

THE MEASURE OF A MAN

NOT DOUBLE-TONGUED

We are measuring a godly man by looking at the spiritual characteristics required of leaders in the church.

We've moved from elders to deacons but the point is that every Christian man, regardless of his role and calling, ought to aspire to these characteristics.

1 Timothy 3:8 Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued...

I don't know why but I always think of a scene from an old movie, a Western, where an Indian says, "White man speak with forked-tongue."

The Greek word, *dilogos*, appears only here in the New Testament. Some think it refers to gossip. It's as if you had two tongues going - one that you use when talking to a person and another that you use behind their back when talking about them.

There is a famous illustration about gossip. Let me read a version to you.

There is a 19th century folktale about a man who went about town slandering the town's wise man. One day, he went to the wise man's home and asked for forgiveness. The wise man, realizing that this man had not internalized the gravity of his transgressions, told him that he would forgive him on one condition: that he go home, take a feather pillow from his house, cut it up, and scatter the feathers to the wind. After he had done so, he should then return to the wise man's house.

Though puzzled by this strange request, the man was happy to be let off with so easy a penance. He quickly cut up the pillow, scattered the feathers, and returned to the house.

"Am I now forgiven?" he asked.

"Just one more thing," the wise man said. "Go now and gather up all the feathers."

"But that's impossible. The wind has already scattered them."

"Precisely," he answered. "And though you may truly wish to correct the evil you have done, it is as impossible to repair the damage done by your words as it is to recover the feathers. Your words are out there in the marketplace, spreading hate, even as we speak."

Gossip is not just something women can be guilty of! We tend to think of it that way but guys are or can be just as bad or worse.

We also tend to minimize gossip. Sure, it's a sin; but not a very 'bad' one.

Listen to this from Romans 1:28-32.

Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;
Romans 1:29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,
Romans 1:30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
Romans 1:31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;
Romans 1:32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

"Whisperers" translates to gossips. Gossip is in pretty bad company!

Dilogos might instead (or also) be a prohibition about saying one thing to one person but something else to the next. This doesn't mean that you tell everyone everything about every situation. It doesn't cancel-out discretion. There are some things that others don't need to know. We use the expression, "it's on a need-to-know basis."

The idea is that whatever you say to one person, if you are going to say it to someone else it should be the same.

I run into this all the time. Typically a wife will call to ask counsel or advice on a situation with her husband. Not long after we hang up the husband will call and ask, "Did you tell my wife such-and-such?" Which is why it's usually best to talk to everyone at once!

Sometimes I will hear from someone that someone else said I told them such-and-such. It's usually something that puts me in a bad light.

It's nice to be able to say, "I would never have said that," because I always say the same thing!

Though *dilogos* isn't broad enough to mean control of the tongue, I think it should be obvious that tongue-control is a quality every maturing man needs to aspire to. In his famous passage James wrote,

James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

James 3:2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

James 3:3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.

James 3:4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

James 3:5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

James 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

James 3:7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

James 3:8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

James 3:9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.

James 3:10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

James 3:11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?

James 3:12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

Of course we understand that the real problem is the heart. Your tongue only gives expression to what is in your heart.

James' illustrations indicate you need someone else to be in control of your heart and therefore your tongue. Just as a horse needs a rider holding the reins, and a ship needs a captain manning the rudder, your tongue needs a master.

In our own energy we cannot change our hearts and therefore tame our tongues. God is the only one who can control your tongue.

Here is a quotable quote from Jon Courson: “The more time we spend using our tongues for **praying**, the less time we’ll spend **preying** on others with our tongues.”

That sort of brings us full circle. A mature Christian man doesn’t gossip or slander; he says the same thing to everyone; God has control of his heart and therefore control of his tongue.

“Christian man not speak with forked tongue!”