

## USE AND ABUSE OF THE TONGUE

It's an interesting fact, I don't know whether you've considered it, but in the human head there are seven natural openings. And they all go in pairs until you come to the last one. And they go also in descending order. Approximately the same level you have a pair of ears and a pair of eyes. That makes four openings. A little further down you have two nostrils, that makes six. You're left with one more opening which is all on its own, and that's your mouth. I suppose no one would ask for two mouths. Most of us have more than enough problems with just one. I'm sure there are many deep and wonderful truths in those simple facts that I've related to you.

If you were to go to the Scripture and make a systematic and complete study of all it has to say about the tongue and the things that are related to the tongue, that is the lips, the mouth, words and speech, it would take you many, many hours. You can look at any reliable concordance under any of those headings—words, lips, tongue, mouth, speech—and there is page after page of references to the Bible. In fact, I don't suppose there's any single subject that occupies more space in the Scripture than that which relates to the use of our tongue and our mouth.

God created man with a faculty of speech. And let people say what they will, but I don't believe there's any reasonable way of explaining how an animal that's not capable of speech will ever be able to speak in the sense in which we speak. For me, even before I became a Christian, this was a clear, well-established line of division between man and all lower animals. I've never heard any rational, sensible, convincing explanation of how an animal that couldn't speak could ever develop into an animal that could speak. And I believe when God gave man the ability to speak intelligently, consecutively in sentences and concepts and so on, it was part of what was included in the statement that God made man in His own image and in His own likeness. And when God committed to man the power to speak, in essence, He committed to him His own authority and creative ability. Because it was by God's word that all creation were brought into being. If you want one Scripture for that, Psalm 33:6:

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. (KJV)

And Hebrews 11:3:

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. (KJV)

There is no greater power committed to any of us with greater implications for good or evil than the power of speech. And therefore, it is only reasonable that we take some time and pay some attention to the way we use this power.

Let's consider, first of all, some general warnings and instructions of the Scripture and I will start in the book of Psalms. Psalm 34:11–13. If you have a Bible you'll probably find it helpful to follow through. I've got quite a considerable number of Scriptures to give you.

Come, ye children, hearken unto me [and I believe it is God speaking to His children by the Holy Spirit]: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? (KJV)

Do you want a long life and a good life? It's one thing to have a long life, it's another thing to have a long life and enjoy it. I've dealt with many, many people that had a long life and it was mainly misery. But God says that He, through the fear of the Lord, will teach us how to have a long life and enjoy it. "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" And the main part of the teaching is in the next verse.

Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. (KJV)

The greatest hindrance to a good life is the misuse of the tongue.

We turn onto the book of Proverbs and there must be several hundred references in Proverbs to the use of the tongue and the lips. I've just chosen a few. Proverbs 13:3:

He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction. (KJV)

So what you do with your mouth decides the course of your life. If you want to preserve your life you have to watch over your mouth. Proverbs 15:4:

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit. (KJV)

Where the *King James Version* says “a wholesome tongue,” the literal Hebrew says “the healing of the tongue,” which shows clearly that the tongue needs to be healed. And the tongue of every unregenerate man, without exception, needs to be healed. And the healing of the tongue is a tree of life.

Now the tree of life carries both fruit and leaves. The fruit are for food, the leaves are for medicine. That you’ll find both in the Old Testament (in Ezekiel) and in the New Testament (in the book of Revelation). And the Scripture teaches very clearly that there is a fruit of the tongue. And we eat what we produce with our tongue. The kind of fruit our tongue brings forth is what we feed on ourselves.

Then it says in the second half of that verse: “perverseness [in the tongue] is a breach in the spirit.” *Breach* in modern English, “a leak.” A lot of people have “leaky” spirits. They get blessed in the meetings, filled with the Spirit of God, and before they even get home they’re no longer full. They leaked out. Which way did they leak? Through the tongue. An uncontrolled, undisciplined tongue is a leak in your spiritual life. No matter how often you get filled you’ll never stay full if you can’t stop that leaky tongue of yours. Proverbs 18:21:

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: . . . (KJV)

The tongue controls both death and life. And notice it puts death first because before regeneration the tongue of the unregenerate man is a death dealing weapon.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. (KJV)

There is a fruit of the tongue and you eat it. And Proverbs 21:23:

Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles. (KJV)

If your soul has got into trouble, the reason is you didn't keep your mouth and tongue because if you do keep your mouth and your tongue, you keep your soul from troubles.

We'll move on to the Song of Solomon, which, I believe, and many commentators believe, contains in it a picture of the bride of Christ, the church. And in the 4th chapter there's a very beautiful, wonderful description of the bride as the Lord sees her and as the Lord desires her to be, and intends to make her. And there are two references there to the speech of the bride. Song of Solomon 4:3:

Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: . . . (KJV)

The "thread of scarlet" speaks of redemption. The lips of the bride have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. They're pure and comely. And that's how her speech is. And in the 11th verse of the same:

Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; . . . (KJV)

So her tongue brings forth that which is beautiful, attractive.

Matthew 12, and this is one of the most searching chapters of the New Testament. I've recently become particularly interested in this chapter. It has so much in it, but there's part of what Jesus says here is about the tongue. Matthew 12:33–37. You'll notice we talk again about the tree and its fruit.

