

WISDOM: THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

An exposition of Proverbs 18:21
at West Hills San Jose on August 2, 2020

PASTORAL PRAYER: God Almighty, King of Glory we open our hearts and ask you to come in. Give us grace we ask, that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life, that in the last day when Christ shall come again in His glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we might rise to life immortal through Him who lives and reigns with you, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Lord we cast upon you our cares and anxieties concerning the world, our country our state and our county, and we praise You that lift You lift these burdens from our backs through prayer, and take them upon yourself such that we can be free from worry and free from fear, knowing that we have been heard and loved and cared for. We pray for our leaders, would you grant them wisdom and righteousness for this historical moment. Would you work upon their hearts and minds through grace such that we would be enabled to live a quiet life godly and dignified in every way working diligently with our own hands. We pray for the ongoing civil unrest in various parts of the country. We pray that the anger and rage and zeal for change would give way to patient, thoughtful, thorough listening, dialogue measured action that can produce real and meaningful changes where injustice is truly found.

I pray for the church in San Jose, would you grant love and unity and fellowship among all those who are following Christ Jesus. Would you be at work, using all of us in our neighborhoods and spheres of influence to encourage other believers and to spur one another on to love and good deeds as much as we are able.

And I pray for our congregation Lord, would you protect us from becoming spiritually apathetic, but would you encourage us, in as many ways as we are able, to continue striving to not only grow spiritually ourselves, but to help others in their walk with Christ. I pray that you would continue to grant us a spirit of submissiveness toward our local government, that we would live with a clear conscience and a pure witness to our community.

Lord I want to thank you that the Jourdans were able to make it safely to France, despite the numerous hiccups in the days leading up to their departure. We pray Lord that you would encourage, strengthen and establish them in Christ Jesus, that you would begin to immediately open doors for the gospel as they begin the work of making home in France. Lord I also want to pray for Joe and Laurel Smith, whose U-Haul Aaron and I helped pack up yesterday. We pray that you would be with them, encouraging their hearts and souls as they transition to their new life in Rancho Cordova. I pray that you would connect them to a local church, and establish them in the Lord Jesus Christ with all strength mercy and power.

I also want to pray for baby Faith MacConnell, would you continue to bless and heal her through the medical care she is receiving. Lord would you bless and encourage Ryan and Audrey as they seek to love and care for her. Would you help us, your church, understand how to help them in their time of need. Now as we prepare to receive the Word which can save our souls we ask that you would enable us to hear your Scriptures, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them; that by patience and comfort, we may embrace and ever hold fast to the blessed hope of everlasting life, which You have give us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

PROBLEM: Well good morning brothers and sisters, it is my immense privilege to be with you virtually and physically for the good of our souls and for the glory of our God. When it came time to settle on a subject of focus for our summer series this year, Eric Yang suggested wisdom and it's various facets. As I discussed it with the staff and with the other elders it began to feel more and more like the ideal subject to engage as a church. And the reason why was that we happen to find ourselves in a very strange time marked by many uncommon events. None of us have ever lived through a global pandemic, most of us have never lived through a time of significant civil unrest, some of us have never lost a job before or felt that job loss could be this imminent, and few if any of us have ever experienced a prolonged absence from congregational meetings as a church. How do we respond to such things. You know what the answer is? The answer is you respond with wisdom. Love and wisdom.

When God authors a series of unexpected twists on our pilgrimage we can either respond wisely or foolishly, helpfully or unhelpfully, righteously or unrighteously. And over the last several months, those who have taught from this pulpit have sought to help you recognize and understand the big picture, help you discern what is good, and to admonish you to respond in ways that bring life, which is our simplified summary of biblical wisdom. Last week, Brad opened the series by emphasizing that the beginning of all wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

And that phrase can become so common you can lose perspective on how profoundly wise it is. When God brought these circumstances upon us, the people who started from the fear of the Lord responded wisely, my God is in the heavens, He is still Lord over all things, what would my Lord have me do next. That's wisdom. The people who started from the fear of the virus, or the fear of being cooped up in their house, or from the fear of x, y or z besides God... ended up full of anxiety, or anger, or whatever, what tended to follow was not what Scripture would call wisdom. The fear of the Lord...in real life...not like in the theoretical sense...really is the beginning of wisdom.

