

ZERO TOLERANCE

PRAYER

Scripture: James 3:9-12 & Lev. 19:11-18

There is a phrase that you hear quite often in the world today and that is 'zero tolerance.' I am sure that the young people have heard this word from their teachers and as adults we have heard this phrase on the news. Matter of fact Gov. O'Malley Just endorsed or signed some type of legislation on this. The zero tolerance that he was referring to is 'zero tolerance on bullying.' The question can be asked, 'exactly what is zero tolerance?' It is stating unequivocally that bullying with not be tolerated. That if a person bullies another they will suffer the consequences, i.e., contacting parents, given detention and even being suspended from school. When the zero tolerance rule is put into place it is as if the one in charge is telling the other, 'you have a choice. Either you behave as I have stipulated or you will suffer the known consequences.'

There is another type of 'zero tolerance' that I read about in the Daily Bread this week. It told the story of a young woman who was applying for a job online. She was surprised to learn that the company had a zero-tolerance policy for gossip. The employees were encouraged to confront one another, instead of gossip about their fellow employees. If employees are caught gossiping, they are reprimanded, and if they continue, they are fired! (comments – H.S.)

Well, this morning, I need to let you know that long before this kind of policy was ever implemented, God had His own zero-tolerance for gossip and the negative, foul things that come out of people's mouths. Look at verse 16 in our text. ***"Do not go about spreading slander among your people."*** God is very particular about the things that come out of our mouths. He lets us know that He has zero tolerance towards those who

spew venom out of their mouths. Why am I speaking on this today? Because today is Youth Sunday and I wanted to speak on something that is of deep concern to me with our children. And that is how they talk to one another and the negative things that they say about one another and to one another.

Last week God gave us a powerful word on “Speaking the Word Only.” He showed us the power that can be released when we speak the Word, with faith in the One who backs up His Word. We know that we serve a loving God, we know that we serve a gracious God. We know that our God wants nothing but the very best for us. But God is letting us know that He just is not going to put up with some of the trash that comes out of your mouth.

There are two areas that God wants us to focus on this morning. The first area is that God wants us to know that He has zero-tolerance with what is going on with some of His children, back-biting, gossiping and slandering other people! God says in *1 Peter 3:10* **“Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.”** (comments – H.S. deceitful speech is just another way of saying ‘gossip.’)

The company that was spoken of in the Daily Bread had a zero-tolerance for gossip. A person could ultimately be fired for being a gossip. (comments – H.S.) I tend to believe that that must have been a Christian owned company, but I don’t know. But I do know that it is a Christian principle that we are not to gossip about other people. Someone may be thinking, ‘but why Pastor. What wrong with a little gossip, it’s harmless.’ Well, let’s see what the Word says about that. We are going to look at some verses in the Book of Proverbs.

Turn to **Prov. 11:13** **“A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.”** What’s wrong with being a gossip? God says that gossip betrays a confidence. Everybody at some point in time needs someone that they can confide in. They need to know that if they tell you something personal about themselves, that it will not be repeated. (comments – H.S.) When you share something that someone else told you about themselves, you have not only lied to the person; but you have also lied to God. What is the other reason that God has zero-tolerance for gossiping.

Proverbs 16:28 **“A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.”** Why does God have zero-tolerance for gossiping? Because it brings about division and strife. God says that gossip will separate close friends. The question you need to ask yourself and the question that I need to ask myself is, ‘is it worth it?’ You know sometimes we share things about people under the pretext of praying for them. (notice I said pre-text) But in actuality all we wanted to do was to share this juicy morsel of gossip that was shared with us. Let me share something God taught me a long time ago. If someone wants to come and tell me something negative about another person; then they must be willing to bring that other person with them so that they can hear it too! God has zero-tolerance for gossip because He says that it will separate friends. Now how can we show the world what friendship is all about when we have strife and division among believers because of gossip. What next?

Proverbs 25:9-10 **“If you argue your case with a neighbor, do not betray another man’s confidence, or he who hears it may shame you and you will never lose your bad reputation.”** If you are always going around gossiping behind other people’s back, you are going to be the one to get a bad reputation. (comment – H.S.) God tells us in His Word, that ‘he who wants to have friends must show himself friendly.’ No one is going to

want to be your friend if you have a bad reputation, a reputation of being a gossip. They will be afraid to allow you into their circle of friends.

Proverbs 26:20-22 “Without wood a fire goes out; with gossip a quarrel dies down As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man’s inmost parts.”

(comment on each section.)

People can rarely undo the damage that hurtful and harmful words have done. Let’s ask the Lord to set a guard over our mouths.

I told you that there were two areas that God wanted us address concerning what we speak out of our mouths. Turn to **James 3:9-12 “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 come praise and cursing, My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”**

God wants to show us the other side of what is done with this same tongue. He wants to show us that He will not put up with ‘two-sides of the same tongue.’ What does that mean? (comments – H.S.) Again, last week we talked about the positive side of the tongue and today He has shown us the negative side of the tongue. You and I have got to understand that God has zero-tolerance with this negative side. And the negative side will hinder you from receiving the blessings of the Lord. Amen. Amen.

PRAYER

INVITATIONAL HYMN