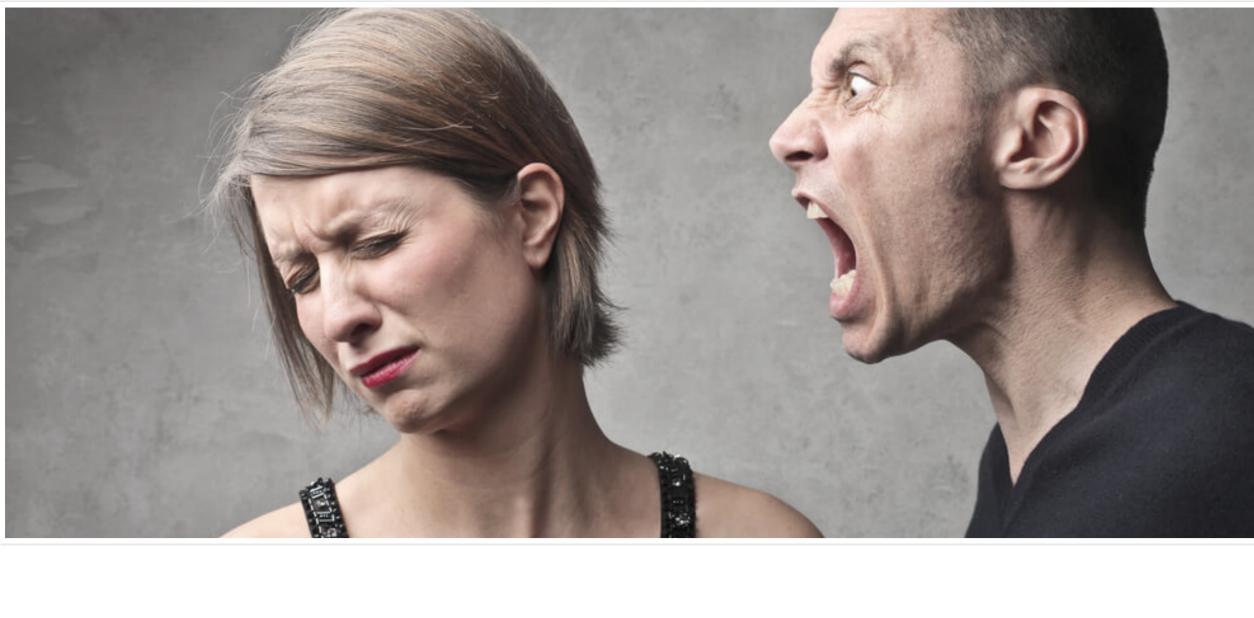
The Blog

A Brief Welcome



Timothy Berg Friday, May 24, 2019

On Talking The Talk (Part I)

was regularly viewed as a coveted virtue). Some of it probably has to do with my family background (being yelled and cursed at every day of my childhood by a mother who simply wasn't well mentally or spiritually). Some of it probably has to do with how often, and how long, in my own life I lived as a verbal bully. But

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whatever its causes, there are few sins that sicken me more than sins of the tongue, and especially slander and verbal bullying. Something about these sins uniquely breaks my heart, especially when I see them in myself and other Christians. Perhaps we always most hate the sins of which we have long been most guilty. I know of no sins that more often "get a pass" in Christian circles than sins of the tongue. Literally anyone who has a social media account of any kind has witnessed the unconscionable vitriol and rage that comes out in words not carefully thought about. Political discourse in this era has become a ticking time-bomb of explosive words. I expect that from those who don't have a relationship with Jesus. What continues to

It probably has something to do with the circles I was raised in (in which verbal bullying from the pulpit

each other. We often use the contrast of people who "talk the talk" but don't "walk the walk." But in my experience, far too many Christians have simply given up even trying to "talk the talk." Yet the Bible gives us no leeway here. We cannot follow Jesus and simply ignore the things he had to say about our speech. And what he says about the sounds that come from our physical tongue apply just as much to what we type in virtual speech with our fingers. Christians simply don't have the option to

surprise me (though it perhaps shouldn't) is the way that Christians often talk about each other, and to

disobey Jesus and the commands of Scripture here without repentance. In this first post we will look at the book of Proverbs on the Tongue, and in the next post we will turn to the New Testament. Wisdom Literature On The Tongue The Wisdom literature of the OT, and Proverbs in particular, contain numerous statements about the tongue and how believers are to use it;

"A gentle tongue is a tree of life,

but perverseness in it breaks the spirit."

(ESV, Pr 15:4)

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." (KJV, Pr 18:21)

> but whoever restrains his lips is prudent. 20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth. 21 The lips of the righteous feed many,

> > but fools die for lack of sense."

