

**Articles and Sermons :: The Evil Tongue\*Thomas Watson(highly Recommended reading)****The Evil Tongue\*Thomas Watson(highly Recommended reading) - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/3/5 5:48**

The Evil Tongue  
Thomas Watson

And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity—James 3:6

The apostle James in this Scripture, describes the evil of the tongue, “The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.”

1. “It is a fire.” It burns with intemperate heat; it causeth the heat of contention; it sets others in a flame.
2. “A world of iniquity.” It was at first made to be an organ of God’s praise, but it is become an instrument of unrighteousness. All the members of the body are sinful, as there is bitterness in every branch of wormwood, but the tongue is excessively sinful, “full of deadly poison” (verse 8).

Doctrine: The tongue, though it be a little member, yet it has a world of sin in it; the tongue is an unruly evil. I shall show you some of the evils of the tongue.

1. The evil tongue is the silent tongue; it is wholly mute in matters of religion; it never speaks of God or of heaven, as if it cleaved to the roof of the mouth. Men are fluent and knowledgeable enough in other things, but in matters of religion their lips are sealed up. If we come into some people’s company, we do not know what religion they are of, whether Jews or Mohammedans, for they never speak of Christ; they are like the man in the gospel, who was possessed with a dumb spirit (Mark 9:17).
2. The evil tongue is the earthly tongue; men talk of nothing but the world, as if all their hopes were here, and they looked for an earthly eternity; these have earthly minds, “He that is of the earth, speaketh of the earth” (John 3:31).
3. The evil tongue is the hasty or angry tongue; it has no command of passions, but is carried away with them, as a chariot with wild horses. I know there is an holy anger, when we are angry with sin: Christ had this anger when they made the temple a place of merchandise (John 2:15). That anger is without sin, which is against sin; but that is an evil tongue, which is presently blown up into exorbitant passion; this “tongue is set on fire from hell.” A wrathful spirit is unsuitable to the gospel; it is a gospel of peace, and its author is the Prince of Peace, and it is sealed by the Spirit, who came in the form of a dove, a meek peaceable creature. You who art given much to passion, whose tongue is often set on fire, take heed you do not one day in hell desire a drop of water to cool thy tongue.
4. The evil tongue is the vain tongue, that vents itself in idle words: “Under his tongue is vanity” (Psalm 10:7). A vain tongue shows a light heart; a good man’s words are weighty and prudent; his lips are as a tree of life to feed many and his speech is edifying, “The tongue of the just is as choice silver” (Proverbs 10:20). But, “The mouth of fools pours out foolishness” (Proverbs 15:2). How many idle away the day of grace in frivolous discourses? A wise man’s words are like gold, weighty, and will sink into the hearts of others; but the words of many are light and feathery and will make no impression, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36).
5. The evil tongue is the censorious tongue, “Who art thou that judgest another?” (James 4:12). Some make it a part of their religion to judge and censure others; they do not imitate their graces, but censure their failings. Such an one is a hypocrite, for this comes from pride. Were men’s hearts more humble, their tongues would be more charitable. The censurer sits in the chair of pride, and passeth sentence upon another, and does reprobate him; this is to usurp God’s prerogative, and take his work out of his hands; it is God’s work to judge, not ours. He who spends his time in censuring others spends but little time in examining himself and does not see his own faults. There is not a greater sign of hypocrisy than to be overhasty in judging and censuring persons.
6. The evil tongue is the slanderous tongue, “Thou sittest and slanderest thy own mother’s son” (Psalm 50:20). Slandering is when we speak to the prejudice of another, and speak that which is not true. Worth and eminency are common

is blasted by slander; holiness itself is no shield from slander: "John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, yet they say he hath a devil" (Matthew 11:18). Come and let us smite him with the tongue. A slanderer wounds another's name, and no physician can heal these wounds. The sword doth not make so deep a wound as the tongue. The Greek word for slanderer, signifies devil. Some think it is no great matter to belie and defame another; but know, this is to act the part of a devil. The slanderer's tongue is a two-edged sword, it wounds two at once; while the slanderer wounds another in his name, he wounds himself in his conscience. This is contrary to Scripture, "Speak not evil one of another" (James 4:11). God takes this ill at our hands, to speak evil of others, especially such as are eminently holy, and help to bear up the honour of religion: "Were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Numbers 12:8). What! My servant who has wrought so many miracles—whom I have spoken with in the mount face to face—were not ye afraid to speak against him? So will God say, You must take heed of this, it is a sin your nature is very prone to; and remember, it is no less sin to rob another of his good name, than to steal his goods or wares out of his shop.

