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THE DOCTRINE OF THE SINS OF THE TONGUE

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES
NUMBER 26
JAMES 3:7-10

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JAMES 3:7-10 "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: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

We are studying that section of James where we have illustrations of the sins of the misuse of the tongue. Here we have an illustration of dangerous animate things in the lower creation.

JAMES 3:7 "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:" For every "kind" and the word is "phusis" and means species. We will have three different species mentioned here. The first species mentioned is "therion" and it refers to mammals. It says there they have "been tamed" but the Greek word doesn't say that. The word is a present, passive, indicative of "damazo" and it means to subdue or to control. It doesn't mean "tame." Now some animals have been tamed, but the idea here is subdued or controlled. Some mammals are too stupid to be tamed, like the rhinoceros or the buffalo.

Then it says "and of birds" and this is a genitive plural of "petainon" and it refers to animals that are covered with feathers, the bird kingdom. Birds can be tamed but the word still means subdued or controlled. Then we have "and of serpents" and the word is "herpeton." We get the word herpetology from this word. It includes snakes, crocodiles, alligators, and turtles. Some of these have been tamed but the word still means subdued or controlled. Those who work with animals in zoos or otherwise can testify to the fact that animals can be subdued and controlled and some can be tamed. But their nature is one of rebellion. They received this rebellious nature back in the Garden of Eden. When Christ returns, this rebellious nature will be withdrawn from the animal kingdom and they will then be tame.

Next we have the words "things in the sea" and the word is "enaios" and this refers to all water animals. Some of these have been tamed like the dolphins. But everything in the sea can be subdued and controlled. The word for subdued or controlled "damazo" is in the passive voice and this means they receive this discipline or control from man. Great crowds flock to the circus to see animals. They have far more physical power than man, but man can subdue them and control them. Man is able to control the king cobra and the lion and man is quite impressed with his ability to control animals with far greater power and speed than he had himself. Yet man is unable to control and subdue the little instrument called the tongue.

Now we have "has been controlled" and this is a perfect, passive, indicative of this same word "damazo." Then we read "of mankind" and it literally means "by the essence belonging to mankind." In his human soul man has found power to outsmart and manipulate all members of the animal kingdom. This ability comes from the superior quality of soul within man. But isn't it amazing that even though he is superior he has not found a way to control his tongue.

So get a corrected translation of this verse--

"For every species of animals, and birds, and reptiles and marine life is being controlled and has been controlled by the essence belonging to man."

JAMES 3:8 "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." "De" is a conjunction of contrast. The word "tongue" is the accusative singular of "glossa." It is the object of the verb and says, "No one is able to tame the tongue." The word "can" is from the present, active, indicative of "dunamai" and it means has the power, has the ability to tame the tongue and this time it is an aorist, active, infinitive of "damazo." The words "an unruly evil" come from a compound noun "akatastasos" plus "kakos" and it means unstable, restless evil. The words "filled with" is from "mestos." "Deadly" is from "thanatephoros" and means "death carrying" then we have the word "poison" from "ios" and it really means "death bringing venom."

Summary

1. In this analogy the mental attitude sins are the venom, while the tongue is the fang which carried the venom to the victim. The analogy is of a very poisonous snake. The snake strikes and this is the picture of the tongue striking its victim. Snakes really don't bite, they strike. This is an accurate picture of the tongue. Some of you have often thought of yourselves as good Christians, because you don't do certain things that shock you, like steal or commit adultery. But your tongue is sharp and it strikes with greater rapidity than any King Cobra that ever existed. If a poisonous snake strikes you and it is out of venom, then the strike doesn't amount to much. But if you have your brain full of mental attitude sins and you strike someone with your tongue, it is the worst poison in the world. This kind of gossip or maligning, and thereby hurting others, lets us know that we are not as good Christians as we profess to be. Fornication and murder are never described in the Bible as the strike of a cobra but the sins of the tongue are described in this fashion.

Illustration--Please let me hit this point one more time, and let me hit it hard. You don't need to know all the personal, private details about someone in order to be able to pray intelligently for them. These little private gossip prayer groups that meet and they discuss all the gory details about their friends and then they say, "The reason we do this is so we can pray intelligently for them" and that's just a lot of junk and is a poor excuse for cheap gossip and maligning the character of others. It doesn't have anything to do with intelligent prayer. God knows all the details and you don't have to know them in order to be able to pray for them.