And now that the foundation has been laid, I would like to build upon it. If wisdom is understanding the big picture, discerning what is good and responding in ways that bring life... than how does that wisdom apply to your speech. What does it look like to use your tongue, to use your words, wisely? If there is one thing I know for sure about the pandemic and everything else...is that all of you have been talking about it. You've discussed it privately for sure, and probably publicly. And I want to consider with you today, how the Scripture depicts the wise use of the tongue, and the foolish use of the tongue in all of life. Not just as it relates to things like discussing global crisis...but how it relates to how we speak to each other, how you speak to your friends and coworkers, spouses, children parents, siblings. But perhaps even more than that...I want to help you feel the weight, and the implications of your words. I want to draw you into the reality of what is at stake when it comes to wise and foolish speech, and then point the way to wisdom...here is my main point today:

MAIN POINT: Life and death is in the power of the tongue, so love life and speak wisely.

SETTING THE CONTEXT: Please open your bibles to proverbs 18:21. Some of you may recognize this verse as the proof text for name it and claim it theology. There is a whole

movement of false teaching, called the word of faith movement, that thinks if you just say things out loud with your words, God will cause them to happen. Which is false. Which is not what this text teaches. But with that being said, I find this really weird tendency in myself, that when a section of Scripture is being abused, or misused, or misapplied on a grand-scale in a very unhelpful way, I subconsciously avoid those texts of Scripture because it reminds me of heresy or false teaching. And I was reminded this week that I should NOT do that. This is SCRIPTURE...and it is teaching something very helpful, it is wisdom from God that we need for life and godliness.

Now one last caveat before I get into my text. As I prepared for this sermon this week, I literally worked through every single passage of Scripture that I could find that addresses speech. You know how many there are? There are A LOT. I had pages and pages and pages by Tuesday and it dawned on me that there is literally no way I can cover everything the bible has to say about this topic, so let me just admit that on the front end, I can't say everything this morning. This is my best attempt to give you a broad summary of what the Scripture engages in detail. So with that being said, let's humble our minds and open our hearts for the reading of God's Word

READING: Proverbs 18:21 "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits."

PRAYER: God would you grant us insight and discernment, as we discern your Holy Word together, and enable us to act upon what we have read and heard with all of our hearts. Amen.

ROAD MAP: 1.) How is life and death in the power of the tongue, 2.) the problem with the tongue, 3.) wisdom for your lips, 4.) the eternal purpose of the mouth.

HOW IS LIFE AND DEATH IN THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

1. So we will start in proverbs 18, but that will really function as a jumping off point for what the rest of Scripture emphasizes about wise speech. So let's begin. Proverbs 18 says 3 things of significance, it says your tongue has power. Second it says that that power has the effect of bringing life or death. And third, it has the somewhat enigmatic claim that those who love it will eat its fruit.
 1. So let's begin with the last part of the sentence. The author says those who love IT will eat its fruit. And the question is, what does IT refer to? Many folks think that IT is referring to the tongue, which is a metaphor for speech. So on that reading, the author would be saying Life and death is in the power of your speech and those who love speech will eat its fruit.
 2. Which makes some sense at first but when you start pressing on it it becomes problematic. Lots of people love speech. Fools and wise people. As a matter of fact, Proverbs 13:3 seems to say kind of the opposite. Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; but he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin. There are several more proverbs and statements from wisdom literature that suggest that people who love to talk are more often foolish than wise. So unless the proverb is trying to say something completely negative about speaking, which I suppose it could be, this seems unlikely to me.

