

## TITUS Part 12: Evil Speech. Chapter 31-2: (4/22/2017)

The following text is based on a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph.

**\*Portions of this sermon message have been edited to better transcribe the message. All the Scripture verses are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted and are in red. Therefore, it is recommended that this document be printed in color.**

We are going to continue in our study on Titus, and we're getting to the end of the study. Last week we broke into the last chapter, chapter three. Today we are going to get to verse two, and we may actually just finish it next week.

Before we get into today's message, let me preface it by saying that what we are going to be covering today is one of those topics that you cannot bring to the forefront of your mind enough. You are going to have the day when the light bulb goes off in your head, and it will change your whole mentality. We tend to learn something, and then we have this attitude that we are done; we have learned it, and we can move on to learn something new in the word. That is not how God designed His Word. God designed His Word through repetition; you go back over it again and again. All you need to do is study the Torah; we will find these primary principles, the ones that God is most concerned about, repeated over and over and over again. We see them constantly; you can't forget them. And if that weren't enough, you don't read the Torah just once; it never ends. This is what we call the Torah cycle. Whether you're on a three-year cycle or the one-year cycle doesn't matter, you're just redoing it over and over again.

What we are going to cover today is one of those concepts and principles that we can't ever let go of. And the reason is because it's so easy to fall into this trap over and over. So this is a concept that we're going to learn today.

With that said, let's break into Titus 3:1—**Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one.** The "them" is the churches that Titus was going to, and Paul reminds Titus not to speak evil of anyone. This is on the forefront of Paul's mind as he instructs Titus. He instructs him to—**speak evil of no one**; don't fall into this trap.

This is what the rabbis call *lashon hara*; in the English it literally means evil tongues or evil speech. You need to understand something: the rabbis are terrified of *lashon hara*; they're terrified of evil speech. Why? Because they know what Paul knew. They know the destruction capabilities it has on a community. This is why Paul is mentioning this. And look at what Proverbs 18:21 has to say about the topic—**Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.** Death and life: understand this is not hyperbole. Literally, death and life are in the power of your tongue.

The enemy loves to come in and whisper in your ear and say, "It doesn't really matter what you say; no one's really listening anyway. No one really cares." That is a lie because when you speak you have the power to speak life into somebody, and you have the power to speak death over them. You need to think about that concept; it can radically change your faith. It will change the way you speak or talk; it will be a total 180-degree reversal. Go right back to the Titus verse—**Death and life are in the power of the tongue.**

Proverbs 11:11 articulates this so beautifully and gives you an example—**By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted**. I want you understand what was just said—the **blessing of the upright**. The upright and righteous men are going forth and they are blessing; they are speaking life into the city or the community. And what is the effect? It is exalted, it goes to the highest of heights, it's secure, and it's strong. But, in opposition to that we read this—**but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked (Proverbs 11:11)**. Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

Think about this: We can speak life into our communities, into our friends, and into our families; or we can speak death. But know this: your words have power; you will bring a city to destruction, and you will bring a community to destruction. Understand this reality. This is the reality that Paul knows is true. So as Titus is going out, this is at the forefront of Paul's instructions. He is extremely concerned about them falling into this.

I like to tell this little Hasidic tale of a pillow filled with feathers. There was this man who went out into this community and was speaking evil of the rabbi to everyone. The things he said started to spread and to fester. When he saw its destruction, he came back to the rabbi and said, "Rabbi, I've done a horrible thing. I am convicted, and I am sorry. Whatever it takes, I need to make this right. So the rabbi says, "Fine. Go get a feather pillow, cut it open, and scatter it to the wind." So the man goes and does what the rabbi asked. He cuts the pillow open and dumps the feathers out. The wind takes the feathers until all the feathers have disappeared. Within moments he doesn't see them. He goes back to the rabbi and says, "Rabbi, I've done as you have asked. Now what?" So now the rabbi shares with him the lesson of the story, "Surely I tell you, you can no more make a penance, make amends, for what you have done than you can go out and collect the feathers." The moral of the story is that you can't collect the feathers. This just shows the power of our tongue and the damage it can do.

