

The Bulwark

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SLIP SLIDING AWAY

Who would have ever thought that something as seemingly insignificant as the type of horseshoe would lend itself to the downfall of a mighty army. But according to an article written by Anthony Brandt entitled “1812: The Bitter End”, such played into Napoleon’s defeat in Russia. It is well known that winters in Russia are extremely harsh. Apparently, Napoleon’s farriers had only shod a few horses with cleated shoes, the rest remained in “summer shoes”. The horses slipped on the ice covered roads as they tried to pull cannons, supply wagons and so forth; in short a massive failure of the supply chain. A mighty army brought to a catastrophic end, with a slip here and another slip there.



How many of us have experienced our own undoing by a slip; a slip of the tongue. Solomon, in the book of Proverbs noted the power of the tongue. *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”* (18:21) Imagine that, a slip of the tongue can, and oft times does do severe damage to careers, friendships, familial ties and so much more. Things of great import in our life, slip sliding away, by a slip of the tongue.

On his part, James in his epistle put

a premium of the power of the tongue. In the third chapter and in basically the first twelve verses he discusses just how venomous the tongue can be. In fact so much so that he points out in verse eight, *“But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.”* Think back to the undoing of Napoleon’s army, horseshoes; who would have thought something like what kind of shoes the horses were shod with meant victory or defeat? *“So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire.”* (James 3:5)

Slip sliding away; now imagine the slip of the tongue in the age of social media. A careless word can go viral and it can’t always be retracted. It might be prudent to consider what David asserted as seen the 39th psalm. *“I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle...”* (v. 1) The careless word or thought need not always be verbal, but however communicated, causes the spread of that which is toxic. One must always remember that the mouth speaks that which fills the heart (Luke 6:45)

On a decidedly more upbeat tone, look at what Peter penned in his

first epistle, chapter three and verse ten. *“Let him who means to love life and see good days refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile.”* We have the power within self to mitigate so much of the drama that creeps into our life, if only we would be mindful of our words. *“He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles.”* (Proverbs 21:23)

Perhaps the best summation to the thoughts presented can be seen in Proverbs 17:27-28. *“He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is man of understanding. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips he is considered prudent.”*

(wbc)

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