Most of you shudder when you see a snake. Why don't you shudder when you see a tongue that gossips and maligns? A cobra with his hood up ready to strike, or a coiled rattlesnake, is not half as bad as a tongue ready to gossip.

Don't run with people whose tongue strikes like that. Whether what they say is true or false is not the issue at all. You stay away from gossip.

2. The sins of the tongue represent the instability of a wide swing of reversionism. In reversionism you have real wide mental and emotional swings.
3. The sins of gossip and maligning manifest the inability of one's soul, in contrast to the maturity of a super-grace believer. A super-grace believer doesn't malign or slander. He has no venom to be expressed.
4. The mature believer with an Edification Complex in his soul always avoids the sins of the tongue.
5. The tongue of a mature believer performs those tasks for which it was designed. It lifts up others, it carries good news of love and blessing. It glorified God and God's Word at every opportunity. A tongue backed up by love is a real messenger for God.

JAMES 3:9 "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God." "Therewith" is an old English word and is from "en" plus the instrumental "autos" and should be translated "by means of this." Here we have a picture of the tongue functioning under reversionism. The word for "bless" is a present, active, indicative of "eulogeo" and means "to speak well of someone." The Lord is mentioned as the one we are speaking about, and people do this, thinking it will bring a blessing to them if they speak well of God. But with the same tongue and in the same breath they "keep on cursing" and this is a present, middle, indicative of "hataaraomai" and it means to wish evil on someone, to reduce someone to nothing by our gossip.

The Doctrine Of The Sins Of The Tongue

1. Like all sins in this category, the sins of the tongue rise out of the old sin nature.
PSALM 34:13 "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile."
2. The sins of the tongue are motivated by mental attitude sins. That's the venom that is in the soul and it comes out by way of the tongue. Pride, jealousy, bitterness, hatred.
3. Out of the list of the seven worst sins God abhors, three of the seven are sins of the tongue. Proverbs 6:16-19
4. The sins of the tongue produce triple divine discipline. Matthew 7:1-2 and Psalm 64:8. Our mental attitude sins are disciplined, and when the tongue mentions the sins of someone else, then God lets the discipline for the sin we mentioned fall on us. Matthew 7:2 says the discipline boomerangs back on you. These are sins that you didn't even commit, you just gossiped about them, but even though you didn't commit them, because you gossiped about them you got the discipline that would have come to the one who did commit them.

5. If you continue to be guilty of sins of the tongue, it is a sign or reversionism. This can lead to maximum divine discipline or can even lead to the sin unto death.
PSALM 12:3 "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:"
6. God protects and blesses the believer who is victimized by the sins of the tongue. Job 5:19-21. This is just another way God turns cursing into blessing.
7. Control of the tongue is the sign of maturity and the result of an Edification Complex in the soul.
8. The tongue of reversionism when turned loose can produce enough hurt to destroy an entire congregation.
9. Since the sins of the tongue can destroy an entire congregation, it is the duty of the pastor to constantly warn the congregation about these things.
2 TIMOTHY 2:14-17 "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;"
10. Troublemakers are characterized by sins of the tongue.
PSALM 52:2 "Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully."
Believers are warned to separate themselves from such people.
ROMANS 16:17-18 "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
11. The believer can actually lengthen his life and be happy by avoiding the sins of the tongue.
PSALM 34:12-13 "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile."

This verse goes on to say "Which was made" and this is a perfect, active, participle of "ginomai" and here it means "having come into being" "After the similitude" is from "homoiosis" and it refers to the essence of God, the essence in the soul placed there by God. Each member of the human race was given this essence by God.

So a correct translation of verse 9 is--

"By means of this tongue we speak well of The Lord, The Father, and by means of this tongue we keep cursing mankind having come into being from the essence given us by God."

JAMES 3:10 "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." This verse emphasizes reversionism that can set in within the soul. "Out of the same mouth" and this is used to show how deceptive the tongue can really be. The word "proceedeth" is a present, middle, indicative of "ezerchomai" which means "to come outside." So there comes to the outside both blessing "eulogia" and cursing "katara." Now the tongue is designed to bring blessing, but instead out comes cursing. Man just can't control his tongue.

Now we have God's conclusion-"My brethren, these things ought not to be." Literally the greek says "there is no need for these things to come into existence in this manner." Doctrine in the soul will cure the misuse of the tongue and will dry up gossip and maligning of others