

Control of the Tongue



Learning by Living (Part 6)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

This week I will be continuing with the theme which I commenced last week: "Learning by Living," in which I am sharing with you vital practical lessons that I have learned in serving the Lord and His people.

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk, we will be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write, even if it is only a brief personal note. Now back to our theme, "Learning by Living."

Have you ever stopped to ask yourself: How much spiritual progress am I making? How far have I come?

Well I want to share with you something that I learned and have practiced over the years, which is a very good way of answering that question.

The Bible shows us one very practical way in which we can check on our own spiritual progress: by checking on how we use our tongue.

During World War II in the North African deserts, I worked as a hospital attendant with the British Medical Forces and for a time I worked with a very clever laconic Scottish doctor. And I was responsible for the administration of a small reception station in the desert for patients with dysentery. The only kinds of patient we took in were dysentery patients. I won't go into the details about that, I will spare you all of that.

Well, every morning I had to go around with the doctor checking on the patients. And he had a ritual that he just went through without any variation. He would come up to each patient and say, "Good morning. How are you?" And he never bothered to listen to the answer. The next thing he always said was, "Show me your tongue." And when he looked at the man's tongue, he formed his own estimate of

just how the man was doing.

You need to understand that in those days they did not have the very sophisticated means of testing that we have nowadays and certainly they would never have had them right out there in the middle of the desert.

But the principle that I want to bring out is that God treats us the same way. He says, "How are you?" But I do not think He pays much attention to our answer. Because the next thing He says is, "Show me your tongue." And it is from our tongue that He decides how we are doing spiritually.

You see, God has provided us a mirror to help to check on our own spiritual progress. This mirror is His own Word.

This is what James says in his epistle in the first chapter, verses 22 through 26:

> "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like."

You understand the mirror that we look into is the Word of God. And some people look into it, see their problems and then walk away and forget them and do nothing about them.

> "But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. [And then notice the next sentence:] If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless."

You could almost picture yourself standing in front of God's mirror and sticking out your tongue. God says, "When I see the condition of your tongue, I will know whether your religion is sincere and valid or whether it is worthless, by how you use your tongue."

And then in the same epistle, chapter 3, James says this:

> "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. When we put bits into the mouth 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."

So what the rudder is to the ship, the tongue is to the human life. It steers, it decides the way we will go. If we use it right, we come safely into harbor. If we misuse it, we make shipwreck.

Now, I would just like to share with you, out of my own experience, briefly, some stages in the disciplining of my own tongue.

Now when the Lord met me supernaturally in an army barrack room, in 1941, an army barrack room in the British Army, I have to say with shame that I was a slave to blasphemous, unclean speech. I just could not speak five sentences without using words that were embarrassing. When I met the Lord I was instantly delivered of all of that.

I met the Lord because I had heard a sermon preached on Isaiah, chapter 6, in which Isaiah saw the Lord in his glory. And when he saw the Lord, he said:

> "Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."

Well, when I heard those words in that sermon, "A man of unclean lips, living amongst the people of unclean lips," I said, "That describes me as accurately as I have ever been described in my life." Then in the vision:

> "One of the seraphs flew to Isaiah with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. He touched Isaiah's mouth and said, 'See this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'"

And that was my experience. When the Holy Spirit touched my lips, instantly and completely I was delivered from unclean speech and blasphemy.

Well, I thought that was all there was to it. But I soon began to discover there is a lot more to it than that. And so I discovered the words of Jesus, in Matthew 5:37:

> "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

I found that exaggeration and over-emphasis were things I had to deal with.

And then the Lord showed me how dangerous it is to indulge in negative talk, in stating things that are unbelieving and contrary to Scripture. For Paul says in Romans 10:10:

> "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

So with our mouth, we confess to salvation. If we say the right thing it brings us into salvation. If we say the wrong thing it does the opposite.

And then in Hebrews 3:1 we are told that Jesus Christ is the High Priest of our confession. What we say that is right, He is obligated to fulfill.

And then I learned also about hasty speech. There is a verse there in Proverbs, which really challenges one. Proverbs 29:20:

> "Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him."

Brothers and sisters, how often do we speak in haste? What a terrible judgment; "there is more hope for a fool" than for the person who does that.

And then God dealt with me about idle talk. I found the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:36:

> "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

And I realized I was saying things that really did not have any significance. I did not really mean them. And I heard others do that and say, "I did not really mean it. It does not matter." But Jesus says, "The mere fact that you did not really mean it is what matters." We are going to give an account of every idle word that we speak.

