

# The Bible's Picture of the Tongue



Does Your Tongue Need Healing? (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you on this week's important, but challenging theme: Does Your Tongue Need Healing?

In my talk yesterday I explained the direct connection between our heart and our mouth, summed up in the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:34:

> "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."

In other words, when the heart is filled, it overflows through the mouth and the overflow that comes through the mouth tells us the real condition of the heart. Jesus also said, "The heart is like a tree; the words are like fruit." If the fruit is good, then we know the tree is good. But if the fruit is bad, then we know the tree is bad. We cannot have bad fruit coming out of a good tree. If the words of the mouth are bad, then the condition of the heart also is bad.

I also showed you two beautiful Old Testament portraits, the first of Christ, the second of Christ's bride. Here's the portrait of Christ in Psalm 45:2:

> "Thou art fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Thy lips; therefore God has blessed Thee forever." (NASB)

The first feature of the Messiah is the grace upon His lips and this is that which brings God's blessing upon Him.

And then Christ's bride in the Song of Solomon, verse 3:

> "Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely..." (NASB)

Verse 11:

> "Your lips, my bride, drip honey; honey and milk are under your tongue..." (NASB)

So, you see both for Christ the Messiah, and for His bride, the Church, the first feature of the grace of God and the

spiritual and moral beauty is their lips and their speech.

Today I'm going to show you a Biblical picture of the tongue itself. I'm going to turn to the Epistle of James which deals at length with this subject. First, let's consider some very searching remarks that James makes about the nature of true religion, the kind of religion that God accepts and also the kind that He does not accept. These remarks are found in James, chapter 1, verses 26 and 27. In verse 26, James speaks about the kind of religion that is not acceptable to God.

> "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless." (NIV)

Those are very searching words. It doesn't matter how religious we may claim to be, how much we may attend church and sing hymns and do all the other things that are required and expected of religious people—and in themselves, all those things are good—but, though we may do all those things, if we do not keep our tongue under control, our religion is worthless. The whole thing is unacceptable to God. Would to God, that all religious people would face up to this issue.

And then on the other side, in the next verse, James speaks about the kind of religion that God accepts and requires, and again, it's pretty different from that of the average church-goer today. James 1:27:

> "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." (NIV)

See, the first positive requirement of pure religion is not church-going, not even Bible reading; it's looking after those who are in need. It's showing practical love to those who are in need, primarily orphans and widows.

Let me suggest to you, if you are in any way religious, that you take time to look in this mirror of the Word of God, there in the first chapter of James, verses 26 and 27. Look right into that mirror and see yourself as God sees you with all your religious activity. If you don't control your tongue, your religion is worthless, and if you want to have a religion that's accepted by God, it's got to be demonstrated first and foremost in caring for those who are in need; the orphans and the widows.

You see, I think again of that little anecdote of mine about the doctor in the desert when he asked his patients how they felt, he really wasn't too much interested in the answer because the next thing he always said was, "Show me your tongue." And that's really what James is saying in those two verses. He's saying if you want to impress God with your religion, the first thing He's got to say is, "Show me your tongue," and He's going to judge from your tongue whether your religion is valid and acceptable or not.

Now we're going to look at a number of pictures that James uses to illustrate the function of the tongue in our lives. We're going to move on to the third chapter of the Epistle of James, James, chapter 3, verses 2 through 8. This is what he says:

> "We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. [Just pause there for a moment. What James is saying is, if you can control your tongue, you can control your whole life. You're a perfect man if you can control your tongue. Then he goes on to give some illustrations from the natural world.] When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." (NIV)

Let's look at some of the illustrations that James uses there. He's bringing out the unique significance and influence of the tongue for the whole course of our life and our personality. The first example he uses is the bit in the horses mouth. He says, "If we succeed in putting a bit in a horse's mouth, we can turn the whole animal around." The horse, in the Bible, is usually a type of strength, a physical strength. But what James is saying is, no matter how strong a horse is, if you can once get control of its mouth with the bit, you can control the whole animal. It's strength is brought into subjection through the control of its mouth. And James is saying the same is true with us. That which controls our

mouth controls the whole course of our life.