Either make the tree good, and [its] fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and [its] fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by [its] fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (KJV)

The heart is the tree; the mouth is the fruit of the tree. The tree is known by its fruit. What comes out of your mouth is the indication of what's in your heart. And Jesus then goes on to apply this very

specifically to our words, verse 35:

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. (KJV)

See? There's no in between. It's either good or evil. And it's either good all the way or evil all the way. A good man out of the good treasure bringeth forth good things—three times good. An evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things—three times evil. It's the same stream all the way through, it cannot change. Verse 36:

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (KJV)

Ultimately, the destiny of our soul is settled by our words. And every idle word that we speak we must give account of. So many times when people say something wrong or foolish, they say, “Well, I didn't really mean it,” as though that covered it. But it doesn't. Because words you don't mean are idle words. An idle word is any word that you're not prepared to back up and stand by and go through with. And Jesus said every idle word that we speak we shall give account thereof. Do you know what I've noticed? I'm sure this is one of God's problems. He's never actually shared it with me but I do believe so. People who don't mean what they say don't believe that God means what He says. But He does. Don't judge God and His words by the way that you use words. God never uses idle words. Every word that God says He stands behind. And God says, “Let your words be like that. Don't use idle words. If you do, you're going to have to give an account of them.”

We'll move on to Colossians 4, taking one Scripture from Colossians, there are many, many passages in the epistles of Paul that deal with tongue, speech. . . . Colossians 4:6:

Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. (KJV)

Salt makes things appetizing, attractive. Paul says to Christians, “Let your speech be appetizing, attractive. So speak that people want what you’ve got.”

And then we’ll go to James which is probably the epistle of the New Testament that deals most thoroughly and most searchingly with the tongue. We’ll just look at two passages. James 1:26:

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man’s religion is vain. (KJV)

I don’t want in any way to be negative or appear to be critical, but as far as I’m concerned, that writes off, with one stroke of the pen, seventy-five percent of religion practiced in the United States at this time. The people who practice it don’t control their tongues. The Bible says, “If you don’t control your tongue, your religion is vain.”

Then James goes further into it in chapter 3 beginning in verse 2 and going on through verse 10. Now there’s a great deal in this but I’m only going to read it and just lightly touch upon it.

For in many things we offend all. [I am so glad that the apostle James had to include himself at that point. That gives me hope and encouragement. Now:] If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man [mature, complete], and able also to bridle the whole body. (KJV)

If you can control your tongue, there is no member of your body that you cannot control. You are in control when you can control your tongue. If you want to know how much self-control you have, you can probably measure it pretty accurately by checking on how much you control your tongue.

Behold we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. (KJV)

What’s in the mouth directs the course of the whole body, that’s the essence of that verse.

Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm [or rudder], [wherever the steersman desires, to put it in a little bit more modern English].

The tongue is like that. The tongue is the rudder of your life. The use of the rudder decides the destiny of the ship. And the use of the tongue decides the course of your life. Use the rudder aright, you'll come safe into port. Misuse the rudder and you'll make a wreck. That's what the tongue is. It's your rudder. And the power in your life that controls your tongue controls the course of your life.

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things [it's got a lot to say]. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! (KJV)

Just one little match can start a fire that will consume a multi-million dollar building. And the human tongue starts fires that burn down homes, churches, communities and nations. Just that one little fire.

Verse 6:

The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. (KJV)

And the word for "hell" there is *Gehenna*, the lake of fire. The tongue defiles the course of the whole body. You cannot have a clean body if you have a dirty tongue.

I was a medical orderly, or what you'd call a hospital attendant for five and a half years in the British army. At one time in the north African desert, I was in charge of a small reception station right out in the desert, for dysentery patients. That wasn't a pleasant job, by any means. There was practically no water. I won't go into the details. But I used to go around every morning with the medical officer, the doctor, who was a Scot. And rather a clever man. And I noticed he invariably addressed the same two remarks to every patient regardless of who they were or anything else about them. He said, "Good morning, how are you?" And he never bothered to listen to that. The next thing he said was, "Show me your tongue." And that's what he went by. And I think God treats you and me the same. He's not impressed by our religious profession; He just says, "Show Me your tongue. I'll judge the state of your body when I see your tongue." And he was a very clever doctor.

We'll finish reading James 3:

For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; . . . (KJV)

I remember as an unbeliever, a skeptic, a philosopher, that someone quoted that little part of a verse of the Bible to me and I said immediately to myself, “That is the truth.” I didn’t know the Bible had got anything so sensible as that to say. And it just stayed with me. “The tongue can no man tame.” That says it. Are you going to disagree with that? Stand up please if you don’t agree. “Brother Prince, I always control my tongue; I have no problem. James was wrong. I’m the evidence.” Let’s see you here tonight if you’re here. All right. I never have had anybody argue with James about that.

The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (KJV)

And where it says “deadly,” that word has rather lost its meaning in modern English. But it means “death-dealing poison.” It brings death.

Therewith bless we God, even the Father [these are religious people, please notice that]; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren [my Christian brethren], these things ought not so to be. (KJV)

Don’t deceive yourself. James was not writing to unchurched people, he was writing to professing, Spirit-baptized Christians, because they didn’t have any other kind in the church in those days.

All right. Now let’s take a moment or two to consider some of the specific problems that we find in dealing with the tongue. Without going into too much detail, I think I’ll put them up so you can follow them with the eye as well. I have ended up with seven. Those of you who know me know that somehow it usually ends up that way in my outlines. I didn’t try; it just stopped when I got to seven.

