Today we want to continue with our series of messages from the Book of Ecclesiastes. Please open your Bibles to Ecclesiastes chapter ten. And let's read verses 11-14.

**ECCLESIASTES 10:11-14 (NKJV)**

11 A serpent may bite when it is not charmed; the babbler is no different.

12 The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious, but the lips of a fool shall swallow him up;

13 The words of his mouth begin with foolishness, and the end of his talk is raving madness.

14 A fool also multiplies words. No man knows what is to be; who can tell him what will be after him?
INTRODUCTION

POET ROBERT FROST once said, “Half of the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it.

The major focus of this tenth chapter of Ecclesiastes is on FOOLISHNESS. In our message last week from the first ten verses of this chapter, Solomon admonished us to avoid the DISGRACE of a fool, and to avoid the DIRECTION of a fool, and to avoid the DESTRUCTION of a fool.

Now, in verses 11-14 Solomon's primary focus is on the words of a fool. I don’t know whether you have noticed this or not, but any time you come to a discussion on “foolishness” in the scriptures, there is almost always some reference to a person's use of the tongue.

And so in today's message, Solomon offers “A Word To The Wise About The Words of Fools.”
First of all, Solomon warns us about…..

I. The **UNTAMED** Words of A Fool (v.11)

v. 11 A serpent may bite when *it is* not charmed; the babbler is no different.

1. In order to understand what Solomon means here we need to understand a little about the eastern culture of his day.

2. This verse is very similar to **Psalm 58:4,5 (NKJV)** which says, *Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf cobra that stops its ear, Which will not heed the voice of charmers, charming ever so skillfully.*

   We see this same thought in **Jeremiah 8:17 (NKJV)** which reads: *“For behold, I will send serpents among you, vipers which cannot be charmed, and they shall bite you,” says the LORD.*

3. If you are like most people, you believe *“the only good snake is a dead snake.”*

Cobras are very deadly creatures. It is very common for one to die within 30 minutes of being bit by a cobra. **Illustration:** When I preached in the village of the Eurakala Indians in southern India back in 2007, two of the children in that tribe had died from cobra bites the week before.
4. We have all seen images of the Indian “snake charmers” playing a tune on a musical pipe to charm a cobra; and the cobra pops up out of the basket and does sort of a hula dance. The cobra will not strike as long as the charmer is playing his pipe.

But the charmer understands the moment he stops playing his pipe the cobra is poised to strike and if it does, he may be dead in short order.

5. Solomon uses the cobra to illustrate the danger of a fool with an UNTAMED TONGUE.

He says, “A serpent may bite when it is not charmed; the babbler is no different.”

A “babbler” is one who speaks half-truths; a teller of secrets; an idle talker who inflicts harm upon others with words.

6. We have a term for people like today. We call them “snakes in the grass.” A “snake in the grass” is someone who can’t be trusted. They will speak to you with a smile on their face, then turn around and stab you in the back.
7. Judas Iscariot was “a snake in the grass.” He pretended to be a true follower and friend of Jesus, but then he turned around and with his deceitful words he struck a deal with the chief priests and elders to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

8. Ahithophel was “a snake in the grass.” Ahithophel was King David's chief adviser and counselor. David thought he was his dear, close friend. But in secret Ahithophel was collaborating with David's son Absalom who was trying to dethrone David.

9. We have all known people who are nice and friendly to you as long as you agree with them and “charm them” with words they want to hear; but then the minute you stop playing their song or cross them they will strike you like a deadly cobra!

10. Solomon is warning you and me NOT TO BE ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE! Don't be like the FOOL with a deadly, untamed tongue!
Next, Solomon warns us about.....

II. The **UNKIND** Words of A Fool (v.12)

v. 12 The words of a wise man are gracious, but the lips of fool shall swallow him up.

1. I'm sure you will all agree that some of the worst problems of your life have been instigated by your tongue; at least I have found that to be true in my life.

2. Sometimes unkind words come out of our mouths without warning or forethought. **Words spoken in haste....Words spoken in a harsh tone.....cruel words.....hurtful words.**

3. Often unkind words roll off our tongues **when we are exhausted.......or when we are under a lot of stress....or in times of anger or frustration.**

And the moment those words leave our lips they can never be “unspoken.” You and I cannot “unsay words” any more than we can “unring a bell.”
4. While all of us are capable of speaking unkind words under certain conditions, a fool regularly spews forth unkind, hateful, mean-spirited words.

5. **BEWARE** of the person who always has something CRITICAL or JUDGMENTAL to say.

   **BEWARE** of the person who beats people down and beats people up with their hateful words.

   **BEWARE** of the person who regularly calls you on the phone or comes by your house to run other people down.

   Like the old wise proverb says, “Those who spread evil words about others to you, will spread evil words about you to others.”

6. But you know, as evil and unkind as the tongue can be, it is also capable of doing amazing goodness as well.

   Solomon says, “The words of a wise man are gracious.”

