

# Respectable Sins: Sins of the Tongue

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome here for this Sunday, November 21st. I know I often say this when I say the date, but man, is time flying by. In some ways, it feels like, I feel like a rock in a raging river.

So time is just flying past me. But at the same time, I also recognize that we want things to be different now, right? We're tired, we're worn out, we're discouraged at times, and we want things to be, quote unquote, normal again.

Well, God is still with us in whatever our current circumstances are, and we can thank him for that. This morning, we're concluding our Respectable Sins sermon series.

So I'm going to reflect back on the introduction to our series a bit to remind us of what we've learned. So over the course of the series, we had a review of the concept of sin.

We've looked at specific sins, including worry and pride and selfishness, impatience and irritability, anger, judgmentalism, envy, and jealousy.

[ 1 : 08 ] So remember, if you've missed any of the sermons in the series, those and others are available on the website. They're also available through Bramarkast, which is our podcast. Never ceases to amaze me when I talk to friends and say our church has a podcast.

Their minds are blown. So we're ahead of the curve, if that's encouraging to you. So we've recognized that our sin can be reflected in our actions, in our attitudes, but also in our moral nature, that internal character of who we are as individuals.

One commentator I read for us in the past suggests that, at its root, sin is essentially selfish disregard. It's choosing what we want over anything else, seeking to fulfill our selfish desires over the needs of another person, or over the will of God in our lives.

Human beings are prone to sin. We are attracted to sin. We are tempted by sin. And all those factors are part of our nature. And even as Christians, this is hard for some people to hear, we are still sinners.

Can you recognize that? And God hates sin. We've talked about this before. Because it blinds us to the truth. It separates us from him.

[ 2 : 35 ] It separates us from healthy community with other people. But even more than that, God hates sin because he is holy. As I prayed, or as I said in our opening this morning, that sin and sinfulness is as contrary to God's nature as anything could possibly be.

God is sinless. God is righteous. So sin is the opposite of everything he represents. Sin is entirely incompatible with.

It's in full rebellion against God. It is as simple as that. But thanks be to God, because we're not expected to conquer sin on our own.

I can have an amen there, maybe. But as we read in Hebrews 4.15, for we do not have a high priest, this reference isn't on the screen yet, we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.

Do you hear that? We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, but was without sin.

[ 3 : 54 ] That's the difference. Jesus sacrificed for us. He advocates for us. He stands with us. We are not in this alone.

We recognize that our sin can be forgiven by God, but as I've said before, only one way. We all know this, but it's good to be reminded. By confessing our sin, not pretending it doesn't exist, and receiving forgiveness.

We've talked in the past about, you need to receive God's forgiveness. It is a gift, but it is not a passive gift. It's a transaction. The forgiveness of God was only made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Again, this is something we may know in our heads, but it doesn't hurt to be reminded of it. When I ask you to name the sin that you perceive to be the biggest issue for the average church, yes, you heard me that right there, yes, the church, what would you say that it is?

Audience participation. Pride. Others? Discouragement.

[ 5 : 21 ] I'm seeing, I'm, sorry, Vern, anger. I'm seeing, it's funny, I'm making eye contact with people over their masks, and I know you have answers that you're not sharing.

Apathy. Apathy. Eh, apathy, right? Frogs in a pot, just keep turning up the heat, eh.

What's that? Oh, did they really? Oh. Wow, thank you for, I'll never, I'll never use it again.

Wow, frogs with brains, well, that fits too. Sometimes we just don't think, right? Okay, well, no one has said it, which is good, but you also know the title of this sermon.

In some ways, I want us to recognize that I have saved an issue of respectable sin, one that is perhaps most easily discounted, passed over, at times, even accepted, sins of the tongue.

[ 6 : 26 ] This morning, we're going to look at defining sins of the tongue, looking at what the Bible has to say about them, and how we can repent of them in our lives.