3. So what would be an alternative interpretation? Well the IT of proverbs 18:21 could be referring to life and death. So on this interpretation what the author would be saying is that life and death are in the power of your speech, and those who love life will eat of ITS fruit, and those who love death will eat of ITS fruit. If you love life, your tongue will powerfully work to cultivate life, if you love death you life will work to cultivate death.
4. That sounds like what the rest of Scripture says about the power of speech. Life and death in this text are metaphors for flourishing and destruction. Life is what is good and grows and blesses and builds. Death is what decays, denatures, demeans and destroys.
2. So if this is correct...what the author of Proverbs is saying is that in your head, there is a little tool entrusted to you by God. And that little tool has potency and power. And what you love will result in what you cultivate with that little tool for good or for evil, for blessing or for cursing, for help or for harm, for life or for death. Sticks and stones can break your bones but words can kill you.
3. Now I made something I want to share with you guys to help you feel the weight of this claim. It's possible to hear what I've just said and think to yourself OH that's just preacher hyperbole, this is just Josh getting excited, because Josh is so excitable. If there is any part of you that is tempted to think your words and the way you use YOUR TONGUE isn't a huge deal I have put together a string of texts describing what happens when you use your tongue wisely, and another paragraph describing what it's like when you use your tongue foolishly or unrighteously. And I'm not going to read all of the biblical citations because there are so many but you will recognize them, they are lifted directly from Scripture.
 1. A tongue used wisely and righteously - is the power of life, choice silver, is a bringer of healing, commends knowledge, is a tree of life, can sustain with a word those who are weary. It is pure, and serve the Lord. It is a fountain of life that delivers from death. It preserves your life. The righteous ponder how to answer, and their mouths keep them from trouble. A righteous mouth is open for the mute and for the rights of those who are destitute. It judges righteously and defends the rights of the poor and needy. It is discerning and persuasive and wins him favor. It is gentle and brings healing to the bones. It is good fro building up, it fits the occasion and gives grace to those who hear. It sets a good example for the church, it is gracious and seasoned with salt. It is truthful, faithful, righteous and filled with the praises of the Lord.
 2. A tongue used foolishly and wickedly - is the power of death, set against heaven, it thrusts like a sword, pours out folly, breaks the spirit, is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death. It is a deadly arrow, a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal, it is worthless. The foolish tongue is a small member, boasting of great things, it is a world of unrighteousness, setting on fire the entire course of life, set on fire by hell. It is a restless evil full of deadly poison, concealing violence, and bringing men to ruin. The mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. Foolish lips walk into a fight and invite a beating. They are your ruin and a snare to your soul, and the lips of fools consume them. A foolish mouth is full of anger, wrath, malice, slander and obscene talk. It grumbles and is discontent following its own sinful desires. It is loud and boastful, showing favoritism to gain an advantage. Its beginning is folly and its end is evil madness. It is harsh, foolish and perverse.

4. This is what it means that life and death are in the power of the tongue. Just think for a moment, what is the most hurtful thing anyone has ever said to you? If you go down that road for a few minutes you will come across some old deep wounds won't you. There are probably things that have been said to you, that you can point back to, that have shaped you into the person you are today. God has invested your tongue with profound power, and it's no surprise when you think about it.
 1. Who is the first person to speak in Scripture? God. And what does God's Word do? It creates. It is freighted with tremendous power and God through speaking creates the world. It is no surprise then, that we as His image bearers would also be entrusted with powerful speech. Not earth creating speech, but the power to cultivate life and death in the world around us.
5. Now as I move into talking about the problem with the tongue, and wisdom for your lips I want to stop and remind you, as I had to remind myself over and over this week that Holy Wisdom is a gift of grace. These things are written to help us, to heal us, to restore our souls, to teach us how to love life in our speech so that we would use our powers for good and not evil. There are ways that each and every one of us falls short of this teaching and the way forward is not to defend yourself, or justify yourself...the way forward is to humble yourself and receive grace from God.
 1. These lessons are meant as a mercy to us broken and confused sinners. And we are a church...meaning we are a group of people who have recognized and our brokenness and confusion and sin, and have looked away from trying to justify ourselves to the justification that God offers us in Christ Jesus, whose blood was shed to cleanse us of all unrighteousness and through His powerful Spirit is sanctifying and restoring us into the image of Christ.
 2. And I want to remind you of that, because A LOT of what our culture thinks and assumes about wise and righteous speech is LITERALLY the opposite of what Scripture teaches. The Scripture doesn't suggest that when something outrageous happens you should immediately jump onto social media and express your feelings. It says the opposite, James 1 says you should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.
6. So all that and more is coming up. But we need to start with our fundamental problem in communication. Please turn with me in your bibles to Luke 6:44-45 to the teaching of Jesus.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE TONGUE

1. So I could just as easily have made this point from the proverb but I want to help you make connections across your bible to show you that God's thoughts on this are consistent everywhere. In Proverbs 18, the wise man says what you LOVE will shape what kind of fruit you eat. You will either love life and enjoy the joyful fruit of life spent sowing peace. Or you will love death and be left eating the bitter fruit of loneliness from a life spent sowing gall. But what does Jesus say?
2. In Luke 6:45 Jesus says the good person out of the good treasures of his heart produces good and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, **FOR OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART** his mouth speaks. Your tongue is nothing more than a window into what your heart loves and treasures and thinks.