The next example is perhaps a little more vivid. He compares it to the rudder in the ship. He says a ship may be a very great structure and it may be carried to and fro by tremendously powerful forces—the winds and the waves—and it may be capable of carrying many people on board. And yet, in that ship, there is one decisive, small piece—the rudder—and it's the use of the rudder that determines the whole course of the ship. If the rudder is used aright, the ship will get safely to harbor. If the rudder is not used aright, the ship is likely to make shipwreck. And he says it's the same in our lives. The tongue is the rudder. That's what controls the course of our lives. If that rudder of the tongue is used aright, we'll make it safely to our destination. But if it's not used aright, we'll make shipwreck.

Then another example that he gives is that of a small spark that can start a forest fire. In our United States, this year and every year, billions of dollars of damage are caused by forest fires and they usually start just the way James says, with a small spark. The Forest Department of the United States has a very vivid poster which says, "Only you can prevent forest fires." That's true in the spiritual. The tongue is like a little spark that can drop somewhere and destroy something of tremendous value and size, causing billions of dollars of damage.

And fourthly, the other example that James uses is a source of poison. He says the tongue is like a  poisonous element that poisons the whole course of our lives.

Just look at those examples again for a moment with me; the bit in the horse's mouth, the rudder in the ship, the spark that starts a forest fire, and a poison that's injected into our life stream. The essence of all these illustrations is the same. The tongue is something small in itself but capable of causing incalculable harm, and harm that can never be undone.

And then James goes on to point out, once more, the inconsistencies of religious people. Chapter 3, verses 9 through 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." (NIV)

James is saying exactly the same as Jesus said. If the tree is good, the fruit will be good. If you've got a fig tree in your heart, you'll get figs out of your mouth. But if you've got a vine in your heart, you'll never get figs out of your mouth. What comes out of your mouth indicates what's in your heart. And the same, he said, with the flow of water. If the water that comes out of your mouth is fresh, then the spring that's in your heart is fresh. But if the water that comes out of your mouth is salty and brackish, then the spring of your heart is salty and brackish. So that which comes out of the mouth inevitably indicates the true condition of the heart.

Let's return to James 1:26 to close.

> "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless." (NIV)

Well our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll continue with this theme: Does Your Tongue Need Healing? I'll be diagnosing certain specific diseases that affect our tongues.

## Radio Program

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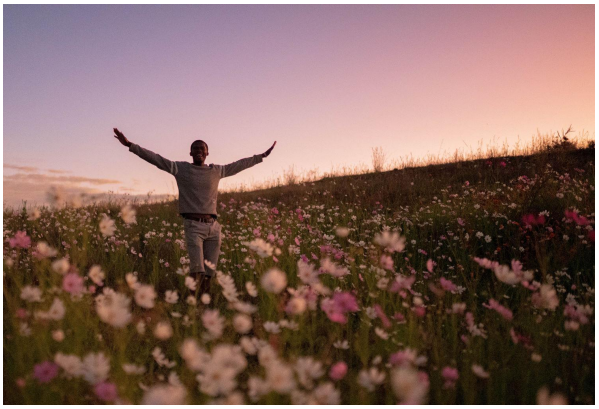

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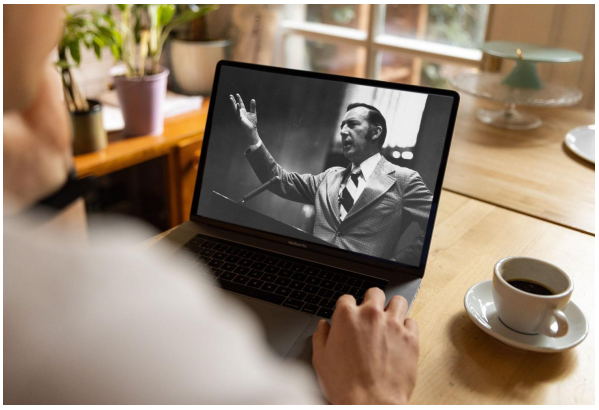

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