So first, how do we define sins of the tongue? Well, it's very formal wording, first of all, right? That wording may make it sound foreign, but you're all, we're all, well aware of what that means, and you'll see this morning.

I want you to listen to the following phrases and tell me if you've ever heard them or said them yourself. Ready to feel icky?

Someone told me, dot, dot, dot, you know what I heard? Well, I didn't want to bring this up, but people are saying, dot, dot, dot.

Okay, I really shouldn't tell you this, but, I'm going to tell you anyway. I'm going to tell you something if you promise not to tell anyone else.

[ 7 : 37 ] Any sound familiar? Anyone squirming? So, were any of them familiar to you? Those expressions, we need to recognize, are telltale signs of sins of the tongue.

Because when you hear those phrases, it means, what you're about to hear next may not be good, or may not be a good choice. It's also important to recognize that sins of the tongue can actually refer to a whole range of sin in our lives.

And you know, as I personally have reflected on this more deeply, I've come to recognize that just as there is good fruit, fruit of the Spirit in our lives, fruit that comes when we follow God, when we seek to follow Him, I believe, these words actually came into my head as I was preparing this sermon this week, there is rotten fruit that is produced in our lives when we give in to sin.

And I believe the sins of the tongue are examples of, if not, the whole nature of rotten fruit in our lives. Because they are what we produce when we are living with unconfessed sin in our hearts. When we are living with pride or selfishness or greed or anger or lust or any other form of sin that we are discounting or ignoring, it's the sins of the tongue that tend to reveal that.

[ 9 : 24 ] So what do the sins of the tongue look like? What do they sound like? Well, we may be immediately drawn to the idea of cursing or telling crude jokes, right?

So absolutely, that is an example. That's certainly a part of it. But there is definitely more. I was talking to a friend of mine and I said, one of these days I'm going to preach a sermon on Christian cursing.

And he went, what are you talking about? And I gave him a list of about five or six. And he went, oh, you're on to something there. So think about it. I mean, I do it.

Think about sanctified cursing. We use words that are not that different. We use expressions that express the same frustration or anger, but we think they're okay somehow because they're not that word.

It's worth thinking about. I digress. So there's definitely more, as I said, to sins of the tongue. Let me give you some examples. Gossip. Gossip. Talking about other people.

[ 10 : 29 ] And do you recognize when people are gossiping, it is, I'd say, 99 to 100% of the time behind someone else's back. It's almost never with good intentions or in good ways.

That's why it's not good. Sharing information with other people that someone may have shared with you in confidence. As I touched on, well, you know what I heard?

I really shouldn't tell you this, but I'm going to do it anyway. Nosiness. I have a friend who's not a Christian and I said, I'm going to be talking about sins of the tongue.

What do you think are, what's your impression of things that the church does that are bad? And she said, nosy people. Judgmental or nosy.

Seeking information about a situation or a conversation that involves others and may not, in fact, these are hard words to hear, may not, in fact, be any of your business.

[ 11 : 33 ] Have you heard somebody say to you, well, that's none of your business. Sometimes that comes across as rude, but sometimes it's true. If you're asking about something or you're digging for information about something and someone says, maybe that's not really your concern.

It's worth thinking about. Criticism. Tearing someone down or tearing something apart rather than building up.

See how damaging being critical can be? You may think, well, it's constructive criticism. That's, to me, that's an oxymoron. If you don't end up building up the person after you've done the damage of any criticism, you've done nothing but damage, in my opinion.

Slander. Oh, boy. Slander is like gossip. Making judgments or assumptions about another person or their reputation and spreading that around.

Well, you know what someone told me about someone else? I really shouldn't tell you, but I'm gonna. Do you see that chain of, wow, and it all weaves together.

[ 12 : 52 ] It all weaves together and snowballs. Can you recognize in yourself a desire to know something about someone or their circumstances and you may be trying to disguise it with an air of care?