I want to take you to James's epistle. He dedicates a significant portion of his epistle to the tongue, and the way he does it is so beautiful. He gives this information about the tongue that we need to have if you want to appreciate what Paul is commanding here to be done. This is what we read in James 3:2—**For we all stumble in many things**. I love how he starts. This is so different than talking to Christians today where there's this veneer Christianity, and we tend to put this nice gloss on the outside. It looks beautiful on the outside, but it isn't right on the inside. What I like about reading Scripture and like about the apostles is that the apostles are raw, they're organic, they are open, and they wear their heart on their sleeve. You know who they are, and they say things like—**we all stumble in many things**. Notice that he doesn't start by saying, "Look at how high and pious we are; we're just so righteous. Be more like me." Instead he says—**we all stumble in many things**. He continues—**if anyone does not stumble in word (In what? In word), he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body**.

What is fascinating about this is the way James explains this: man's ability to control his entire body is based upon his ability to control his tongue. You think about that. If you don't stumble in word, you're perfect. What does this tell you about the tongue? It tells you that the tongue is a very powerful force. In fact, the tongue is so powerful that James offers up some analogies to help us appreciate this, and this is what he goes on to say in James 3:3—**Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body**.

This is fascinating because if you've ever seen horses, they are these mammoth animals with brute strength. If you watch people who know horses like Shelly; it is interesting to watch her walk around with the horses. She has great respect for the animal, she knows how these animals are, and she respects the strength of these animals. Right? By comparison, James is looking at the brute strength of

this horse in that, if you don't know better, it could be deadly. It could be very harmful. But this is what's interesting: riders put bits in horses' mouths. This is where James is taking us to: the tongue. He is shifting the focus on this horse's tongue. You put this little bit into the horse's mouth, and all of the sudden the will of the horse submits to its rider. You need to understand that a horse has a spirit, a will. If you don't put a bit in its mouth and instead let it run around, it will do what it wants to do and go where it wants to go. This brute strength and muscle mass does what it wants until a rider puts a bit in its mouth, and then its will is subdued to the rider's will.

James goes on to give another analogy—<sup>4</sup> **Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires (James 3:4).** Think about ships like the Titanic and other ships that are of great size. Look at the sheer size of it in comparison to the little, tiny rudder or to the little, tiny propellers that are shifting under the water and turning this massive boat. Continue in James 3:5—**Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!** How many times have you seen these pictures of these massive forest fires where hundreds if not thousands of acres are totally decimated, all because of a spark? Verse 6—<sup>6</sup> **And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.** The Greek word for world is *kosmos*. It is an entire world of iniquity. You couldn't use stronger language here in describing what the tongue is. Continuing in verse 6—**The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.**

So we learn some things about the tongue that Paul knows. Number one, it is a world of iniquity. Number two, it has the power to defile the whole body. And if that weren't enough, it has the power to destroy everything in its path, leaving nothing. James 3:7-8—<sup>7</sup> **For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.** <sup>8</sup> **But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison [emphasis added].** Let me get this straight: the tongue is a world of iniquity, it defiles the whole body, it destroys everything in its path, and it is unruly evil full of deadly poison. And now he tells me no one can tame it. How scary is that?

James 3:9-10—<sup>9</sup> **With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.** <sup>10</sup> **Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.** And he's absolutely right. These things are not to be so. But guess what? They be. Right? They be very much?

How often do we fall into the trap of evil speech? How often do we defile this temple (our bodies)? And remember what Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 3:17-18—<sup>17</sup> **Do you not know that you are a temple of God....** <sup>18</sup> **If any man defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him.** And when you think about that statement, "You are the temple," and realize that our tongue has the ability to defile this temple, what does that mean? Total destruction!

I will add an interesting little tidbit. Do you know what the rabbis teach in regard to the reason the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D? Look it up in the Babylonian Talmud: *lashon hara*. That is what they attribute the destruction of the Temple to. So you understand that the rabbis have deep respect when you start talking about the tongue. They know what Scripture says; they know the effects of it even to the point that they now say the destruction of the Temple happened because of the tongue.

