

June 13, 1999

Scripture: Proverbs 10:18-21; 12:18

Sermon: **Mastering Our Mouth**

What a person does is a lot more important than what a person says; but when you begin to read through the Bible, you understand that the Bible puts a tremendous emphasis upon how we talk to each other. For example, in the Ten Commandments two of the ten have to do with how you talk. In Proverbs chapter 6 it talks about the seven things God hates and three of them have to do with speech. Jesus perhaps summed it up when He said, "you're going to have to give an account for every trivial word that you speak." Now what He is saying is, if you think you are just saying things and God or nobody is paying attention, then you are mistaken. What you are saying, God knows, and what you are saying other people know. Jesus' half brother James said it this way, "if anybody considers himself religious and does not bridle his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is in vain." There's a little phrase that we often said as children-sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me. Not say says the Bible. What we want to do this morning is see what the Proverbs have to say about our speech. Many of us are committing some of our greatest wrongs and many times are not even conscious about it. Someone had indicated that we have a great Bill Of Rights that gives us freedom of speech. When we read the Bible, you understand that we have a "bill of responsibilities" of how we use our speech. Out of Proverbs Chapter ten let me read you a couple of samples that really are just all of the way through the Bible, all the way through the Proverbs. Verse 6-Blessings crown the head of the righteous but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked. Verse 8-the wise in heart accepts commandments, but a chattering fool comes to ruin. Verse 11-The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked. Verse 18-He who conceals his hatred has lying lips. Whosoever spreads slander is a fool. When words are many, sin is not absent. He who holds his tongue is wise. Now let me ask you a question. Why does the Bible say so much about how you talk? Why when you read the book of Proverbs, would there be more about speech than about everything else? Let me give you three reasons. The first one is what you say reveals the kind of person that you are. Jesus said it is out of the heart that a man speaks. What you say is going to leave the impression on people's lives of the kind of person that you are. There is a beautiful little book that has been written called The Beauty Care for the Tongue. Listen to what it says. Your reputation, will in a large part, be established by the use you make of your tongue. The impression that people have of you by what you say, will label your character. It is true, your expression is what makes an impression. You don't have to be around a person very long until you can pretty well determine what kind of person it is. You recall at the trial of Jesus, the disciples were trying to hide in the group. Finally they picked out Simon Peter and they said you are a Galilean. Your speech betrays you. The kind of person that you are is really reflected in what you say. The Bible says one of the reasons you need to be careful about your speech, is that regardless of all the other talents that you have, a person is probably going to remember you more by what you say and rarely by what you do. The second thing that the Bible says is so important is you begin to use your tongue because you have such a great impact upon people. If you have read any of the writings of

Adolph Hitler, you know that he was the master of the word “propaganda.” If you read it, he had a brief credo: “if you say it long enough, if you say it loud enough anybody will believe it.” If you have ever seen the old news reels of a whole nation marching in step and this man with his hand raised and said this is what I want you to do. This is what we need to do. He was able to sway that whole nation and really inflame the whole world. Isn’t it strange that on the other side of the English Channel, there was another man that had a gift of speech. His name was Churchill. You recall as the rockets started landing in London, Churchill got on the radio and this is what he said, “We will fight you in the streets. We will fight you on the shores. We will fight you as a man. We will fight you as a woman. We will fight you as a child. You will not defeat us.” That man was able to galvanize not only his people but also much of the nations of the world by just the ability to be able to speak. When you talk about great presidents, many people say that one of them was a man by the name of Ronald Reagan. What was the title that they gave him? The “great communicator.” He was able to use speech to be able to galvanize people. Now understand this—you have that ability. By what you say, you have the ability to make a tremendous impact upon people. If you do not use it well, individuals are going to be turned away. Let me show you how that works. Take the word criticism. Now all of us know that good criticism is necessary. But I’m talking about the kind of person that every time you are around them they can always see everything that is bad. They are the people

who always look at the small things. They never see the big picture. They are the people who when everyone is up they come along and say, “yes but.” Suddenly you understand that everyone has been going a certain way but here is a person with criticism and people start backing back. It is the power to be able to speak. Take gossip. Gossip is really an attempt to try to show how smart you are, and how on the “in” you are. Because it’s always this, “nobody else knows this, but I do.” I am the one who has been given by the gods the privilege of knowing this information and guess what? You have the privilege to hear it from me. People are impacted by what is said. A Roman Catholic Sister wrote one of the most beautiful stories I have read in recent days. Her name was Helen Morsaka {sp} She talked about a young student she had by the name of Mark Irkland. Mark, she said was a young boy that every time in school he was always talking, and she was always trying to figure out how to shut him up and keep the class going. She said one day it was just worse than ever. It seemed like Mark had gotten everybody talking. Finally, she said, tell you what you do, let’s just close the books. Get out a blank sheet of paper and I want you to write down the name of everybody in the classroom. Now what I would like for you to do is write beside their name what you like best about them. So they all wrote it down. She said now would you stand and they all got up one by one and read what they had done. Sister said she had forgotten all about it. The group went on through high school. The group graduated. Mark went to Viet Nam. Mark came back in a coffin. The funeral was held and that group who went through high school together went down to the coffee shop. The mother of Mark and her husband came up to Sister and said. “I thought you would be interested to know of one of the things that was in Mark’s wallet when the officer gave it back to us. They unfolded it. It had been put together, torn, and taped. It was that sheet that he got in the ninth grade. He carried it all the way through high school. He carried it through Viet Nam. When she gave it to Sister, Vickie got up and