Well, you know, I heard that you're really struggling with such and such. Tell me about that. Right? You don't necessarily want to know the information so that you can pray for them in more detail. God knows all the detail. It's important to think about. Christians can be particularly bad for that, I believe.

couching our nosiness, our desire for information that is not appropriate for us to know, in a desire to pray for someone with the suggestion that we are concerned about them when we actually just want to know their business.

Can you recognize that? if you join a conversation, here's another challenge. If you join a conversation where people are criticizing someone else, do you join in or do you seek to shut it down?

[ 14 : 25 ] Do you make assumptions about other people and happily spread them around for anyone who will listen? without consideration for whether the assumptions are fair or even true?

Have you ever been given, or sorry, have you ever given a project or task everything that you had and all someone else could do was point out the things that you had missed?

have you ever heard from someone that someone else has been talking about you? How did that feel?

I bet it didn't feel good. So can you recognize that if it didn't feel good when it happened to you, why would you ever, ever think of doing it to or about someone else?

my friends, these are all examples of sins of the tongue, that rotten fruit of sin in our lives.

[ 15 : 37 ] So second, what does the Bible say about sins of the tongue? Let's look at it, and as you can imagine, it's not popular in scripture. there are more than 60 warnings about these kinds of sins, six zero warnings, and that is just in the book of Proverbs.

So let's look at a few key passages together this morning. In James chapter 3 verses 2 to 12, this is a little bit longer passage, we read, we all stumble in many ways.

If anyone is never at fault in what he said, he says he is a perfect man able to keep his whole body in check. When we put bits in the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.

Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder where the pilot wants to go.

Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boats. Makes great boats.

[ 16 : 55 ] I typo in my notes. So consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body, a world of evil.

It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man. But no man can tame the tongue.

It is restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in God's likeness.

Out of the same mouth comes praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both freshwater and saltwater flow from the same spring?

[ 18 : 05 ] My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce freshwater.

Do you hear that passage and think, well, the Bible says I can't control my tongue, why should I worry about trying? Why should I lose any sleep over it? Do you think that way?

I hope not. Because while we can't completely control our tongues, we can learn to have enough control to reduce the damage they can have on someone else.

The damage our tongues can cause, the damage our words can cause, not only on others but even on ourselves. As the Apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians 4 verse 22, you were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Friends, by receiving Jesus into our lives, and as submitting to him as Lord, we're called to seek to follow his example. It's as simple as that. we're called to seek to put God and others before ourselves.

[ 19 : 36 ] Love God, love others. We're called to seek holiness through the work of the Holy Spirit within us. We don't do it under our own strength.

Thank the Lord for that. Paul continues in Ephesians 4 29, Do not let unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

In Matthew 12, verse 36 and 7, Jesus says, but I tell you, hear this, but I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

For by your words, Jesus says, you will be acquitted and by your words, you will be condemned. Jesus reminds us here that what we say reveals what's in our hearts. Can you recognize that?

[ 20 : 54 ] The connection is that intimate. The words that come out of our mouths reveal the condition of our hearts. Do you like what you hear in your own words?

I confess that I don't always like my words. can you recognize what your words, what you hear yourself say, may reveal about your heart?

My friends, the sins of the tongue, the rotten fruit of the heart, it doesn't reflect our identity in Christ. And it has no place in our lives or in God's church.

church. Third, how can we repent of the sins of the tongue in our lives? Here's the practical advice. Before you speak, now as a chatty person, this is as much for me as anyone, before you speak, consider this perspective. objective is what I'm about to say true.

[ 22 : 08 ] That's important. And I'm talking about life-giving truth here. I'm talking about building people up. love. It's not your objective truth.

It's not your opinion that you're looking to convey. Second, is what you're planning to say, hear this, necessary? Or are you just speaking because you like to hear the sound of your own voice?

the older I get, the less I talk. And Michelle would say that's not true. But the older I get, honestly, the more I sit back in conversations and just listen to what other people have to say because I've run out of a sense that I've got just the thing for you.