I have been talking about the various kinds of problems that we can have with our tongue and I am sure that those of you who have been listening, there is not one of you that has not had to acknowledge, in some respect or other, that you have one of those problems.

Now in closing, briefly, I want to suggest to you the solution that I believe I have found and I believe it works as long as we apply it. First of all, you have to be honest and acknowledge that you have this problem with your tongue. If you do not admit the problem, if you never look in the mirror and see the condition of your tongue; or if you look in the mirror and walk away and forget what you have seen, then there is no solution. But if you acknowledge it, then you need to do these three things: Confess, repent and renounce. Just say, "I am not going to go that way any longer. I am not going to indulge in those things any longer. I am asking the Lord to deal with these things in my life."

After that, the next thing that is very important is you have to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Remember, it was the Holy Spirit that set Isaiah free from all the unclean speech. Paul says:

> "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit. [And then he goes on:] Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."

Do you understand? It is no good just becoming dumb, nobody is going to live that way. So if we want to get rid of the negative, we have to replace it with the positive. And the way to do that is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Yield your whole being to the Holy Spirit, especially yield that unruly member which you cannot control, your tongue, to the Holy Spirit.

I have made a study of all the places in the New Testament where it speaks about being filled with or full of, the Holy Spirit. And I have discovered in every single case the next word that follows is a word that has to do with the way we use our tongue—either speaking, or prophesying, or singing.

"But the overflow of the heart," Jesus said, "is through the mouth." So when we fill our hearts with the Holy Spirit and with the Word of God, then the overflow will inevitably be right. But if we let our hearts become empty of the Spirit and of the Word; or if we fill our hearts with foolish, empty things, with the language and the thoughts and the standards of this world, whatever is in our heart is going to come out through our mouth.

Paul also says again in Colossians 3:16:

> "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and so on."

You understand? When we are filled with the Word and with the Spirit, when our heart is filled, it will naturally overflow with the right. Do not focus on the negative. Confess the negative, renounce it, turn to God for deliverance and for pardon and for cleansing; but then the real ultimate solution is be filled with the Spirit and with the Word of God.

Radio Program

Transcript: TS-R130-101-ENG
Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

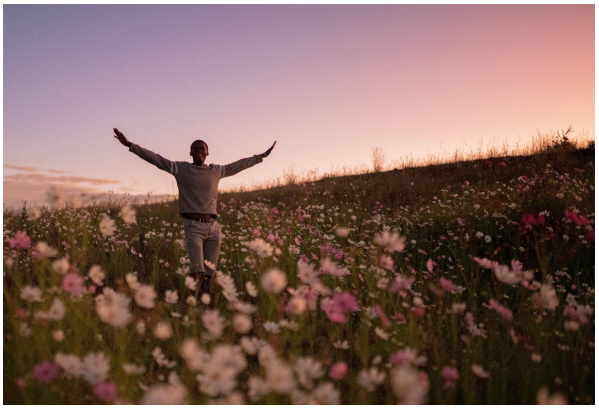


Bible Teaching Resources



Books

Illuminate and expand your understanding of the Bible with the Derek Prince collection of Christian books.



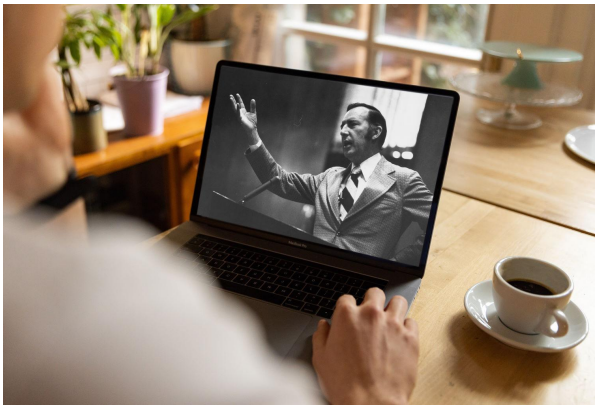
Daily Devotionals

Browse free biblically inspired daily devotionals by Derek Prince for practical teachings to uplift your Christian faith.



Legacy Radio

Listen to inspiring 10-minute messages and connect faith to life with the Derek Prince Legacy Radio podcast.



Sermons

Watch original and digitally remastered sermons by Derek Prince. Includes full message transcripts (free download).



Official App

Available free, download the official Derek Prince Ministries app and equip your faith, anywhere, anytime.



Proclamations

Declare life and experience the transformative power of God's Word with our bible-based Proclamations.

Copyright © Derek Prince Ministries