7. The evil tongue is the unclean tongue, that vents itself in filthy and scurrilous words, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (Ephesians 4:29). A sign of a great distemper, that the fever is high, is when the tongue is black: a sign men's hearts are very evil, when such black words come from them.

8. The evil tongue is the lying tongue, "Lie not to one another" (Colossians 3:9). The Cretians were noted for liars (Titus 1:12). It becomes not Christians to be Cretians. Nothing is more contrary to God than a lie; it shows much irreligion; lying is a sin that does not go alone, it ushers in other sins. Absalom told his father a lie, that he was going to pay his vow at Hebron (2 Samuel 15:7), and this lie was a preface to his treason. Lying is such a sin, as takes away all society and converse with men; how can you have converse with him, that you cannot trust a word he says? It is a sin so sordid, that when the liar is convicted, he is ashamed. God's children have this character, they are "children that will not lie" (Isaiah 63:8), the new nature in them will not suffer them. The liar is near akin to the devil, and the devil will shortly claim kindred with him, "The devil is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). He seduced our first parents by a lie (Genesis 3:4). How does this sin incense God? He struck Ananias dead for telling a lie (Acts 5:5). The furnace of hell is heated to throw liars into, "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Revelation 22:15).

9. The evil tongue is the flattering tongue, that will speak fair to one's face, but will defame, "He that hateth, dissembleth with his lips" (Proverbs 26:24). When he speaks fair, believe him not; dissembled love is worse than hatred. Some can commend and reproach, flatter and hate—honey in their mouths, but a sting of malice in their hearts: better are the wounds of a friend, than the kisses of such an enemy. Hierom says, "The Arian faction pretended friendship; they (says he) kissed my hands, but slandered me and sought my ruin." Many have dissembling tongues, they can say, your servant, and lay snares, "A man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet" (Proverbs 29:5). You often think you have a friend in your bosom, but he proves a viper. To dissemble love is no better than to lie; for there is a pretence of that love which is not. Many are like Joab, "And Joab said to Amasa, art thou in health, my brother? And he took him by the beard to kiss him, and he smote him in the fifth rib that he died" (2 Samuel 20:9). For my part, I must question his truth towards God, that will flatter and lie to his friend. God will bring such an one to shame at last, "Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation" (Proverbs 26:26).

10. The evil tongue is the tongue given to boasting, "The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things" (James 3:5). There is an holy boasting, "In God we boast all the day" (Psalm 44:8), when we triumph in his power and mercy: but it is a sinful boasting, when men display their trophies, boast of their own worth and eminency, that others may admire and cry them up; a man's self is his idol, and he loves to have this idol worshipped, "There arose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody" (Acts 5:36). Sinful boasting is when men boast of their sins, "Why boasteth thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?" (Psalm 52:1). Some boast how wicked they have been; how many they have made drunk; how many they have deflowered; as if a beggar should boast of his sores; or a thief boast of being burnt in the hand. Such as boast of their sinful exploits, will have little cause to rejoice, or hang up their trophies when they come to hell.

11. The evil tongue is the swearing tongue, "Swear not at all" (Matthew 5:34). The Scripture allows an oath for the ending of a controversy, and to clear the truth (Hebrews 6:16); but in ordinary discourse to use an oath, and so to take God's name in vain, is sinful. Swearing may be called "the unfruitful works of darkness." There is neither pleasure nor profit in it; it is like a hook the fish comes to without a bait, "Because of swearing the land mourneth" (Jeremiah 23:10). Some think it the grace of their speech; but, if God will reckon with men for idle words, what will he do for sinful oaths?

But it is only a petty oath, they swear by their faith?

Surely they which have so much faith in their mouth, have none in their heart. "But it is my custom": Is this an excuse, or an aggravation of the sin? If a malefactor should be arraigned for robbing, and he should say to the judge, "Spare me

e, it is my custom to rob on the highway"; the judge would say, "Thou shalt the rather die." For every oath you swear, God puts a drop of wrath into his vial.

But—some may think—what if now and then I swear an oath? Words are but wind. But they are such a wind as will blow you into hell, without repentance.

12. The railing tongue is an evil tongue: this is a plague-sore breaking out at the tongue, when we give scornful language. When the dispute was between the archangel and the devil about the body of Moses, "The archangel did not bring a railing accusation against him, but said, the Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 9). The archangel did not rail against the devil. Railing often ends in reviling, and so men bring themselves into a premonition, and are "in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:22).