I've got a gem of wisdom here that, or if I'm likely to say something that's not helpful, I'll keep my mouth shut. I'm still learning, God's still working on it.

But is what you're about to say to someone necessary? Try it and think with that filter. So here's another test. This is a real good one.

[ 23 : 26 ] If you wouldn't say something to someone's face, guess where I'm going? Do not say it behind their back.

Do you hear that? So if you think I have something to say and I'm going to say it to someone else because I can't say it to the person, maybe keep your mouth shut.

Might not be a bad thought to cross your mind. Don't talk about people behind their backs. it's corrupting and it's destructive and it's damaging.

Don't talk about people, my friends. Talk to them or keep silent. And as we read, James has powerfully said, he's illustrated the dangers of the sins of the tongue. he's reminded us in the passage that we read that sometimes our words are right. Sometimes they are pleasing to God. But at other times they are violent.

[ 24 : 41 ] They are destructive. James talks about the tongue being poison. Is what you plan to say to someone helpful? Is it encouraging?

Is it comforting? Or does it smell like rotten fruit? Does it smell like gossip? When you stop and think about it. Does it sound like criticism? And let's remember constructive criticism, not usually that constructive. Or does it sound like judgment that you're passing on someone?

Or a judgment call that you're making about them, which is not fair or even true? does what you're about to say sound like putting someone else down?

Or talking behind their back? Or hurting their reputation? Does it sound like that? Because those are all red flags as well. Remember, okay, let's call something out for a moment.

[ 25 : 50 ] We all have said things we regret. Can we agree on that? that's the thing, boy, when you think about, I can play a tape in my head of things that I have said to people that the second they're out of my mouth, I wish I could have crammed them back in.

But once the words are out, once the damage has been done, once the scar has been created, remember that words are like fire, as James says.

you can neither completely control them, nor reverse the damage that they may have done. Our speech, the words that we choose and use, reveals a great deal about our character, and the state of our heart.

So my friends, let's seek to be people who watch our tongues, either using them to heal and encourage, or as a wise mother rabbit once said, if you can't say anything nice, say it with me, don't say anything at all.

My hope and prayer is that this series, Respectable Sins, has helped each of us to gain a better perspective on some of the specific sins we may commit, and that we've learned some new ways to identify them and address them.

[ 27 : 20 ] My friends, ask God to reveal the sin in your life that is keeping you, or maybe keeping you, from a deeper relationship with him, or maybe perhaps shaping your life in unhealthy ways.

Confess those sins to him, and seek to follow his plan for your life. After multiple weeks talking about sin, next week we're beginning Advent, and our series is called Unwrapping the Names of Jesus.

And over the course of four sermons, we're going to look at knowing the sin in our lives, we're going to recognize the God who came near.

we're going to recognize more than what it means for Jesus to be a baby in a manger, but what it means for him to be our Savior day by day, our wonderful counselor, giving away teasers now.

But we're going to be looking in the book of Isaiah at the four of the names Isaiah uses to refer to the coming Messiah, who we know to be Jesus. As we conclude our series and our time together this morning, let's one last time say the words of 1 John 1-9 together.

[ 28 : 44 ] Are you ready? If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and he will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let's close in prayer before Vernon Cathy give us our sending song. Our Father, we confess to you that our speech is often corrupt and bears and produces rotten fruit.

Lord, help us to tame our tongues, we ask you. Fill our hearts with your grace. Fill our hearts with the words of healing that you would have us use for other people and for ourselves.

Lord, you have loved us even when we are unlovely or unlovable. let that same love fill our hearts so that our tongues will be moved to speak only that which builds up.

Father, we also thank you for the time we have spent in this series together. Please convict us of our unconfessed sin. Help us to ask for your forgiveness and Lord, we ask through the power of your Holy Spirit within us.

[ 29 : 58 ] Give us the strength to turn away from the pervasive patterns of sin in our lives. We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, and our Lord.

Amen.