7. Just as a fool can breathe death upon a person with his or her unkind words, a wise man can breathe life upon a person with his or her kind and encouraging words.
I love the story Dr. David Jeremiah tells about ROBERT WEBBER. Robert Webber grew up on the mission field, where his parents served with AFRICA INLAND MISSION.

Once, when they were back in the states on furlough, the Webber family settled in Montgomery, Pennsylvania in a small home near a farm.

Young Robert was just nine years old at that time; and he loved blackberries. So one day he grabbed a bucket and started picking some blackberries from the nearby bushes. Without thinking, he strayed onto the neighbor’s property and started picking some of his blackberries.

Suddenly the neighbor burst out his front door, waving his fist, and hollered, “Get out of my field and don’t let me catch you on my property again.” Young Robert was terrified and quickly ran home to tell his father. Mr. Webber said, “Give me that pail of blackberries. We’re going next-door to talk to that man.”

As father and son marched across the yard, young Robert was thinking, “Good, my dad is going to show that old man a thing or two.”

When they arrived at the farmer’s house, Mr. Webber said, “Sir, I’m sorry my son was on your property. Here, I want you to have these blackberries.” The kind words completely disarmed the old farmer. He said, “I'm sorry I yelled at the boy. I don't want the blackberries; in fact, I don't even like blackberries, you keep them. And young man, you can pick all the blackberries you want out of my fields.”

(SEARCHING FOR HEAVEN ON EARTH by Dr. David Jeremiah, p. 273, Integrity Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, Copyright 2004)
* The Wise Man uses words to BUILD OTHERS UP, while the FOOL uses words to TEAR OTHERS DOWN.

*The Wise Man uses words to ENCOURAGE, while the FOOL uses words to DISCOURAGE.

*The Wise Man uses words to BREATHE LIFE upon others, while the FOOL uses words to BREATHE DEATH upon others.

8. Solomon's admonition is clear: **BE A WISE MAN, NOT A FOOL!**

Next Solomon warns us about....

**III. The **UNWISE** Words of A Fool (v. 13)**

v. 13 The words of his mouth begin with foolishness, and the end of his talk is raving madness.

1. What Solomon is saying is, **a fool starts speaking unwise, foolish things the minute he opens his mouth and he is still speaking unwise foolish things until he stops.**

2. Think of that person you know who has you on “pins and needles” every time you're around them because you never know what stupid comment is going to come out of their mouth.
3. Think of that person you know who loves to listen to themselves talk and they never know when to shut up!

4. Think of that person you know who always has to get their “two cents worth” in; that person who always gives you their opinion whether you want it or not.

5. Think of that person you know who is “an expert” on everything and always knows more than anybody else in the room.

6. Think of that obnoxious relative who routinely makes shameful or embarrassing comments at family gatherings that makes you want to crawl under a table.

7. Solomon is warning us NOT TO BE ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE. God created us with TWO EARS and ONE MOUTH and we need to know how to use them accordingly!
Finally, Solomon warns us about......

IV. The **UNCONTROLLED** Words of A Fool (v.14)

v. 14  “A fool multiplies words. No man knows what is to be; who can tell him what will be after him?”

1. Plato once said, “*Wise men speak because they have something to say; fools speak because they have to say something.*”

2. For some reason a fool is not content to keep his foolishness to himself; he has to share it with the rest of us.

3. When Solomon says, “*A fool multiplies words*” he is saying a fool just goes on and on and on, even when he doesn't know what he's talking about. And the more he talks the more he exposes his foolishness.”

4. A fool is that person who won't let anyone get in a word edgewise. A fool is that person who always goes off “half-cocked” spouting off information before he or she knows all the facts.

5. Give a fool enough rope and sooner or later he or she will hang themselves with their own words.
The late Zig Ziglar was a highly respected author, salesman, and motivational speaker.

One time Ziglar was playing GOLF with a young associate. As the young man teed up his ball on the first hole, Ziglar watched with great amusement. The young man was about 6’ 3” and weighed about 230 pounds.

He was obviously very uncomfortable as he approached the ball. He picked up his club.....wiggled it a few times.....laid it down.....then repeated the whole process. Ziglar whispered to a buddy nearby, “This young man is obviously not a golfer.” A moment later the young man drove the ball about 240 yards right down the middle of the fairway.

After the young man hit the ball, he walked over to Zig Ziglar and said, “Mr. Ziglar, I heard what you said.” Ziglar was so embarrassed he wanted to crawl in a hole. But the young man continued, “I heard what you said when you spoke in my hometown three years ago, and it completely changed my life. I want you to know Mr. Ziglar, that it is an honor for me to even be on the same golf course with you.”

Ziglar breathed a sigh of relief, and in his book “Top Performance” he wrote about that experience. He said, “That day I made a new resolution to be far more careful in uttering my comments, especially negative ones about other people.” (SEARCHING FOR HEAVEN ON EARTH by Dr. David Jeremiah, Integrity Publishers, Nashville, TN, Copyright 2004)

Today, let us resolve to be more careful with our comments, especially those negative comments we often speak to or about one another.

Let us resolve to refrain from the UNTAMED, UNKIND, UNWISE, and UNCONTROLLED WORDS of a fool!