Problem number one is **excessive talking**. Did you know that was a problem? One thing I have to observe; I learned quite a number of languages which have genders. I’m probably familiar with about a dozen languages and in every language which has genders, the tongue is always in the feminine gender.



It's an unvarying fact. You can check on it in any language you like, if you find that there's a different language, I'd be interested to know. Let's look at two Scriptures. In Proverbs 10:19:

In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin [or there lacketh not sin. You cannot speak too much without saying the wrong thing.]: but he that refraineth his lips is wise. (KJV)

And Ecclesiastes 5:3, this is a very sharp verse. I am so happy that I have no particular person or even group in mind.

For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. (KJV)

So if you hear a person talking all the time, they're telling you what they are. A fool's voice is known by the multitude of words. And in the multitude of words there wantest not sin. You just cannot afford to keep on talking all the time.

Furthermore, bear in mind as Jesus said, and we'll come back to later, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." A restless tongue denotes a restless heart. A person who can never keep quiet is not at rest no matter how much they may talk about peace and joy, and speaking in tongues and all these things. They just advertise their inner disquiet by what is running out of their mouth all the time.

Then there's **idle words**. We've already mentioned that, so we'll just put them up. There are two Scriptures there. The one in Matthew 12:36 we've already looked at. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof." The other is on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:37.

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. (KJV)

But really the correct translation is "cometh of the evil one"—"comes from the devil." It's a very, very hard saying, but it's the truth. When you mean yes, say yes. And when you mean no, say no. And stop. That's all you have to say.

The history of the English language, even in my lifetime, is a long history of words whose meaning

has been lost by misuse. Think of words like *fantastic*. It doesn't mean anything today. People wanted to use a word that was strong, that would impress people, but you don't impress people by using words like that. You know what impresses people? Just saying what you mean. That is impressive. And Jesus says, "Just say that and stop." Overemphasis quickly loses its effect.

We had a subject for English years back when I was at Eton College. It was, "What is the Essence of Vulgarity in Literature?" I don't mean obscenity, because that was before the days when *adult* meant "obscene," which is what it means today. And we had an interesting discussion in our English class about this. And somebody came up with an answer that has always remained in my mind. He quoted some passage from some play of Shakespeare about a certain man and he said, "Methinks the fellow doth protest too much." Vulgarity is saying too much. It's overdoing it; overemphasizing it. It's using too many adjectives, too many colors in the painting. And that's just what Jesus was warning us against. He said, "When you mean to say yea, say yea. And when you mean to say nay, say nay." And when you meet a person like that, let me tell you one thing. You listen to what they have to say.

The next is **gossip**. Now I really do not joke about gossip. Because I think it's a terrible thing. And I think it's a reproach to the feminine sex. Now I know men can gossip too. But basically, as Brother Baxter said, when preaching about the man/woman family relationship, he said, "Gossip is a woman's occupational hazard." And I see his point. A woman in ordinary society has far more temptation and opportunity to gossip than a man. I'm not saying men don't gossip, because I know for sure they do. But anyhow, let's see what the Bible says. Leviticus 19:16:

Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor: . . .  
(KJV)

Which is very closely related. Don't be a witness against your neighbor. Don't spread stories about your neighbor. They may not be true, and even if they are true, it probably isn't your business to carry them around. A *talebearer* is, as its word indicates, "one who carries stories around about other people."

Let us look at a few other Scriptures on that quickly. Proverbs again. You'll find we always come

back to Proverbs. Proverbs 18:8:

The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.  
(KJV)

Did you know that it's possible to kill somebody with words? I mean, literally kill them. I know ministers in the past who died under the reproach and shame and wounding of malicious tongues.

Jeremiah 18:18, Jeremiah's enemies said:

Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words. (KJV)

And many, many servants of God die smitten with the tongue. Terrible responsibility. Proverbs 20:19:

He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.  
(KJV)

Would you notice that? The talebearer will usually come and treat you as the exception. "Now I wouldn't say this to anybody else, but I know I can trust you not to repeat it. And you know I wouldn't say it" and so on and so forth. And they will flatter you to make you receptive to the little piece of poison they want to inject. So beware of him that flattereth with his lips. We'll come back to flattery later on. Proverbs 26:20:

Where no wood is, there is the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.  
(KJV)

A fire has got to have something to burn and strife has got to have something to burn too. And what keeps strife burning is the talebearer's material that is carried around from home to home and person to person. So if there's strife, somewhere behind that strife is a talebearer.

First Timothy 5:13 is a New Testament reference. We'll only take the verse, we should really look into the context, but we're going very quickly through this subject just by way of introduction to it. First

Timothy 5:13:

And withal they learn to be idle [this is spoken about women in the church], wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. (KJV)

I suppose every one of us who has been in any kind of Christian community can think immediately of people like that. First Peter 4:15, let me just give you this too while we're about it.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. (KJV)

Isn't it remarkable where the busybody is listed in that verse? See what you're in company with? A murderer, a thief and an evildoer. Now most religious people would be horrified to be classified as murderers, thieves or evildoers. But many of them are busybodies. Personally, I will tell you this: I detest busybodies. As a minister and a pastor, I've been through this situation where everybody wanted to run everybody else's life. And it's misery. I always think of the lady in our congregation in London who had one geranium and my wife had three. And she just couldn't rest because my wife had two more geraniums than she had. And I said to myself, "God, if I ever get out of this situation, I'm never going to let myself get back into it again." And I just will not be under the heel of busybodies. On the mission field, about once every six months we had some self-appointed inspector who came around to see how we were doing. If you've never been a missionary, you wouldn't understand this. I learned to show them the door. Well, we've got to go on.

