

Mastering the Tongue

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. There are many times it is quite wise to keep our mouths shut & we as Christians must learn to do so.
- B. Jephthah provides a prime example of why this is.
 - 1. Jephthah seems to have been a good man.
 - a. God raised him up as a judge to lead his people.
 - b. The author of Hebrews mentioned him as one who had conquered through faith (Heb 11:32-34).
 - 2. Although Jephthah seems to have been a good man, he had one serious flaw: He had a problem keeping his mouth shut.
- C. When we fail to keep our mouths shut,

II. WE SAY THINGS WITHOUT THINKING, vv 29-31.

- A. Jephthah made a vow without thinking.
 - 1. Jephthah as conquering God's enemies & he was heading toward the Ammonites.
 - a. Jephthah seems to have been somewhat fearful of the Ammonites, for he made a vow to God.
 - b. That vow asked for God's help in overcoming the Ammonites.
 - 2. Jephthah said that if God would deliver the ammonites over to him, he would sacrifice the first thing that came from his house.
 - a. "Thing" here is a bad translation.
 - The Heb word is used only to refer to people; many newer translations translate the word as "whoever."
 - Jephthah seems to have been making a vow of human sacrifice.
 - b. He would sacrifice this person as a burnt offering.
 - Many commentators deny that Jephthah actually sacrificed his daughter.
 - Yet, the text says that he would give that person as a burnt offering.
 - 3. This vow shows much poor thinking.

- a. Human sacrifices were condemned in the Mosaical Code (Dt 18:10)--What Jephthah was going to do was forbidden by God.
- b. Jephthah seems not to have considered that the person who first came from his house might have been a loved one.

B. We need to think seriously before we speak.

1. There is more hope for a fool than one who speaks without thinking (Prov 29:20).
2. We are to be slow to speak (Js 1:19).
3. We need to speak only that which will give "necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph 4:29).
 - a. Our words need to build up, rather than tear down.
 - b. We need to consider each word carefully.

II. OUR WORD CAUSES MUCH GRIEF, vv 34-35.

A. Jephthah suffered much because of his vow.

1. The Lord gave Jephthah victory over the Ammonites, vv 34-35.
2. When Jephthah returned home, his daughter came out to meet him.
 - a. She came out with timbrels & dancing---she came out celebrating his victories.
 - b. She was Jephthah's only child.
3. When Jephthah saw his daughter, he tore his clothes--a sign of mourning.
 - a. He loved his daughter very much & did not desire to harm her.
 - b. Yet, he knew that he could not go back on his word.

B. Our word can cause much grief.

1. "A harsh word turns up anger" (Prov 15:1).
2. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity" (Js 3:6).

C. Are we suffering grief because of our words?

III. WE NEED TO KEEP OUR VOWS, vv 36-39.

A. Since Jephthah had made this vow, he had no choice but to keep it.

1. Just because Jephthah kept his vow does not mean that God approved of it.
2. Human sacrifice has always been wrong.

- B. But, since Jephthah had made this vow, he felt he had to keep it.
 - 1. His daughter encouraged him to keep the vow, v 36.
 - 2. His daughter asked permission to bewail her virginity; her father consented, vv 37-38.
 - 3. When his daughter had finished bewailing her virginity, Jephthah gave his daughter as a burnt offering.

- C. We need people who believe they need to keep their word.
 - 1. We need people who keep their wedding vows.
 - a. Marriage vows are taken lightly today.
 - People believe that if marriage becomes difficult, they can just leave.
 - They have promised to be married until death, but it just doesn't mean much.
 - b. We need to keep our marriage vows.
 - 2. We need to keep our contracts.
 - a. If we have promised an employer to perform certain activities, we need to perform them.
 - b. Even if those activities become unpleasant, we need to perform them.

V. CONCLUSION.

- A. We need to learn to keep our mouths shut & use our tongues wisely.
- B. The greatest thing one could ever do with the tongue is to confess that Jesus is Lord (Rm 10:9-10).
 - 1. Have you made that confession?
 - 2. Do you need to come to Jesus?