With that, I want to take you to Matthew 12. Yeshua has something to add here. And again, it is vitally important in understanding and appreciating the tongue and specifically how it functions. This is what we read in Matthew 12:34—**Brood of vipers** (responding to the heretics who were actually accusing him

of casting out demons by the ruler of demons)! **How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.** Interesting! He says—**Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.** This tells us something about the tongue in that it is not, in and of itself alone; it is directly connected to another organ: the heart. In other words, the tongue is the formal representative to speak on behalf of the heart. Think about the emotions and thoughts that your heart feels. These things are made manifest by its representative: the tongue. The tongue will bring these things to fruition so that we know what's in somebody's heart. If the mouth boasts wicked things, what does that tell you about that person's heart? If the mouth boasts truth and righteousness, if a mouth goes out to heal others and to give them encouragement and love, what does it tell you about the heart? It tells you a lot. The tongue is the window to the heart.

Going to Matthew 12:35-37—<sup>35</sup> **A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.** <sup>36</sup> **But I say to you that for every idle (careless) word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.** <sup>37</sup> **For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.** That is terrifying! People have put these statistics together where they look at how many words the average person speaks in their lifetime. It's over half-a-billion. Think about that and put that in context. That is over half-a-billion words, and all of them are going to be laid out before us in judgment.

Something else that is kind of funny, and maybe I shouldn't mention it, but I will. In the statistics, they started looking at how many words women speak in comparison to men. It was just really ironic. They say that per day women are speaking roughly twenty thousand words. That is twenty thousand words compared to men who speak seven thousand. The moral of the story: pray for the women. I'm kidding. Just a little lightheartedness! Believe me, women, on the Day of Judgment, it is the men who will be groveling. I promise you that.

Going to Psalms 34:12—**Who is the man who desires life?** The words “desires life” is where you get the term *chafets caim* or *chaim chafets*. That is a book, if you are not familiar with it. It is also now attributed to Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan who later just became known as the Chafets Chaim, but the book is all about the *lashon hara*. This is where it stems from, if you will. Continuing from the beginning—**Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good?** <sup>13</sup> **Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.** This is King David speaking in his infinite wisdom: Do we love life, do we want to see a long life, do we want prosperity and health to come upon us? If so, keep your tongue from evil. It's an unruly evil, and we've just got to recognize that. You would be shocked to know that we have not even begun to touch the surface in regard to what the Bible has to say about the tongue. So if we want to be blessed in what we do, take heed. Or you can use your tongue as an instrument of death and find out what happens.

Now I want to take this to David's son Solomon. He had the same wisdom that his father had in this matter. Look at what he says in Proverbs 13:3—**He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.** Think about that. We need to guard the words that we say. And I can be the first to tell you: have I been perfect in this or anywhere near it? No. This is why we need scripture to strike fear into our hearts. This is why we need to do this because no man has tamed the tongue. There is actually one: His name is Yeshua, but other than that no man has managed to do it.

Now having said that, I want to give you a real life example of someone who fell into the trap of evil speech, of *lashon hara*. And this one is a really good example because what you're going to see here is how easy it is and how there are going to be times when you feel justified in saying what you have said.

But it is evil speech. So I want to take you to Numbers 12:1, and this is what we read—**Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses.** Now to really appreciate this, we need to understand the context, so we're going to break this down a little bit. I highlighted their names for a reason. Look at these people who are mentioned here. Aaron was the *kohen gadawl* (High Priest). He was the anointed of God Most High to make intercession for the people, to keep peace between God and the people, and to be that connection of intimacy. It was through Aaron's service, which God ordained, that God would continue this intimate relationship with Israel. This is who Aaron is. Who is Miriam? She is a prophetess of God. Prophets are what? They are anointed. The two people mentioned here are anointed.

Now with that context, we look at the verse again—**Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses.** Now there is something else here that I want to talk about in regard to the construct of the Hebrew. Normally you get into this pattern where you see this natural ebb and flow in the Torah in regard to the structure of Hebrew. For example: *Vayedaber Adonai el Moshe* (and God spoke to Moses). We see that typically because that is how your Torah portions start out. Right? This is different. It is not *Vayedaber*; it's *Vetedaber* (this is a verb in the feminine but means the same as *Vayedaber*), and scholars talk about this, in that it stops you dead in your tracks. Why? Because it's in the feminine. In other words, when you read this in the Hebrew, it implicates Miriam as heading up this little mutiny, if you will, against Moses.

