

Sunday, November 8, 2009—The Weight of Our Words—Cross Words: Murmuring and Contentious Words

Introduction

- This is now the fourth message in our fall series entitled: The Weight of Our Words: Measuring the Impact of what we Say.
- So far we have looking the following issues regarding taming the wild beast that is the tongue.
 - Introduction: Five Principals of the Tongue in James 3
 - Principle 1: Controlled Speech Is a Measure of Maturity—James 3:2
 - Principle 2: The Tongue is Small but Significant—James 3:3-5
 - Principle 3: Our Words Are Potentially Combustible—James 3:6
 - Principle 4: The Tongue is Like a Wild and Deadly Beast—James 3:7-8
 - Principle 5: The Tongue Tends to Promote a Double Standard—James 3:9-12
 - Truth Telling: Beguilement, Deceit, Lying, and False Witness
 - Malicious Speaking: Gossip and Slander
- Today we are going to be looking at a third category of evil speaking, namely Cross Words and the sins of Murmuring and Contentious Words
- When you are upset with someone or something how do you show your displeasure?
- We can show displeasure with complaining, screaming, subtle barbs, nagging, criticism, and angry words. We can verbally cut and destroy other in numerous ways.
 - Proverbs 12:18
 - Psalms 57:4
 - Psalms 140:3
- We use cross words for a number of different reasons. Here is a short list of the most common reasons for our verbal outbursts:
 - **Anger:** is like an inner explosion searching for an outlet. A common escape is the tongue.
 - **Irritation:** sharp words often result from irritation that is produced when people interrupt or interfere with our well-ordered lives.
 - **Disappointment:** unrealized expectation or misplaced dependencies are painful and our disappointment often shows up in our speech.
 - **Impatience:** an impatient spirit tends to let loose verbal outbursts before giving the situation appropriate thought.

- **Stress:** people on emotional overload then to have shorted verbal fuses than those who live in an organized, relaxed environment.
 - **Insecurity:** people often resort to sharp, intimidating, or critical words in order to project a sense of strength and security.
 - **Guilt:** when guilty people are confronted they often respond sharply.
- Scripture indicated that these root issues surface in our speech in two general ways. One the verbal sin of murmuring. The other is called a contentious tongue.

Murmuring

- Murmuring is a form of complaining that harbors a negative attitude toward a situation or the people involved. It runs the continuum from griping about the slow driver in front of you to murmuring against the Lord for all of the negative things in your life. The common factor in all murmuring is a critical spirit.
- The word appears in many places and in many forms in your King James Bible:
 - Murmur—appears 9 times in 8 verses
 - Murmured—appears 19 times in 19 verses
 - Murmuring—appears 2 times in 2 verses
- According to the *Webster's 1828 Dictionary* the word murmur carries the following meanings:
 - A complaint half suppressed, or uttered in a low, muttering voice.
 - To grumble; to complain; to utter complaints in a low, half articulated voice; to utter sullen discontent; with at, before the thing which is the cause of discontent; as, murmur not at sickness; or with at or against, before the active agent which produces the evil.
- According to the *Webster's 1828 Dictionary* a murmurer is one “who complains sullenly; a grumbler.”
- Murmuring is defined as “uttering complaints in a low voice or sullen manner; grumbling; complaining.”
- Nowhere in Scripture is murmuring more graphically depicted than in the case of the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land.
- Exodus 15:24—after having just watched God destroy the Egyptians in the Red Sea they immediately begin complaining.
- Exodus 16:1-3, 7-9
- Exodus 17:3-6

- Numbers 14:2-4—what a bunch of whiners.
 - Numbers 14:27
 - Numbers 14:29—God punishes them for their murmuring
 - Numbers 14:36

- Several aspects of Israel’s murmuring at Kadesh-barnea are instructive:
 - **Murmuring ignores God’s potential**—the report of the ten spies reflected a godless perspective. God had opened the sea to save them, the heavens to feed them, and the rocks to provide water for them. He had defeated mighty armies throughout their wilderness trek. Certainly He could deal with any problems the new land might present.
 - **Murmuring is born in the context of evil reports**—sins of the tongue that spread negative reports (beguilement, gossip, slander, false witness) create an environment in which murmuring can thrive (13:32).
 - **A Murmuring spirit is quick to jump to the wrong conclusion**—the grumbling Israelites blamed God for their situation and even started planning to return to Egypt (14:3).
 - **Bad judgments are spawned in the atmosphere of murmuring**—the murmuring Israelites decided it would have been better to have died in Egypt (14:10).
 - **Murmuring leads to self-pity**—murmurs often feel sorry for themselves and focus on how they have been mistreated, misused, and let down.
 - **Murmuring thrives in an atmosphere of fear**—twice Joshua and Caleb exhorted the people not to be afraid (14:9).
 - **Murmuring left unchecked usually breeds rebellion**—rather than listening to reason the Israelites were ready to elect new leaders who would oversee their rebellious plans.
 - **The end result of a murmuring spirit is a general atmosphere of dissatisfaction**—criticism and complaining always lead to discontent.

- Numbers 20:1-13—Moses eventually gets so frustrated with the murmuring of the people that we winds up disobeying God.

- Examples of murmuring in the gospels
 - Luke 5:30
 - Luke 15:2

- Luke 19:7
- John 6:41-43, 61
- Acts 6:1
- Philippians 2:12-13—believers should never have a reason to murmur and complain according to Paul

The Contentious Tongue

- Contentious tongues create strife, resentment, and division in any relationship. The Scriptures describe the contentious tongues by using words like **contention, strife, quarreling, and debating**.
- Consider the meaning of the following words:
 - **Contention**-- Strife; struggle; a violent effort to obtain something, or to resist a person, claim or injury; contest; quarrel. Strife in words or debate; quarrel; angry contest; controversy (I Corinthians 1:11, Titus 3:9).
 - **Strife**-- Exertion or contention for superiority; contest of emulation, either by intellectual or physical efforts. Contention in anger or enmity; contest; struggle for victory; quarrel or war (I Corinthians 3:3, Philippians 2:3).
 - **Quarreling**-- Disputing with vehemence or loud angry words; scolding; wrangling; fighting; finding fault; disagreeing.
 - **Debate**—Romans 1:29, II Corinthians 20:12
- There are many causes for a contentious tongue:
 - Hatred—Proverbs 10:12
 - Hot Temper—Proverbs 15:18
 - Anger—Proverbs 30:33
 - Pride—Proverbs 13:10
 - Arrogance—Proverbs 28:25
 - A desire for position and prestige—Luke 22:24, Matthew 20:20-28
 - Those who tarry long at wine—Proverbs 23:29-30
 - Nagging—Proverbs 21:9, 19
- The most serious result of a contentious tongue is the division and discord it creates.
 - Proverbs 6:16-19
 - I Corinthians 12:25

- Division among the brethren destroys the reflection of God through us. The phrase “divide and conquer” has spiritual validity. Division among God’s people gives Satan a tremendous advantage in squelching our usefulness, joy, and peace. The destructive influence of murmuring, contentious words must be exchanged for words that produce confidence in Christ and encouragement to His people.