Number four, **lying**. We'll look at a few Scriptures starting again in the book of Proverbs. You'll be able to find the book of Proverbs by the end of this message. Proverbs 6:16–19:

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him . . . (KJV)

Now there's seven things listed that the Lord hates to the point of being an abomination. And it's worth looking at them. Number one, "a proud look." Number two, "a lying tongue." Number three,

“hands that shed innocent blood.” Number four, “an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations.” Number five, “feet that be swift in running to mischief.” Number six, “a false witness that speaketh lies.” And number seven, “he that soweth discord among brethren.” And actually, out of those seven things, three relate to the tongue. And they are all hateful to God. Lying tongue, false witness, and sowing discord among brethren.

And then in Proverbs 12:22 we have the Scripture:

Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: . . . (KJV)

The word *abomination* is the strongest word that can be used, I think, to describe something that is displeasing to God.

Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight. (KJV)

And then we turn to the New Testament, John 8:44. These are the words of Jesus to the religious leaders of His day. It should make us pause. He wasn't talking to unbelievers or unreligious people. He said:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (KJV)

The devil is the father of lies. Every time we take a lie in our lips, we're taking something that comes from the devil.

And then just one more series of Scriptures on lying. The book of Revelation has three warnings in the last two chapters of the Bible. The dangers of lying. Revelation 21:8:

The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (KJV)

All liars are headed for the lake of fire. I don't want to give too much application to this, but there are many Christian liars, let's be honest about that fact. And I'm not the judge, but I just wonder what's going to happen to them in the last days. I really do. And some of them are preachers. I have to be very careful what I say, but I followed in a certain city, which will be absolutely nameless, a certain preacher who had been preaching in that church where I was preaching for several weeks. And gathered very large crowds. The pastor, who is a godly man and who is a friend of mine and whose opinion I respect, said to me privately later, "Brother Prince, I simply could not understand it. There are things I cannot explain but I heard that man night after night say things which I knew for sure were flat direct lies." And really that is a kind of a problem. It's God's problem in the last resort. Aren't you glad that you're not the judge? I certainly am, but I don't want to turn away from the Word of God.

The Bible says all liars will end in the lake of fire. Do you know what I believe that means? I believe it means just what it says. Charismatic liars, non-Charismatic liars. They're just liars. Now there's always repentance for every one that will turn back to God.

Revelation 21:27, speaking about the New Jerusalem, the holy city:

And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. (KJV)

Nothing that makes a lie will ever get inside the New Jerusalem. And Revelation 22:15, speaking again about this same place:

For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. (KJV)

That's as clear as anything can be.

We take the next problem that we deal with which is **flattery**. We've touched on that, but we'll take just a few more Scriptures about flattery. I don't think most people appreciate how dangerous flattery is and how unacceptable to God. As a preacher, I feel that from time to time I am flattered. Not that I just

get appreciative remarks, but that people lay it on. And I've learned to be on my guard very, very much so.

Now I appreciate genuine gratitude and expressions of appreciation, but many, many preachers have been ensnared by flattery. I could specifically name men who were so flattered that they allowed themselves to be captivated by their flatterers and lost their ministry because they were just taken over. Let's look at what the Scripture says. Psalm 12. For every one of these Scriptures that I am giving you there are probably twenty that I don't. Psalm 12:1-3:

Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity [and my margin here says *insincerity*] every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things. (KJV)

That again is very clear. And I think you would agree I'm not being unfair or negative when I say amongst religious people there is a great deal of insincerity. A lot of sweet talk that really doesn't amount to anything.

Let's look in Proverbs again, you know where the book of Proverbs is by now. Proverbs 26:28:

A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; . . . (KJV)

There's tremendous psychology in that. The person who lies about you and harms you will hate you for doing it. Did you know that? I've confronted people who have lied about me and they were worse afterwards than before.

. . . and a flattering mouth worketh ruin. (KJV)

And then one more about flattery, Proverbs 29:5:

A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet. (KJV)

I remember distinctly, I have to be so careful what I say because the people I have in mind are

sometimes known. About three years ago a man came to me and invited me to speak at a convention. And he really made me think well of myself. I'll tell you. In his words there wasn't another preacher like me anywhere to be found. And I was strongly disposed to go, but when I prayed over it and meditated over it, everything in me said, "Don't go!" And I am so glad I didn't go, because I would have been together with other men whose ministry I don't approve, whose message I don't accept and would have created many, many problems for me. But that man, when he flattered me, he spread a net for my feet. Only by the grace of God did I escape being entangled in that net. I tell you this, and some of you are a little younger than I am, just bear this in mind. You don't have to learn everything the hard way. Beware of him that flattereth with his lips. It's not said in vain.

The next thing that we'll deal with is **hastiness**. Being hasty with your words. And we'll look at just a couple of Scriptures there. Proverbs 29:20:

Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him. (KJV)

That's very searching. Don't blurt out everything you feel the moment you feel it because you'll end up in serious problems. Learn to keep it in.