said, “that’s not unusual. Mine’s in the top drawer of my dresser.” One said, “I read mine last week.” Mary reached in her purse and pulled out her list. Sister said, “I never realized what it meant just to be able to stand in a group and let people say “what you mean to me.” You should never be surprised. You have within you the power of life and death. To be able to use it for good will make one of the grandest impacts you can ever make in your life. Jonathan Edwards who helped to change the face of American Christianity was walking down the street in Boston, and just heard two ladies talking about how God loved them. Jonathan Edwards gave his heart and his life to Christ. The power of being able to speak . If you could ever recognize the gift that God has given you, you’ll understand why the Bible talks about it so deeply. There’s a third reason. That is the power of harm that it can do. Not long ago, a family asked if they could bring somebody who was not a member of our church to see me. I began to realize a person in depression. I began to realize a person who was hurting. I spent a long time. We talked together and finally it was said. I remember what my daddy said to me twenty years ago. One day in a fit of anger, he cut his son down to where he was down to his ankles. That was all the son remembered. What you say in gossip and what you say in profanity and what you say in rumor and what you say in lies and what you say to all of these people— my what harm it does. You need to understand that sticks and stones may break bones but words do hurt. They will stay with people for years. Now if all of this is so important, then you and I need to come back to the Bible and ask ourselves what can we do to make a difference in how we speak. One of the ways is, it says seven times in the Proverbs don’t speak too much. Did you hear one of the Proverbs that said, the chattering fool, the person whose tongue is loose at both ends and just rattles all the time. It says they will always come to ruin. One of the Proverbs said it this way, a wise man spares his words. You all know another little proverb. God gave you two ears and one tongue. That means you are to listen twice as much as you are to speak. One of the words that are given to us is that you need to be very careful and choose your words wisely. They came to Thomas Edison one day and said you are the man who invented the talking machine. He said, “Oh no God did that, I was the only man who invented a switch to cut it off.” All of us need to lean the switch and be very, very careful about what we say. Second word—we need to confess. We need to confess how we have harmed ourselves and harmed others and harmed the cause of Christ by what we have said. Maybe this morning, you would stop to think of the gossip, the lie, and the judgmental attitude, the saying something that is wrong and maybe even leading somebody wrong by what you said. It may be today that what you need to do is just have a good confession time with God and confess specifically the sins that you have made. Now listen to me carefully. Jesus said it’s not up here that is the problem. It’s down here that is the problem. Until you are willing to have your heart changed, then what ‘s going to happen is you’re going to go back out and do the same thing. James says the tongue is a fire and no man can put it out. It is impossible for you in your own strength to change what you say and how you say it. Only if God changes your heart. When I was young my mom used to say to us boys as we were growing up, if you say that again I’m going to wash your mouth out with soap. I want to tell you I’ve blown a lot of bubbles with Lifebuoy. But mom’s cure just didn’t go deep enough. Because, it is not up here, it is down here. Until my heart gets right with God, I’m always going to be hurting other people and harming the cause of

Christ. Third word-I need to start meditating on the scripture to let the word of God begin to cleans my life of all of these thought patterns in my life. I need to be able to come and say Lord by the washing of Your word, You are going to take this out of me. So when I would speak with anger or would speak with profanity or speak in some other way, that the word of God is going to be able to cleanse my life and cleans my mind. That that sort of thing is not going to come out to me. I remember a man I baptized one day. He said you are not going to hear me say very much for a long time. I said oh? I said every time I've been around you , you talk a lot. No, big change. He said fifty per cent of my vocabulary is profanity. He said I'm going to have to just shut up for a while and just speak very slowly. One day about seven o'clock at night he called me. He said, I want to tell you what happened. I've been at work all day. I haven't used the Lord's name in vain all day long. I said, How did you do that. Because I got up early in the morning and read God's word. It's washed it out of my mind. You need to meditate upon His word. Get wash and wear. I really would hope that what would happen to you this morning is an event that happened in the Bible. There was a prophet. He stood one day and said I saw God high and lifted up. First thing he said was I am a man of unclean lips. Then he said an angel went and took a piece of coal from the altar of God and put it on his lips. He said, now you are clean. In essence, burning away all the evil things that had been done and in a sense branding his mouth that it would speak for God. What I wish for each of you today, were that the angel of God would take another coal and come and put it against your mouth. Burn away all the things that have been said that has been harmful and hurtful to others, and that your mouth would be branded. When people hear you speak, they would say, he speaks like a person of God. I want to ask you this morning is it confession time for you. Time when you need a real heart change on the inside, because, boy, your mouth has really been out of control. I want to ask you right now, if ;you need more than just a mouth change, you need a heart change. These people who were baptized a while ago and said that I understand that I cannot run my life apart from Christ. You may recognize that now. Your mouth my be just the evidence of it. You recognize that you need to give your heart and your life to Christ and Christ can change your heart and in the process He changes your mouth. There are people in this room today who are Christians who very much could use your tongue for great good-to encourage, to help to speak against evil, to speak for the right, to encourage others. You say today I want to come and move our life and membership here. Where you and I can use this great gift of God for His glory and for His honor.