3. I remember back when God first saved me, and I had to learn to speak all over again. If you would have met me 12 years ago before my conversion, I would have employed the F word 10 times per sentence and would have used it to fulfill every grammatical function. F words would have been flying out of my mouth left and right as nouns, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions.
 1. And I still remember, a week or two after God saved me, standing in line at the Bulldog grill in Fresno CA, with my friend Jeremy Medeiros when he stopped me mid-sentence and said “you know dude, you could have said that whole sentence with out using any F-words and you could have said the same thing.” And I was like, why does that matter? And he was like because Paul says your speech is supposed to be pure and not vulgar.
 2. And I was like really? And I went and grabbed a bible and was like O snap...it does say that. And so I tried to stop swearing. And you know what happened? I couldn't. I couldn't stop, I would mentally try to make myself, but the second I stopped paying attention I slipped right back into it.
 3. But I started to pay attention to why that might be. For instance I began to notice that all of the music I listened to...used impure language constantly. Than I began to notice that all of the movies I watched, and TV shows I enjoyed, and stand up comedians I would laugh at...all swore constantly. And it began to dawn on me...I am literally filling my head with this kind of speech constantly...no wonder it's leaking out of me left and right.
 4. Out of evil treasure I was producing evil...and out of the overflow of my heart my mouth was speaking. And there is something extremely convicting but also extremely liberating about this. First the convicting part. What this means, is that your speech wise or foolish is not anyone else's fault. When you yell at your kids...it's not their fault...it's your fault. Out of the overflow of your heart your mouth is speaking. When you criticize your spouse, when you tear down others behind their back, when you gossip, or demean or indulge in actual racist speech...that is coming out of YOUR heart. What comes out of your mouth when someone does something you deem impolite or unsafe on the road...is your fault. Not their fault. You are speaking from the overflow of YOUR heart.
4. And so the beginning of wisdom in this area is the fear of the Lord. When you see evil in your own heart, you ought to throw yourselves upon the mercy and grace of your God and confess it freely and fully to Him. He has mercy for all of your sins. Sin is why Christ died for us. And where we see sin in ourselves, we fly to the fountain of Christ and say wash me savior or I die. And He will say to us, as He said to the poor and sick and needy in this world, be healed, your faith has made you well.
5. Your tongue learns wisdom by understanding the problem. And your tongue becomes wise through confession, repentance and faith. And there is something very liberating about all this also. If my heart focuses on, what my heart loves and cherishes...is directly related to what comes out of my mouth, then I can stop focusing on unhelpful things and start focusing on godly, healthy, righteous and wise things. You begin cultivating a wise tongue by cultivating a loving heart. Think about it:
 1. A person who is always criticizing in their heart, is going to have a critical tongue.
 2. A self-righteous heart is going to produce a judgmental tongue.
 3. A bitter heart produces a harsh tongue.

4. An ungrateful heart produces a grumbling tongue.
5. If you spend your life focusing on what is wrong with everyone and everything, if you spend your life focusing on what you don't have, or what ought to be but isn't...your tongue will become a force of death. And even when you exercising profound self-discipline to try and make yourself sound nicer, the reality is that who you are is leaking out of you and it's impossible not to notice.
6. On the other hand, if you spend your life appreciating and caring for others, it will naturally produce a nurturing tongue.
 1. A humble heart will produce an unassuming tongue.
 2. A thankful heart will produce a gracious tongue.
 3. A God-cherishing heart produces a God worshipping tongue.
 4. If you spend your idle mind thinking about how you can bless and everyone and everything, you spend your life being grateful for what you DO HAVE, rather than what you don't, if you spend your life focusing on what YOU ought to be, than letting yourself become embittered about what everything ELSE ought to be...your tongue will become a force of life in the world. And even if you tried exercising profound self-discipline to try and make yourself sound meaner...the reality is that who you are will leak out of you and it will be impossible not to notice.
7. So what have we seen so far? We have seen that God has invested our tongue with profound power and how we use our tongue will have profound ramifications for the world around us, our relationships, our view of the world and so forth. Second we have looked at the problem of the tongue. We see that the TONGUE ITSELF is not the source of the problem. The tongue is only a window into who we are and what we love. If we love to criticize, our tongue will become critical. If we love to pray for those who are struggling, our tongue will become compassionate, as surely as day follows night. But what is hopeful about this is that no matter who we are or what we have done...God is interested in transforming our hearts into His very image.
 1. God by His powerful Spirit desires to heal your brokenness...to deliver you from the oppression of your sins...and fill you with joy and new life. For me...that involved some very practical steps. Like ceasing to fill my mind with every manner of vulgarity. Like all that stuff I was consuming was just bad for me. I was laughing at sin, and singing songs of violence...that stuff shapes your soul in unhelpful ways.
 2. But the power of sin is not stronger than the power of grace. God in Christ wants to fill you with Himself. If you decide I want to fill myself with God, it turns out there is actually good Christian music, and funny clean stand up comedians and righteous encouraging versions of all that unhelpful stuff I was consuming every day.
 3. What is a practical step for you? How about the next time you find yourself having critical thoughts about someone...you make yourself stop, pray for them, and commit to thanking God for three things you are thankful for in them. Maybe when you find yourself thinking about how life would be better if...you forced yourself to stop and thank God for the life you have now.