And then Psalm 106 we have this rather tragic picture of Moses who forfeited the privilege to lead God's people into the Promised Land because of one rash sentence that he spoke. If anything should show us how careful God is about the way we speak. Psalm 106:32-33. The incident referred to is in the book of Numbers. The children of Israel were without water and as usual they were murmuring. As usual, they were blaming Moses. As usual, they were saying, "Why did you get us out of Egypt? Would to God we died in that land." And God spoke to Moses and said, "Go ahead of the people and speak to the rock. And when you speak to it, the water will come out." Now Moses had already brought water out of the rock once by smiting it with his rod. And he was really angry with those people. And I don't blame him. I marvel at the patience of Moses. But he went up and he smote the rock and he said, "Must we bring forth water for you rebels?" And God honored him, the water came out. But God had a private interview with



Moses afterwards. He said, “For that, you’ve lost the privilege of leading My people into the Promised Land because you didn’t honor Me with your words.” And this is referred to in Psalm 106:32–33:

They angered the Lord also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips. (KJV)

How many of you know that? When your spirit gets provoked and you speak unadvisedly with your lips. That’s hastiness, and God warns us against it.

The last of these things is **negative talking**. This is one of the respectable sins which are regularly practiced by religious people and not usually considered to be sin. “Oh, I’m so weak; I couldn’t do it. I don’t have any faith. I don’t believe I can get the money in time. I know I’m going to have to have an operation. Oh, you should hear what the doctor told me yesterday.” And so on and so forth. That’s all very polite, very respectable and very religious, and in many cases very unacceptable to God. Many of us dig our graves with our mouth. I mean this literally. A lot of people are dead today who don’t need to be dead. They died because of what they said.

I’ll give you one example which is found in Numbers 13. This is the record of the spies that were sent into the Promised Land. You’ll remember—one spy for each tribe, that’s twelve spies were sent into the Promised Land. Now all those twelve spies saw the same thing. They all had the same experience. They all had the same background. There was nothing different in their circumstances or their background. And you’re probably familiar with the story: Ten spies came back and said, “Oh, it’s a good land, but it’s full of giants and the cities are walled up to heaven and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight.” Two spies said, “It’s a wonderful land; let’s go in and take it.” And I’ll just read you the two statements in Numbers 13:30. Caleb and his companion was Joshua. Joshua and Caleb were the only two.

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. (KJV)

Joshua and Caleb said, “We are able”; the other ten said, “We are *not* able.” And every one of them

sealed their destiny by what they said. The ones that said they were *not* able, were not able. And the ones that said they *were* able, were able. They settled their own destiny by what they said. And Christians do that again and again and again.

I think of so many examples but I have to be a little careful because some of them are very personal. In fact, I think they're too personal—we'll just have to leave them. But I pointed out the other night, we had a fellowship group in our home. I pointed out that Jacob actually pronounced the death sentence on his beloved wife Rachael because when they ran away from Laban, Rachael stole her father's images. Now Jacob didn't know anything about this. Laban followed after them, accused Jacob of stealing his images. Jacob said, "I haven't done that. I'm innocent. You can search us all." He searched the whole company but Rachael wouldn't get up from where she was sitting and she had the images hidden in the seat. So Jacob got very self-righteous and he said, "The one that has done this thing, let him die." And she did. She died the next time she had a little baby, which wasn't many months later. Jacob just spoke rashly and said, "Anyone that's done this shall die." And sentenced his own wife to death.

I think of a lady whom we knew, I didn't want to say this, but God seems to press me to say it. She had a number of children, more babies than she really wanted. She was expecting twins. Somebody said, twins look so beautiful. And she said, "Yes, in somebody else's baby carriage." And that's where they ended. She signed her own death warrant. And I hear Christians saying this again and again and again.

I'll tell you something that happened the other day, my wife and I—I won't say we had an argument, it really wasn't an argument—about where to put a piece of furniture or do something. She said she was going to put it somewhere and I said, "Over my dead body." And my wife said to me afterwards, "You ought never to have said that." And I said, "No, I confess it as a sin and I ask God to revoke it." Because I was really pronouncing my own death warrant. You don't think so, but I know so. I heard Ken Copeland preach, he said we are talking about death all the time. He said I'm tickled to death. Who says that? You have no right to speak like that. You're just wishing something on yourself that ought never to be there. Believe me, this is much, much more far reaching than most Christians realize.

All right. Let's come to the remedy, which is the important thing. Strangely enough, I have seven remedies. If you've ever lived amongst the Arabs, which most of you haven't done, they are a nation which is always saying things with their lips that they don't really mean. And I mean, it's fearful, it's really frightening. They'll say all sorts of things about death, wishing death on themselves and others. And it's really a curse on their whole nation. I'm not critical of the Arabs, I love them, but it's just a sin.

Well, let's come to the remedy. Number one, it is a **heart problem**. Recognize where the problem is. It's in the heart. Matthew 12:33–34, let's look back there.

Either make the tree good, and [its] fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and [its] fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by [its] fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (KJV)

The heart is the tree, the mouth is the fruit. If it's evil fruit it must be an evil tree because a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. So Jesus said, "Settle it one way or the other. If it's going to be evil fruit, it must be an evil tree. But if it's a good tree, it will bring forth good fruit."

James 3, we should turn back there for a moment. Just a little beyond the passage that we read, James says in 3:10:

Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. [Then he goes on to verse 11:] Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? [verse 12:] Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? (KJV)

So again, he compares the heart to the tree, the words that come out to the fruit. And he says the tree is known by his fruit.

Proverbs 18:21:

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. (KJV)

We have to eat the fruit of our own tongue. Good or evil, we eat it.

And then Proverbs 4:23, one of my favorite passages of Scripture:

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. (KJV)

What comes out of your mouth comes from your heart. You cannot deal with your mouth unless you deal with your heart. And that's why the mouth is so important because it's really the barometer of the heart.