So the Rabbis talk about this because if you notice the order of the names that are mentioned, it is Miriam first and then it is Aaron, and it's *Vetedaber* (the female form) first, then it is *Vayedaber* (the male form). This is going to mean more as we get to the end of the story. Returning to the verse—**Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman (Numbers 12:1).** The woman that they are talking about is Zipporah. Now again we need to keep context in mind. Why all of a sudden is this a problem? Moses has been married to Zipporah over twenty years; why all of a sudden has this become a problem? Is this a personality issue that Miriam and Sapporo are having with each other? Understanding what has happened is vital for appreciating the reality of how easy it is to fall into *lashon hara*.

I am going to show you context in regard to these questions. All we need to do is to go back to the previous chapter, and this is what we read in Numbers 11:4—**Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving.** The mixed multitude is not Israel; these are the Gentile people who left Egypt with the Israelites (Exodus 12:38). So they are amongst Israel, and they start to yield to intense craving, the lust of their flesh. They start to do something: they turn their faces back towards Egypt like Lot's wife turned back to Sodom. They start looking back, and they start remembering all the good food that they had to eat such as melons, leeks, and meat. What did this do among the children of this Israel? Well, this is what it did—**so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat (Numbers 11:4)?"**

So these foreigners, these Gentiles, were dissatisfied, discouraged, and discontent with what they had, and they affected Israel. Isn't that interesting? We just finished Pesach, and what did we learn in 1 Corinthians 5 and Galatians 5? A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Evil company corrupts good habits (1 Corinthians 15:33). So we find that they are living it. A little leaven has leavened the whole lump and has spread into Israel. And because of their actions, Israel starts to fall into complaining and the lust of the flesh.

So how does the Lord respond to that? He hears this, and He gets angry. "OK, you want meat. I'll give you meat not for one day, two days, or three day. I will give you meat for a month until it's coming out

of your nose” (Numbers 11:19-20). So they get their meat and start eating it, and this is what happens—**But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague (Numbers 11:33).** Do you want to know what happened? This is what happened: The foreigners infected Israel with complaining; they infected them with leaven, and Israel paid a dear price for that.

So now when we read Numbers 12:1—**Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman.** She is a foreigner! Look at what just happened; this is a serious problem. Think about this: they look at the foreigners and how Israel has been affected, and they realize that it is time for ethnic cleansing, if you will. The attitude of Israel was that they needed to separate from the Gentiles because God’s anger had come out against them. So to Miriam and Aaron, it makes perfect sense to speak against Moses in this capacity and context.

Moving on to Numbers 12:2; look at how this continues—**So they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?"** Is that true? Yes. Miriam was a prophetess. Go back and read the Exodus story again. It was Miriam who led the women in singing (Exodus 15:20-21); the women followed her in song. Has the Lord spoken through Aaron? Yes the Lord has spoken through him. Again, go read the Exodus story. Aaron was the mouthpiece. That is why he was sent to Moses (Exodus 4:14-16). Has the Lord not spoken through Miriam and Aaron? The answer to that is absolutely. So at that point they start to shift the focus to themselves. They start to have an attitude like, “Look at what the Lord has done through us.” And by elevating themselves, they reduce Moses.

So this is the context of how they fell into *lashon hara*. The point of looking at the stories is to give you the understanding that it's much more deceptive. We think we are so witty and smart, and we think we know so much about the Scripture without having the fear of God and the reality of knowing that the greatest of the greats, such as Solomon, David, and Aaron, have been taken down. But we forget these things because we're so great, and they don't know what we know. Do you see how crazy this sounds when you say it out loud? Miriam and Aaron believe they're justified in this thought process.