(ESV, Pr 10:19-21)

"When words are many, transgression is not lacking,

"Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. 28 Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent." (ESV, Pr 17:27-28) "The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near."

(ESV, Pr 10:14)

"With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor,

but by knowledge the righteous are delivered."

(ESV, Pr 11:9)

"There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts,

but the tongue of the wise brings healing." (ESV, Pr 12:18) "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body." (ESV, Pr 16:24)

"A fool's lips walk into a fight,

and his mouth invites a beating.

He goes on to note two characteristics of wise speech in Proverbs; it is restrained, and it is life-giving. On Proverbs frequently portrays the righteous-wise as extremely cautious when they talk. Often they simply say nothing (Prov 10:19; 11:12–13; 23:9), even when insulted (Prov. 12:16; 19:11). Out of love, this kind of person does not repeat a matter (Prov. 17:9)....When the righteous-wise do speak, they speak softly, even when someone is furious with them (Prov. 15:1; cf. 29:8). This kind of person is sensible enough to stop before an argument starts (Prov. 17:14; 20:3). His patience quells strife (Prov. 15:18). He thinks about how to answer instead of saying the first thing that comes to mind (Prov. 15:28). He is

In my experience, some Christians are burdened with a profound a sense of the wrongness of the world and the church, but do not have a correspondingly sweet sense of God's grace for sinful people. Their strategy for dealing with the pain of this pervasive sense of wrongness is to offload it on others. I have known Christians whose "ministry" was pointing out others' faults, being suspicious of false teaching in others, criticizing and scrutinizing other Christians, and so on. A Christian can rebuke and exhort in a larger context of grace, but the person I am talking about does not do this—it is a ministry of condemnation, not reconciliation. Foolish Christians of this sort are recognizable in four ways. First, they are gossips. Instead of speaking

directly to other Christians, they criticize others behind their backs. Second, they spin things in their

reconciliation. They will not lay out conditions, after the meeting of which they would be happy to

reconcile. There is always another problem or worry or suspicion. Fourth, there is no larger gracious

(Rom 15:7). This kind of Christian cannot be reasoned with. They will not meet you halfway. Their

context to their speech. They do not receive and welcome other Christians as Christ has received them

whole aim is to condemn you to make themselves feel better. Their gracelessness renders them unable

Part of the burden of Proverbs is to put the son on his guard against foolish and perverse people (Prov

2:12). This involves describing them, as I have above. But another part of the book's burden is to turn

the son away from folly. In light of this, before proceeding further, we must scour our hearts, with the

to admit wrong and confess it. They are delivered from their sins by sealing others in their sin. They

act and speak "unwisely" by walking contrary to how God is reordering all of creation—and the

relationships in it—by grace.

acronym:

Preservation

Reformation

New Testament

Church History

Tr Only

Ccm

Nt

Text

Resurrection

Luther

Tongues

Eschatology

Tyndale

Textus Receptus

Neo-

Fundamentalism

Apologetics

Kingdom

Apostolic Fathers

Boasts not (Prov. 27:1-2);

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Restrained (Prov. 10:19; 17:14, 27, 28);

Thoughtful, not rash (Prov. 15:28; 18:13);

Honest, not false (Prov. 12:22; 28:22).

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Apt (at the right time in the right way; Prov. 15:2);

Eavesdrops not (no gossip; not a sense of rumor; Prov. 11:12–13);

by maintaining sound doctrine (Prov. 22:17–19), and by prayer (Prov. 15:29).

- Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*, NICOT, pg. 101–103.

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favor: impartiality and honesty are not priorities. Third, they will tend not to work toward

help of the Spirit, for foolish tendencies in ourselves. For instance, if I have something negative to say about another Christian, have I said it to anyone else? While there are a few situations in which one might have to do this (if one is asked, for example, to recommend another Christian for a ministry position), it is extremely easy to point out the faults of other Christians to third parties. This is foolish because Jesus, our wisdom and our great high priest, is interceding for all Christians, speaking the best of them before the Father. Why would we speak any differently? To give another example, in a disagreement, do I spin things in my favor? Do I believe all things and hope all things for the other Christian (1 Cor 13:7)? Or do I assume the worst about them? - Eric Ortlund, pg. 16-17.

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witness of the Bible is bigger than just Proverbs. In the next post, we will look at the admonitions of Paul, James, and Jesus, as we continue to examine the Bible's teachings on the tongue. If You Enjoyed it, Share This Blog!