Number two, **confess your sins and be cleansed**. The problem with words is so many people do not really use the word *sin*. But bad words are sin. Wrong talking is sinning. And when we come to grips with it as sin, we'll begin to see some results. As long as we tolerate it, excuse it or try to brush it off there'll be no change. First John 1:9 says:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (KJV)

When we come to the place of confessing it as a sin, God both forgives and cleanses. First John 1:7 says:

. . . the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (KJV)

So God has a remedy for the problems of the tongue, but until we acknowledge them and confess them as sin, repent of them, seek God for forgiveness and cleansing, we're not accepting God's remedy.

Number three, **refuse evil, yield to God**. There's a double decision that has to be made. I heard somebody once say, and it impressed me, "If you don't know how to say no and mean it, you'll never get to heaven." There is a time to say no and put your foot down. And I've discovered that the devil knows when you mean that no. And if he knows you don't mean it, he'll keep on at you. He's a psychologist. Romans 6:12–13:

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, . . .

Sin is not so spiritual as you think it is. Paul says don't let sin have any part in your mortal body.

... that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members [your physical members] as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: ... (KJV)

Deny your members to the devil. Tell the devil, “You can’t have my hands, you can’t have my feet.” And above all, what’s the problem member? “You can’t have my tongue, Satan, it’s not yours. Jesus redeemed it by His blood. When He died, He purchased my tongue together with the rest of me. And Satan, I am not going to let you control my tongue.” Don’t yield.

Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but [here’s the positive] yield yourselves unto God ... and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (KJV)

Deliberately tell God that you want your tongue to be an instrument of righteousness and you’re yielding it to Him for that purpose. It’s a very precious thing to know that God has set apart your lips for Himself. God spoke to me many, many years ago, about 1943 or ’44 when I was still a soldier in the army, and He called me to preach His Word. And He told me, in effect, He said, “I want your mouth and your lips set apart for Me. I don’t want you to use them in any cause but My cause. Or for any purpose but My glory.” And there’s a very solemn challenge. I haven’t always been as faithful as I should, but I realize the privilege that’s involved of making my lips available to Almighty God.

All right. Number four, **understand why you have a tongue**. That’s very important. If you don’t understand that, you’ll never really move in on what God offers you. Why has God put a tongue in your mouth? For what purpose? Let’s have a look. I’ll take you to the Scriptures. We have to compare Old Testament and New. Psalm 16:9. The psalmist David says:

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. (KJV)

We won’t go into the background of this, but it’s prophetic of Jesus in His burial and resurrection. David says, “My heart is glad, my glory rejoices.” Now you might say, “Well, what did David refer to when he said *my glory*?” But fortunately for you and me Peter quoted this very psalm in Acts 2. And in

verse 26 he gives the New Testament version of that Old Testament verse. Acts 2:26:

Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad: . . . (KJV)

So we have the authority of Scripture. We don't need to seek for an interpretation. *My glory* is "my tongue." Did you know that? Your glory is your tongue. Why is your tongue your glory? Because it's given to you for one supreme purpose, which is to glorify God. You have to realize that. Your tongue is your glory because with your tongue, above all your other members, you have the privilege and the ability to glorify God.

Now bearing that in mind, let's look at other places where David speaks about "his glory." And I think you'll find in every place it's obvious when you see it that the tongue is what he's speaking about. Psalm 30:11–12.

Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing [that's true of me]: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that [for what purpose did God do all that?] that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. (KJV)

God did everything He did in our lives that we, with our tongues, might glorify Him and not be silent. That's the purpose for which He blesses. Psalm 57:7–8.

My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. [David had made a decision, he wasn't going to turn from it.] Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. (KJV)

He says, "I've made up my mind that I'm going to praise God. I've got the musical instruments, I need one more thing. My tongue." So he says, "Wake up psaltery, wake up harp, and wake up my tongue. And let's all get busy and praise the Lord."

Psalm 108:1, the same teaching again.

O God, my heart is fixed [and unless your heart is fixed you won't do this. Your heart has to be fixed. You've got to have your heart made up this is what you're going to do.]; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. (KJV)

What do you sing with? Your tongue. Your tongue is your glory. Now if you can take that truth and meditate on it and act on it, it will revolutionize your life.

Number five, **decide to praise God**. There's a decision involved. Don't leave it till when you feel like it or other people are doing it. See, I'm sure there are some of you here, you praise God out loud, you clap your hands, you lift up your hands in the air—when you're in this group. Do you do it at home? Some of you do, some of you don't. What's wrong with doing it at home? If it's just an act you put on in the church, it's not going to do you much good. But you won't do it unless you make your mind up. Praise is the result of a decision. That's why David said, "My heart is fixed; I will give thanks." I said that once, I said, "Even if the ceiling falls in, I'm going to praise God." And I was away preaching at the time, phoned home to where Johanna lived, found out how things are going on. I didn't get Johanna, but got Vaughn, the youngest member of the family. "How are things going?" He said, "Oh, fine." He said, "The ceiling fell in!" So I was caught in my own testimony, I had to give thanks. I said, "Even if the ceiling falls in, I'm going to praise the Lord." And I did. Praise God, the ceiling is mended and everything is going well.