Now continuing on in the story. Numbers 12:3-4—<sup>3</sup> **(Now the man Moses was very humble.... Isn't that fascinating! The first thing the commentator does in the Torah is to go to the character of Moses, the man who has been spoken evil of—more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)** <sup>4</sup> **Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out.**

My kids know when I come out and say, “Get over here; come here now,” they know it's not good. We heard this when we were kids and our fathers would say that; we knew there was trouble. This is exactly what the Father has done. He has called them, “Come here before Me now.” Moving on to verses 5-8—<sup>5</sup> **Then the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward.** <sup>6</sup> **Then He said, "Hear now My words: "If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.** <sup>7</sup> **Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house.** <sup>8</sup> **I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?"**

The question was, “Why were you not afraid”? The answer to that is because they were blinded by their own chutzpah. They began to look at themselves and what the Lord had done through them, and they were consumed by their interpretation of the situation that their idea was right, and their course of

action should be implemented. But the problem is that it was at the expense of Moses' character. Therefore, through this boldness they speak against Moses.

Now that the Lord Himself has shed light on the situation, Miriam and Aaron are about to see just how great of an error they had made. This is what we read in Numbers 12:9-10—<sup>9</sup> **So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them, and He departed.** <sup>10</sup> **And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper.** This was the facts.

So the Lord plagues Miriam with leprosy. And it's interesting that Aaron is not plagued. Did you notice that? This is why I was spending time talking about that construct of the Hebrew: the *Vetedaber* (the female form). It indicates that Miriam was leading up this revolt. And it is not that Aaron was innocent because he was complicit, but she was leading it out.

So the Lord plagues Miriam with leprosy because of what she said. You need think about this: the leprosy is a result of speech. That is why it is funny that *lashon hara* is actually called leprosy of the mouth.

Now when we look at this story, we learn a lot about evil speech. Number one, evil speech is easy to fall into more than you think. Number two, the Lord hears every word that we say. We forget that. How many times we forget that He is in the room when we're just talking with one other person. I mean I've forgotten it; I'll be the first to tell you that. I would be a liar if I tried to pretend I didn't do it. I wish my words were always tried, true, and perfect. The third thing we learn here is that leprosy of the mouth will separate you from God. If you keep that on the forefront of your mind, it will put your sword in its sheath; your tongue will be in its sheath when you realize what just happened here with Miriam. You notice that when the Lord departs, she gets leprosy. Sin, according to Isaiah 59:2, will separate you from God.

We also know that it is very significant that Miriam was given leprosy by the Lord because lepers were to be cast out of the presence of the Lord; they are to be cast out of the camp. We read this right within the Torah in Numbers 5:2—**Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper.** Why? Because God dwelt among his people. You could not have the unclean sitting in the camp; you have to get everything that isn't clean out of the camp. Do you know what a leper has to do when they are actually identified with leprosy? Let's go back and reread a part of this story—**Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper (Numbers 12:10).** I want to be very clear on that: that's not just some little tidbit. There's a very significant component here being shared with us. It is the priests, the kohanim, that declare people to have leprosy. You need to understand that within the Torah, it has to be the priest; it's not any other man. The person has to go to the priest, and it is the kohanim that declare them to have leprosy and be unclean. This is exactly what just happened here. As a result, the person has to cover their mouth with their hand and pronounce that they are unclean. They then get cast out to dwell alone or with the other unclean lepers. This is the reality, and this is what we need to understand. It separates us from the Lord.

Now I want to build upon the story in Numbers 12 because there's a common thread between this story and another story that morphs into a third story. This will all make sense in a second. In 2 Chronicles we find a story about King Uzziah. Keeping in mind context, there is something you need to know about this King Uzziah. Just like Miriam and Aaron, King Uzziah was righteous; he did what was right in the sight of the Lord. Not just that, but God prospered him so that he became elevated to the highest of

heights. His fame, according to the Scriptures, went out to the ends of the earth. He became great. So what happened? Well, let's take a look in 2 Chronicles 26:16—**But when he was strong his heart was lifted up.** Do you understand that this is when errors can happen; this is when pride creeps in and the tongue moves because of pride? We do certain things because of pride and without fear. And here is this man whose heart is lifted up. Make no mistake, you go back to Aaron and Miriam and how Miriam acted, and you find that their hearts are lifted up; their hearts are lifted up against Moses.