13. The seducing tongue is an evil tongue. The tongue that by fine rhetoric decoys men into error, "By fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18). A fair tongue can put off bad wares; error is bad ware, which a seducing tongue can put off. The deceit lies in this; a smooth tongue can make error look so like truth, that you can hardly know them asunder; as thus, in justification, Christ bears infinite love to justified persons; this is a glorious truth, but under this notion, the Antinomian presseth libertinism; believers may take more liberty to sin, and God sees no sin in them. Thus, by crying up justification, they destroy sanctification; here is the seducing tongue; and error is as dangerous as vice; one may die by poison as well as by a pistol.

14. The evil tongue is the cruel tongue, that speaks to the wounding of the hearts of others. The tongue is made almost in the fashion of a sword; and the tongue is sharp as a sword, "Their tongue is a sharp sword" (Psalm 57:4). Kind, loving words should be spoken to such as are of a heavy heart, "To him that is afflicted pity should be shown" (Job 6:14). Healing words are fit for a broken heart: but that is a cruel, unmerciful tongue, which speaks such words to the afflicted, as to cut them to the heart, "They talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded" (Psalm 69:26). Hannah was a woman of a troubled spirit, "She was in bitterness of soul, and wept sore" (1 Samuel 1:10). And now Eli, in verse 14, "Said unto her, how long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee." This word was like pouring vinegar into the wound. When Job was afflicted with God's hand, his friends, instead of comforting him, told him he was an hypocrite (Job 11:2). These were cutting words, which went to his heart: instead of giving him cordials to his fainting, they use corrosives. This is to lay more weight upon a dying man.

15. The evil tongue is the murmuring tongue, "These are murmurers" (Jude 16). Murmuring is discontent breaking out at the lips; men quarrel with God, and tax his providence as if he had not dealt well with them. Why should any murmur or be discontented at their condition? Does God owe them anything? Or, can they deserve any thing at his hands? O, how uncomely is it to murmur at providence! It is fit for a Cain to be upset with God (Genesis 4:6).

(1) Murmuring proceeds from unbelief. When men distrust God's promise, then they murmur at his providence, "They believed not his word, but murmured" (Psalm 106:24,25). When faith grows low, then passion grows high.

(2) Murmuring proceeds from pride. Men think they have deserved better; and, because they are crossed, therefore they utter discontented expressions against God. He who is humble bears any thing from God; he knows his punishment is less than his sin, therefore says, "I will bear the indignation of the LORD" (Micah 7:9). But pride raises discontent; and hence comes murmurings. Murmuring is a sin that God cannot bear, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation that murmur against me?" (Numbers 14:27). The murmurer discovers much ingratitude; a murmuring tongue is always an unthankful tongue; he considers not how much he is a debtor to free grace, and whatever he has is more than God owes him; he considers not that his mercies outweigh his afflictions; there's more honey than wormwood in his cup; he considers not what God has done for him, more than such as are better than he; he has the finest of wheat, when others feed, as Daniel, on pulse. The murmurer, I say, does not consider this; but, because he is crossed in some small matter, he repines against God. O ingratitude! Israel, though they had manna from heaven, to satisfy their hunger, angel's food, yet murmured for want of quails; not content that God should supply their want, but must satisfy their lust too. O unthankful! Israel's murmuring cost many of them their lives, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them did, and were destroyed of the destroyer" (1 Corinthians 10:10). Their speeches were venomous, and God punished them with venomous serpents.

16. The evil tongue is the scoffing tongue. The scoffer sits in the chair of scorners, and derides religion. Surely the devil has taken great possession of men, when they have arrived at such a degree of sin, as to scoff at holiness. It was foretold as a sin of the last times, "There shall come in the last days scoffers" (2 Peter 3:3). Some scoff at the authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the immortality of the soul; this is the worst sort of tongues. When men have laid aside the v

evil of modesty, and their consciences are seared, then they fall a scoffing at religion; and when once they are come to this, their case is desperate; no reproofs will reclaim them; tell them of their sin, and they will hate you the more, "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee" (Proverbs 9:8). Such a man is on the threshold of damnation.

17. The evil tongue is the tongue given to cursing, "His mouth is full of cursing" (Psalm 10:7): a wishing some great evil to befall another; cursing is the scum that boils off from a wicked heart. Though it is true, the curse without cause shall not come—it is not in man's power to make another cursed—yet to wish a curse is a fearful sin. If to hate our brother be murder (1 John 3:15), then to curse him, which is the highest degree of hatred, must needs be murder. To use a curse, is for a man to do what in him lies, to damn another. Some wish a curse upon themselves: so the Jews, "his blood be upon us". And so do your "God damn me's" as if damnation did not come fast enough: "As he loved cursing so let it come to him" (Psalm 109:17).