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But while the book of Proverbs has much to say about the tongue and how to use and not abuse it, the

Wise speech comes from the heart (Prov. 16:23); it is effected by walking with the wise (Prov. 13:20),

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Student, Preacher, Teacher

7 A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul." (ESV, Pr 18:6–7) Davies notes how often the fool is defined in the OT by his speech; Much of what is said about fools concerns their speech. A fool's mouth is his or her undoing (Prov 18:7) because what is on the tongue and the lips betrays what is in the heart or mind (Prov 10:20-21; 12:23; 15:7, 28; 16:23). The mouth of the fool (kěsîl) both "feeds on" (Prov 15:14) and in turn "spouts" folly ('iwwelet [Prov 15:2]). Fools speak too soon and without listening (Prov 12:23; 18:13). They say too much (Prov 26:7; Eccles 5:3, 10:14). They slander others (Prov 10:18; 11:12; 20:19), are quarrelsome (Prov 20:3), irascible (Eccles 7:9), quick to take offense (Prov 12:16) or verbally aggressive (Prov 29:9). Although fools can at times say valid things such as proverbs, these proverbs, lacking a revelatory frame of reference, are "disabled" (Prov 26:7; cf. Sir 20:20). - J. Davies, IVPDOTWP. 225-226. Eric Ortlund summarizes a major element of the speech of the fool in Proverbs; [T]he fool is always talking. Instead of pondering how he should answer, his mouth pours forth wicked things (Prov. 15:28; cf. 15:2). He answers before he listens (Prov. 18:13). He gets involved in arguments not his own (Prov. 26:17). This kind of person is completely unrestrained: cross him and he explodes (Prov. 12:16; 29:11). He cannot keep another's secret (Prov. 11:13; 12:23). He abuses people he dislikes (Prov. 11:12) and criticizes them to others (Prov. 10:18). Instead of keeping quiet, his rash words are sword-thrusts (Prov. 12:18) that spark arguments with others (Prov. 15:18). - Eric Ortlund, "The Pastoral Implications of Wise and Foolish Speech in the Book of Proverbs," Themelios 38, no. 1 (2013): 8. restrained speech he notes; restrained and cool in spirit (Prov. 17:27; 29:11). But his speech is not weak: it is sweetly persuasive (Prov. 16:21, 24), judicious (Prov. 16:23), and powerful even when gentle (Prov. 25:15). If an issue with a neighbor does arise, he speaks directly to the offending party instead of criticizing him to others (Prov. 25:9-10).... While fools always have to be right, the righteous-wise accept rebuke, confess their wrong, and abandon their sin (Prov. 28:13). Instead of insisting on their own ideas about how life and relationships work, these are the ones who have turned to Lady Wisdom (Prov. 1:23; 9:4-6), listened to their parents (Prov. 1:8; 2:1–5), and submitted to YHWH's discipline, even when it was painful (Prov. 3:11–12). This is part and parcel of their fear of YHWH (Prov. 1:7) - Eric Ortlund, pg. 10. He points out that the admonitions of Paul and Jesus are right in line with the Wisdom of the Proverbs at this point, and suggests that New Covenant Legalists often share similar traits to Old Covenant Fools. While he is careful to say that a Christian is not a fool in the full sense found in Proverbs, he points out that Christians can act in foolish ways, and some, habitually so, as this manner of speech becomes ingrained. His conclusions stand as a warning to Christians who habitually speak in "foolish" ways;

PROVERBS 1) 🌣 💢 vimeo "A fool's tongue is long enough to cut his own throat." - Bruce Waltke (Tweet This) Bruce Waltke, the eminent Hebrew scholar, notes in his work on Proverbs in particular that two elements in Proverbs mark out the difference between the fool and the wise; their communication and wealth. Communication is the bedrock element of community, and this is what the fool disrupts. Waltke urges us to consider the value, characteristics, and sources of wise speech; With regard to value, the tongue has the power of life and death (Prov. 18:21; cf. 10:19; 17:27–28), presumably because it has the power to shape beliefs and convictions that affect eternal destinies. The father depends on his ten lectures to incline his son's heart to wisdom and life. However, the incorrigible fool starves to death because he refuses to eat the good fruit of sound teaching (Prov. 10:21). Good speech is both a "tree of life (Prov. 11:30) and a "fountain of life" (Prov. 13:14) available now. Second, the tongue has the power to heal and to destroy (Prov. 6:12–15, 16–19; 10:14; 11:9; 12:18; 16:24). The child's proverb, "Sticks and stones may break the bones, but names will never hurt you," is not true, for, as Kidner says, "What is done to you is of little account besides what is done in you." Third, the tongue has the power to reward or damage oneself (Prov. 10:10; 12:14; 18:6–7). A fool's tongue is long enough to cut his own throat. The power to heal and destroy others and to reward and damage one's self are inseparable, as the unified structure of Prov. 10:6–14 suggests. A student made some characteristics of wise speech memorable by the acronym "Gentle Breath." By gentle he meant that they are not harsh and/or quarrelsome (Prov. 15:1). The Japanese proverbial equivalent is "soft drives out hard." Women know that oil can be more effective than vinegar. Now the

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