched on! However, what we say without awareness can cause hurt to others.

Read verses 6-12

- What are your thoughts on these verses?
- We need to look into our hearts and honestly assess our lack of 'tongue' control.

There are many times in Scripture when people have used lies to falsely accuse innocent people. Think back to Joseph ([Genesis 39:1-23](#)). When Potiphar's wife cannot persuade Joseph to sleep with her, she concocts a scenario which led to Joseph being thrown into prison. As when his brothers originally sold him into slavery, God turned around these actions so that good came out of them. Had not Joseph been in the prison, many lives would have been lost through famine.

There are other instances of those who refused to speak out what people wanted to hear, preferring death, or suffering to speaking against God. If you have read the book of Job, you will know that Satan came before God and asked if he could test Job, whom he believed only served God because of the wealth he received. God gives him permission to do anything short of taking Job's life. He lost his family, his wealth, his health and had to put up with some very self-righteous friends telling him with **many** words, what he had done wrong. Despite everything he suffered, not once did Job curse God and in [Job 19:25-26](#) we read those wonderful words forever made famous by Handel's 'Messiah', *"I know that my Redeemer lives, and he shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God."* Job received twice as much after his ordeal than he had before it because he guarded his tongue.

John the Baptist ([Matthew 14:1-12](#)) spoke out against King Herod for marrying his brother's wife. He paid the ultimate price, eventually being beheaded.

- Is James wrong therefore, in saying that the tongue cannot be tamed?
- The last two examples show two men: one unwilling to say anything against God, and the second who was unafraid to say what was right.
- Does the answer lie in the difference between Joseph's experience and that of Job and John the Baptist?

Although we are often like those described in verses [11-16](#) of this chapter, there is hope. Verses [17-18](#) say:

“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no partiality and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness.”

In fact, how James describes what we can be is laid out in Paul’s letter to the Galatians 5:22-23: *The Fruit of the Spirit*.

- How do we grow the fruit of the Spirit in our lives?
- What do you find the most difficult?

Our tongue is indeed an unruly member of our body and it is hard to bring under control. However, the more we are aware of what Scripture teaches and continue in regular prayer, God can use us to speak out about his love, mercy, and grace.

Prayer:

Father God, help us daily to pray for love and wisdom that we may not speak out to bring hurt, but rather happiness and peace.