Let's look at David's decision. You can multiply this twenty times without any problem. Psalm 34, and if you read the introductory small print at the beginning of this psalm, David was in the court of Abimilech the Philistine king running away to save his life. And in order to preserve his life he had to go so far to pretend him that he was mad. He scrabbled on the doors with his nails and slobbered on his beard. And at that time he made this decision. You really need to get it in context what was his decision.

I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. (KJV)

First you make the individual decision: "I'm going to do it." Then you find other people who are like minded and you say, "Let's do it together." But the personal decision comes first.

And then in Psalm 35:28:

My tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long. (KJV)

That leaves no room for gossip. Does it?

Psalm 63:3–5. Some of these have been made into beautiful choruses.

Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. (KJV)

And please note, it's lips. Some people say, "Well Brother Prince, I praise the Lord in my heart."

Well that's wonderful. Do it with your lips too. It's just not silent inward praise. Praise with the lips.

Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: . . . (KJV)

Mouth and lips. Notice that. It's not just the inward. But it's the free expression with your mouth and your lips that brings victory. David said, "I shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. I'll live on the best of everything when I really learn how to praise the Lord."

All right. Number six, **remember Christ your high priest**. This is a tremendous area of truth which I'm just beginning to move into. I dealt with it in some of my studies in the conference recently in Miami, but we only just touched on it. The high priesthood of Christ. And He's our high priest, interceding for us, representing us in heaven on one basis: our confession.

Now we have in the *King James Version* two words: *confession* and *profession*. They both translate the same word in the original Greek. *Profess* means "to say forth." *Pro* is "for." *Confess* means "to say with" or "to say the same as." And *confession* in Bible language is "saying forth the same as God said in His Word." That's confession.

Now listen, you may have put ten dollars in the offering tonight, and God bless you. But what I am telling you now is worth a hundred times ten dollars. Confession is saying forth with your mouth the same that God says in His Word. Confession is making the words of your mouth agree with the Word of



God. And Jesus Christ is the high priest of our confession or profession. No profession, no high priest.

Let's look at it. Three times in Hebrews. Hebrews 3:1. This can completely change the course of your life if you can grasp this truth. And if your life needs changing . . . Maybe everything is going so well you wouldn't want it to change. It would be interesting to ask, and I'm not going to do so, how many of you here tonight, if you had the last six months to live over again wouldn't want any changes? And I think I'd have to put up my hand and say, "Lord, I'd have them just the same again." Isn't He good?

Now if there are serious areas of your life which need to be changed, here is one way to do it. It's to learn that Jesus Christ is the high priest of your confession. What you say with your mouth settles what He can do for you in heaven. He cannot go beyond in heaven what you give Him liberty to do for you by what you say on earth. If you have a weak, ineffective, negative confession; you have a weak, ineffective, negative high priest on your behalf. He's the high priest of your confession. Let's look in Hebrews 3:1:

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, . . . (KJV)

Glory to God, aren't you glad you're a partaker of the heavenly calling? Some of my fellow preachers lately have been telling me that they're not much interested in heaven. I could name them, they're known to you, they're my good friends. But I have to say, that doesn't apply to me. I am interested in heaven. I'm glad I'm going there. For me it's a real place. And furthermore, I believe there's a place up there designed for me personally. So I'm glad there's a heavenly calling.

Now, that's not a criticism because what my fellow preachers mean is it's so good here on earth at the moment that they're not interested in what lies beyond. But I think I'm just about ten years older than most of them and I'm probably somewhat nearer that next phase. Anyhow, I'm glad for heaven. And I'll tell you, I have to say this. For me, heaven is a very real place. We've got a record we sing, or we play, we don't sing. Far from it! And it's got that good old song on it, "When the Saints Go Marching In." And when I'm alone and nobody else is in the house I put that record on and I play it to myself and I am just about there, believe me. I am just about there. When they crown Him King of kings I want to be in that

number, believe me, I do. When the resurrection comes, I want to be in that number. Paul said, "If there's no resurrection, we are of all men most miserable." It makes a difference if there's going to be a resurrection or not. It makes a difference if there's heaven there or not. I'm glad it's there. It's a large place, there's room for everybody. All right, come on. Hebrews 3:1:

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; . . . (KJV)

He's the High Priest of what you've got to say. If you keep your lips sealed, He's got nothing to say about you. Talk negative all the time, He just apologizes for you to the Father, that's the best He can do. "I'm sorry, she doesn't know any better, nobody ever got to her, she hasn't read My Word. That's all she's ever heard in church is negative talk. I can't do this, it's going to be worse, Antichrist is coming, I think we're going to get poor, and so on and so on." Jesus is embarrassed when you talk like that. Did you know that? You embarrass Him. All He can do is apologize for you.

Hebrews 4:14:

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, . . . (KJV)

But the Greek says "He has passed *through* the heavens." He's gone all the way through. Passed through the heaven where Satan dwells, passed through the heaven where the angels are, and He's far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come. Seeing that we have such a high priest, what are we going to do about it?

. . . let us hold fast the profession of our faith. (KJV)

You said it yesterday, say it again today. "Since I said it, everything got worse." That's a good sign, keep on saying it. "Yesterday I said Jesus took my infirmities, bore my sicknesses. Today I got three more pains than I had yesterday." Keep on saying it, because you've attracted the devil's attention. That's why

the extra pains came. He's getting scared, he's losing a victim. But the Bible says, "Hold fast your profession."