8. You will never deal with the problem of unwise speech or death dealing tongue if you don't start at the level of your heart. Out of the overflow of the HEART the mouth speaks. But let's now turn our attention to gaining wisdom for your lips.

WISDOM FOR YOUR LIPS

1. So it turns out, that even when your intention, from your heart, is to do good, you can still speak in unwise and hurtful ways. I have accidentally hurt some of you with my words, because I was careless with how I put something, or over generalized something that is deeply personal to you. I have said things that I simply should not have said, not because the thought was evil or sinful but because it was just an unwise thing to say.
 1. Has that ever happened to you? You thought you were saying something totally innocuous but it turns out it was deeply hurtful to the other person? Like husbands have you ever made a thoughtless comment about your wife's appearance? Wives have you ever made a thoughtless critical comparison of your husband to another man? In your head you were just thinking out loud, not with any sort of evil intent...but you know what...you just shouldn't have said that. It wasn't helpful. It wasn't wise. How can I be wise in how I speak?
2. As I was learning how to speak like a Christian, I have always found Ephesians 4:29 to be one of the most helpful summary texts in the whole Scripture. In Eph 4:29 Paul says let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. This says FOUR very helpful things.
 1. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth. The word for corrupting is the word for rotting. Words that cause corruption or rot. Words that denature and destroy. This isn't really about profanity, there are other texts I think that deal with that. But this is about using your mouth to tear down.
 1. If I had to guess...I would say this is the sort of thing you are most tempted to say when you are grumpy. When you are bothered about life in the moment. And I want to share something with you...that is kind of silly and almost dumb in a way but that has actually blessed me and helped me to communicate more wisely in my life. Are you ready? It's the word HALT...if I am feeling hungry, angry, lonely or tired...I need to HALT before I say the first thing that comes out of my mouth. If I am hungry, and angry...that is a recipe to say something foolish that I may regret for a long time.
 2. Any speech that is aimed at tearing down, is speech aimed at death. And your tongue is powerful...and those who love death will eat of its fruit.
3. On the other hand this text also teaches us how to love life. Only speak things Paul says as are good for building up. What does this mean...only speak out of a genuine desire to help. And seeking to build other up isn't trying to restrict you to only saying things that are nice. Proverbs 27:5-6 says better is open rebuke, than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.
 1. Some times saying a hard thing is what love looks like, and sometimes saying nothing is evil.

2. I have had to say some hard things to some of you. And some of you have said some hard things to me. And when it comes from a heart that desires to BUILD UP...it is helpful and a blessing. And I think Paul's point here is don't speak to tear down, speak to build up. The language you hear on the news is the opposite of that.
3. You say I am pro-life, and they say you are ANTI-woman, or pick whatever subject you want. I say I am for something...and the response is to turn whatever you are for into a way of tearing you down and making you by implication against something good. That's corrupting speech, not upbuilding speech. If you disagree with someone, disagree with what they are saying...don't look for a way to put them down in a round about way. That's evil. That's the enemy of productive communication and extremely unwise. Wisdom, wants to understand what you mean...so that either I can learn and be built up, or I can help you understand something that perhaps you don't so that you can be built up. Wisdom seeks to help not hurt.
4. So don't tear down, instead build up. Additionally, do it in Ephesians 4 when it fits the occasion. This one is a little bit trickier because it involves some finesses. But learning to cultivate wise speech is learning when it is and isn't appropriate to say something.
 1. As an example from my marriage that has spilled over into many ministry contexts...I used to think that my wife was sharing with me what she was struggling with because she wanted help fixing her problem. And probably took her 5-6 years of explaining that to me over and over and over again, I don't want you to fix it, I just want you to listen before I finally started getting it.
 2. And can we just have a moment of utter transparency here. If I am being totally honest with myself before God...the primary problem was I didn't want to get it. The way my brain works...is that if there is a problem you fix it. Talking about the problem is a total waste of time. Why would we waste time talking about something that we could easily fix. And listen to me...WHAT FOLLY DOES...is say stop being like you and start being like me. What folly does is say trying to fix it hasn't worked that last 100 times but she's explaining her problem again and you know what they say, the 101st times a charm. That is being unwise and using your mouth in an unwise way.
 3. Wisdom wants to speak when it fits the occasion. Jeanine expressing what was frustrating about her day is not the occasion for me to open my mouth and try and fix things.
 4. When people are expressing something painful to you...it doesn't fit the occasion to correct in the moment begin correcting there theology. If you hear something deeply wrong the occasion will certainly come, but not as someone is right in the middle of processing their grief and pain.
 5. If you are hanging out in a group and you feel as though a brother or a sister has sinned against you, it doesn't fit the occasion to call them out publicly in front of everyone. You want to go to them privately, since your desire isn't vengeance but to build up in a way that fits the occasion.
5. And finally wise speech gives grace to those who hear. Paul could have chosen a lot of words for the last part of this sentence. It could say that is will be a blessing to those who hear, that it will edify or encourage or inspire those who hear. But the said GIVE GRACE.