Continuing in 2 Chronicles 26:16—**his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.** This is something only the kohanim could do. Isn't that interesting? He just overstepped his bounds. That's what pride will do. It is this issue of the heart being directly connected to the tongue which is a representative of the issues of the heart. Moving on to 17-19—<sup>17</sup> **So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD--valiant men.** <sup>18</sup> **And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the LORD God."** <sup>19</sup> **Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar.** How does this tie in? Well it's interesting. Uzziah went on to die as a leper.

I want to jump ahead now to Isaiah 6:1-5. This is a story we have already covered in this series. Do you remember reading this? <sup>1</sup> **In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the LORD sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.** <sup>2</sup> **Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.** <sup>3</sup> **And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"** <sup>4</sup> **And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.** <sup>5</sup> **So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips [emphasis added]...."**

So looking at the context: Isaiah is seeing Yeshua in His glory. It is awesome! The angels are speaking; there is an earthquake and thunder that are shaking him. He has totally lost himself in the moment, but there is something that he hones in on. He doesn't say, "Oh, my eyes have wandered, and my hands have done things they shouldn't have done. My feet have brought me to places I shouldn't have gone." He instead goes to the tongue—I am a man of unclean lips. And if that isn't enough—and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." You want to talk about a world of iniquity; you want to talk about an unruly evil full of deadly poison. The mouth is it; the tongue is. If we are honest with ourselves, what can we say more than what Isaiah had said? We are men and women of unclean lips dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

There is good news here. This is why I saved this for last and why this morphed this way. We continue in Isaiah 6:6-7—<sup>6</sup> **Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.** <sup>7</sup> **And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged."** What an amazing moment! Again, the seraphim didn't bring the coal to his hands, eyes, or feet. He touched his lips; his tongue was purified, and his sin was removed. And did you notice that for this to come about, Isaiah had to have something: confession. He had to have a humble heart to come and confess, "Your glory Lord I have seen, and I am a man of unclean lips." The first thing that comes out of Isaiah's mouth is a confession. That is a powerful deal! And what happened? The Lord forgave him; there is forgiveness here. The same can be for us if we are willing to do as Isaiah did. The coal can touch your lips; atonement can be made despite

having fallen into the trap who knows how many times. Who can count that high? You look at this. It wasn't just Isaiah who received this beautiful mercy and forgiveness. Miriam also received it.

Going back to Numbers 12:13—**So Moses cried out to the LORD.** Now here's what's interesting: as Miriam is sitting there stricken with leprosy, Aaron cries out to Moses—**So Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord! Please do not lay *this* sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned (Numbers 12:11).** Isn't that interesting? You have to tie this to Yeshua because Yeshua is the prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). Here you have the kohen gadawl, the most highly decorated man in all of Israel, begging Moses, whom he had sinned against, for mercy. Everytime we have opened our mouth and spoken evil, it's not just this person we have spoken evil against, it's Yeshua. Think about that!

So how does Moses react to what Aaron said? Numbers 12:13—**So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "Please heal her, O God, I pray!"** What an awesome intercessor! This is the kind of guy you want on your side. <sup>14</sup> **Then the Lord said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days (How long? Seven days. That is the purification time of the leper.) and afterward she may be received again."** <sup>15</sup> **So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey till Miriam was brought in again.**

We look at the horrifying aspects of falling into sin, which every one of us have done, and foolishly speaking evil of one another, which we should never have done. But how can you cover that story without hope? How can you cover that story without talking about the reality that there is forgiveness if we humble ourselves before the Living God?

Think about what Miriam did. She was the one who was cast out of the camp, and Israel did not move. You have over one million people waiting for one person to go through her purification. I think about how mind-blowing this is! This is why when we read Matthew 18:12-13 it says that He leaves ninety-nine sheep to go get the one lost sheep, and He rejoices over that one lost sheep more than all ninety-nine.

Just think about what Miriam did and how angry the Lord was with her. But then think about the awesome forgiveness she received, and she was so loved despite all of this. When we fail, and we have failed countless times, this is how much the Lord loves us. The entire camp doesn't move until one person is brought back in. How awesome is that?