And then in Hebrews 10:23 it says this, and you must take it together with verse 21. It's always united, the high priest and the profession. Hebrews 10:21 and 23:

Having an high priest over the house of God; . . . Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; . . . (KJV)

Say it, keep on saying it, don't stop saying it. That's what it means in simple English. So realize in the relation to the tongue that you have a high priest who's limited in His ministry on your behalf to as much as you say on earth that's in line with the Word of God. Every time you confess the truth of God's Word He goes into action on your behalf in heaven.

And number seven, **submit to the discipline**—"Brother Prince, couldn't you get through a message without using that nasty word?"—**of the Body**. Capital B, I mean the Body of Christ. This is just the last recommendation I have. Submit to the discipline of the Body. And there is discipline in the Body of Christ. And it covers the way we talk about one another. And if you're under the discipline of the body, you will not permit yourself to speak about other people. It's going to be embarrassing. You'll have to go to them and apologize. If you don't go and apologize, you're headed for worse trouble. So keep out of it in the first place. I'll just read you one passage, Matthew 18:15–17:

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: . . . (KJV)

Now, that's discipline. Don't go and tell everybody else first. That's the normal reaction of most Christians. Somebody upset me; I'll go and tell Brother A, Brother B, Brother C. Everybody except the brother. Then it's almost impossible to heal that breach later.

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. (KJV)

All that is discipline. And we're all subject to that discipline if we're members of the body of Christ.

Now there's two aspects to this. Number one, if somebody does something wrong, as I believe, what am I to do? I'm not to go to some other person and complain, I'm to go to that person. I'm to speak to him privately. I'm to seek to heal the breach. And in most cases if you do it that way, the breach will be healed. I speak from experience. And if the person really has done wrong they'll be scared in most cases.

I've seen people, a fellow missionary once did something that I felt was unjustifiable and wrong. So I said I'll do this. I said, "I want to talk to you privately." I made an appointment with him. He was a big strong man. Do you know his knees were literally knocking by the time I got there? I didn't have to argue with him, he was all ready for me. There is tremendous authority in doing what God says. We reconciled, we healed the breach, there was complete reconciliation. The thing never went any further. There were never any more problems about it.

Then the other side to it, and this is where most people slip up. Now many of you would not make that mistake, but there's another side to it which you may not have noted. If somebody comes to you and says, "You know what Brother Jones said about me? You know how he's treated me? You know what he said?" You know what you have to say? Now listen. You have to say, "Have you spoken to Brother Jones?" And if they say no, "Well, then, don't speak to me." Now that is really discipline. See, otherwise you become an accessory after the fact in legal terms. You become responsible for blowing up that situation and making a breach in the body of Christ. This is where most of us slip up.

The book of Proverbs says, "The north wind driveth away rain; so doth an angry countenance, a backbiting tongue." If a backbiting tongue comes, show it an angry countenance. That's legitimate to be angry. Don't welcome it. And if people are continually coming to your home with stories about other people, just tell them that your living room is not a trash depot. And if they want to dump their garbage, find somewhere else to do it. Here is the greatest leakage in the body of Christ, it's in this particular way that we react to this problem.

Now, I have three times in the last six months been approached by somebody who said, "Do you know what somebody did?" And every time by the grace of God I said, "Have you spoken to him?" "No." "Well, you better do it." I have never heard any more about it in any of those three occasions. The leak was stopped and sealed right there. And this is imperative that we learn to do this. Jesus only spoke in his recorded discourses in the gospels twice about the church. Once in Matthew 16, once in Matthew 18. And all He had to say about the local church in Matthew 18 was how to deal with quarrels between brethren. And we are all responsible to know and to apply that discipline.

Let's just sum up and we'll close the message. The remedy.

Number one, recognize it's a heart problem. Go to the root. The heart is the tree; the words are the fruit of the tree. If there's bad fruit, check on the condition of the tree. If there's bad words, misuse of language, check on the condition of your heart.

Number two, if you're guilty, confess it as sin, repent and receive God's forgiveness and cleansing.

Number three, make up your mind. Refuse your members to the devil, yield them to God.

Number four, understand the true purpose of your tongue. Why did God give you a tongue? What's the main purpose of your tongue? To glorify God. Any use of your tongue that does not glorify God is a misuse. And I would point out in this connection that when the Holy Spirit has control of your tongue through the baptism in the Holy Spirit, there's one thing you'll know for sure. Every word you speak will be to the glory of God. You'll never say one word in tongues that doesn't glorify God.

Number five, make a decision to praise God. It starts with a decision, not an emotion, not a situation, but a decision.

Number six, remember Christ is the high priest of your confession. What you say with your mouth sets the limit to what He can do on your behalf in heaven.

And number seven, submit to the discipline of the Body.

Praise the Lord, I think we got through it. Glory to God.

Now, I think in all fairness, without being emotional or dramatic, having preached that message I owe

it to you to give you an opportunity to act on it. If you sit here tonight and you feel, "I have sinned with my tongue, I'm guilty of sinning with my tongue, I sin regularly with my tongue," you may feel any of those things. I suggest tonight you do what I recommended. You confess it as a sin. Face the truth about it. It is sin. Confess it to God, ask Him to forgive you. Ask Him to cleanse you. And then believe for forgiveness and cleansing. Go out of here with a pure tongue. Go out of here with a pure heart tonight. If you've wounded another believer it may be you have to go to him, ask him to forgive you. That's between you, him and God. Now rather than do this in a kind of spectacular way, I want to do it in a very unspectacular way. I want to ask you just to sit quietly in your seats, close your eyes, shut yourself in with God and just take any inward action that is needed between God and you tonight.