18. The evil tongue is the unjust tongue; that will for a piece of money open its mouth in a bad cause. The lawyer has a tongue that will be sold for money, "How long will you judge unjustly?" (Psalm 82:2). Some will plead any cause, though never so bad: though it appears the deeds are forged, the witnesses bribed, there's perjury in the cause; yet they will plead it. When a man pleads a bad cause he is the devil's attorney: as God hates false weights, so a false cause. Better to be born dumb, than open one's mouth in a bad cause. O, what times are we in! Many pervert justice, and, for enriching themselves, overthrow a righteous cause; these are worse than they that rob, for they fleece men's estates under a colour of law, and ruin them under a pretence of doing justice.

#### APPLICATION

See what a blow we have sustained by the fall; it has put out of frame the whole course of nature. Original sin has diffused itself as a poison into all the members of the body; it has made the eye unchaste—the hands full of bribes—amongst the rest it has defiled the tongue, "it is a world of iniquity." That which was made to be the organ of God's praise, is become a weapon of unrighteousness.

If there be so much evil in the tongue, what is the heart? If the stream be so full of water, how full of water is the fountain? If there be a world of iniquity in the tongue, how many worlds of sin are there in the heart, "Their inward part is very wickedness" (Psalm 5:9). If the tongue, which is the outward part, be so wicked, the inward part is very wickedness, "The heart is deep" (Psalm 64:6); it is such a deep as cannot be fathomed; deep pride, hypocrisy, atheism. The heart is like the sea, where is the leviathan, and creeping things innumerable (Psalm 104:25,26). If the skin has boils of leprosy in it, how much corruption is in the blood? If the tongue be so bad, how diabolical is the heart? It is the heart that sets the tongue a-work: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh": there are the seeds of all atheism and blasphemy, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries; these defile a man" (Matthew 15:19,20). If a branch of wormwood be so bitter, then how bitter is the root? O, what a root of bitterness grows in a man's heart! Some say they have good hearts; but if the tongue be so bad, what is the heart? If I see a smoke come out of the top of a chimney, what a fire burns within? "A wicked man walketh with a froward mouth; frowardness is in his heart" (Proverbs 6:12, 14). Solomon shows the reason why the mouth is so froward, "Frowardness is in his heart." The heart is a storehouse of wickedness, therefore called the "evil treasure of the heart" (Matthew 12:35). Original righteousness was a good treasure, but we were robbed of that; and now there is an evil treasure of sin. The word treasure, denotes plenty; to show the fullness and abundance of sin that is in the heart. The heart is a lesser hell, which is a matter of deep humiliation; the heart is, like the Egyptian temples, full of spiders and serpents.

If you would have better tongues, labour for better hearts. It is the heart that has influence upon the tongue. If the heart be vain and earthly, the tongue will be so; if the heart be holy, the tongue will be so. Look to your heart, get a better heart, and a better tongue.

How shall I get my heart bettered?

Get a principle of grace infused. Grace is like the salt cast into the spring; grace changes the heart, and sanctifies all the members of the body—it sanctifies the eyes and makes them chaste—it sanctifies the tongue, and makes it meet and calm. When the Holy Ghost came upon the apostles, "they began to speak with other tongues" (Acts 2:4): when God's Spirit comes on a man with a sanctifying work, he speaks with another tongue; the speech is heavenly. Grace makes the heart serious, and that cures the levity of the tongue; when the heart is serious, the words are savoury.

Remember, you must give an account to God, as well of your speeches, as your actions, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36); words of no account, will have a

n heavy account. And, if God will reckon with men for every idle, angry word, then, what will he do for sinful oaths? “Oh that my words were now written!” (Job 19:23). Truly, if many people’s words were written, they would be ashamed of them. And, let me tell you, your words are written: “The books were opened” (Revelation 20:12). In the book of God’s remembrance all your words are written; you had need then be careful you offend not with your tongue; God writes down all you speak, and you must give an account to him. When the books are opened, God will proceed with you in judgment, according to your words; by your words you shall be saved or condemned: “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:37).

**Re: The Evil Tongue\*Thomas Watson - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/3/5 7:31**

Quote:

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hmmhmm wrote:

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**Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/5/31 14:39**

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