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## Day 141 – May 21

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### *Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE) – “Control of the tongue”*

#### **Readings: Proverbs**

By topic:

Control of the tongue:

- Wise and Foolish Talk – 14:3; 15:2, 7; 16:23; 18:6-7; 19:1; 23:15-16
- Righteousness and Wicked Talk – 10:20-21, 31-32; 11:11; 12:13-14; 13:2; 15:28; 17:4
- Appropriate Speech – 15:23; 16:21, 24; 25:11; 27:14
- Maintaining Silence – 10:19; 12:23; 13:3; 17:28; 18:13; 21:23
- Controlled Speech – 15:1; 17:27; 25:15
- Flattery – 26:28; 28:23; 29:5
- Slander and Gossip – 10:18; 11:13; 16:28; 17:9; 18:8; 20:10; 26:20, 22
- Hurtful Talk – 11:12; 12:18; 15:4; 16:27; 25:23; 26:2
- Quarreling – 17:14; 17:19; 20:3; 22:10; 26:21
- Lying – 12:19, 22; 17:20; 19:5, 22; 21:6
- Power on Tongue – 18:20-21

#### ***Reflections:***

- The verses that deal with the tongue emphasize over and over the power of the tongue. “Reckless words pierce like a sword but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” (Proverbs 12:18) “The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.” (Proverbs 15:4) “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” (Proverbs 18:21)
- The power of the tongue or the spoken word is affirmed throughout Scripture starting with the creation narrative that has God speaking all things into existing and culminates

in Christ as he is declared the “word made flesh.” We are created in God’s image and therefore, we are fundamentally and ultimately relational beings. Therefore, communication is core to who we were created to be.

- Again, as in the other sections of the Old Testament and Proverbs, the bar is set high as the Law calls us to a perfect life. In Christ we experience grace to both be accepted right where we are and then through his Spirit to begin to actually experience some of these good qualities. The challenge is to not beat yourself up when you read these but to turn to God and cling to his grace.
- As we draw near to him he works within to transform us. Paul wrote, “Instead speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” (Ephesians 4:15) In the community of Christ, the challenge is not just to restrain the tongue and manage it, but to use it to really bless other people and help them grow closer to God. The difference we see is that the truth is spoken “in love.” Truth can be hard like a baseball bat. Sometimes we beat other people with the truth (pastors have been known to call this preaching!). The challenge is to take God’s truth and find the most loving way to express it to the others. The promise that Paul shares is that if we faithfully do this, we will mature and grow to be more Christ-like within community. Here we see the contrast with the Old Testament approach. The Law is focused on “not sinning” and “not doing the wrong thing.” In Christ, we are called to a higher focus. As we allow God’s love to flow through us we don’t need to obsess anymore about doing everything right but to focus on loving as best we can. Again the Old Testament is about what doesn’t work and Jesus is about what does work!