6. We are commanded to speak in a way that imparts grace, compassion, empathy, kindness to those who hear. You are commanded to bless those who curse you by the Lord Jesus Christ. When you see things on youtube or wherever that are titled this person DESTROYS that person. You have to recognize that that is warfare language. That is violence language.
 1. You are not taught to communicate in a way that does violence...that humiliates or diminishes or dehumanizes or disrespects or others. You are taught to communicate in a way that gives grace. I spent about a month watching and reading the news (which I have never really done before) when the pandemic first started...and I couldn't believe how much warfare language was used. How much energy went into making the other side look like idiots. That whole way of communicating is broken, unhelpful and unwise.
 2. Your aim in your speech, both with your mouth and with your hands, should not be to tear down, but to build up, as fits the occasion, and gives grace to those who hear. And as I said before, it doesn't follow that you can't disagree or be critical about something. It's about your heart. Are you trying to help, are you trying to be gracious, or are you being harsh and harmful and belittling? That kind of speech both verbal and written is ungodly and unwise.
7. One last thing I want to say about this before we move to the final point. If you have a chance to read through James 3 today, I would encourage you to do it. And I would encourage you to ask yourself the question...do I have good reason to trust myself in how I feel inclined to use speech? I would argue that James 3 teaches us to be way way way more careful about what we say, than most of us are used to being.
8. It would also suggest that you don't want to be defensive about this. You want to root yourself in the gospel of the crucified and risen Lord who died for our sins and lives for a salvation. In Christ there is grace upon grace for the contrite of spirit. This wisdom is a grace gift from your God, not a stick to beat yourself up with. But now for the final point on wise speech...and that is:

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF THE MOUTH

1. Do you know why you have a mouth? Believe it or not, it isn't so that you can share all your thoughts with the world. It's so that in the days to come you would be able to join with all creation to proclaim the praises of the Lord.
2. Philippians 2:5-11 [5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (ESV)
 1. Out of a desire to glorify the name of Jesus, God created you with knees to bow upon and tongues to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

2. The book of Revelation describes the saints doing 3 things in the new heavens and the new earth. Seeing...God's face...reigning with Christ in glory...and crying out in a loud voice "salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb!"
3. Your tongue was created for life...and that life is in the Son of God who reigns upon His throne. And this is part of the beginning of the experience of eternal life...praising the Lord. Praising Him to Him, praising Him to one another, and praising Him to a lost and broken world.
3. If you love Christ, you will love life. And if you love life you will use your tongue to wisely cultivate life in the world around you. You will express thankfulness, and gratitude, you will affirm and encourage, you will exhort and correct, you will bless and praise. If you put away all the things in your life that are discouraging that...and fill your mind and heart with nothing but things that encourage that...you will find yourself eating the fruit of a life of love.
 1. I want to ask you, as your elder and pastor to do three things for me after this sermon. Resist the temptation to say something harsh, choose to say things that will give grace to the people around you, and resolve again to make the person of Jesus Christ the central pursuit of your heart. If you will simply listen to God's Word and do these things...you will find more joy, more hope, more encouragement, more strength, than you ever thought possible. You will taste the fruit of loving life.

Brothers and sisters life and death are in the power of your tongue, so love life and speak wisely.