

The Tongue ~ Your Responsibility

By Senior Pastor Prince Guneratnam

**The Bible says, "For we all stumble in many things.
If anyone does not stumble in word,
He is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.
Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths
that they may obey us,
And we turn their whole body.**

Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, a very small rudder turns them wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among the members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh" (James 3:2-12). James tells us that, if anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man and then goes on to say that the tongue is like a fire. If it is uncontrolled, it corrupts the whole person and is filled with poison. The book of Proverbs says, " he who has a deceitful heart finds no good, and he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil" (Proverbs 17:20). A good New Year resolution is to have a mouth that will not sin as David prays, " You have tested my heart; you have visited me at night; you have tried me and found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress" (Psalms 17:3).

What if someone does you wrong? The Bible has a divine order. " Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:15-17). There are three steps you can follow if a person does wrong to you. Firstly you can go to him and show him his wrong in private. Secondly if he refuses to repent, go to him with two or three witnesses. Thirdly, if he still refuses to repent, let the leadership of the Church know. If that person still refuses to listen even after you have done all these, he is no longer a brother but a sinner. He is no longer your responsibility. He is now in the hands of the Lord. The Bible says that it is a fearful thing to fall the hands of an angry God. God has a divine order for us to follow; we are not to take matters into our own hands but to bring them before the Lord instead.

Those who have been hurt must choose the divine order and not their own way. The tendency for one who is hurt is to look for other Christians to whom they can complain or murmur. By this time, what they have to say has become critical and judgmental. Those who listen are those who want to know but pretend to be concerned. They do nothing to help or to admonish or to bring healing. This makes them an accessory to the sin of murmuring. This was one of the sins that destroyed Israel in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:10)

Psalms 15:2-3 tells us about four things which we must do: we must speak the truth in our hearts; we must not backbite with our tongues; we must not do evil to our neighbors and we must not take up a reproach against our friends. Three out of the seven things God hates in Proverbs 6:16-19 have to do with the tongue: a lying tongue, a false witness who speaks lies and one who sows discord among brethren.

The Bible says that "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). The tongue speaks from what is in the heart. Jesus says, "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. But I say to you that every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgement. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:35-37). You need to guard your heart, for it is wellspring of life. God holds you responsible for your tongue, for often times he harnesses the power of words and uses them to destroy you. He manipulates your thoughts, your choices and your actions with words, twisting them to accomplish his purposes.

How can we guard our hearts? Paul exhorts the Ephesians, " And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5: 18-20). Joshua gave us the secret in Joshua 1:8, "This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success".

On the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, God's divine plan and purpose was to baptize the disciples with His Spirit. The first thing that happened to them when they baptized was that they spoke in tongues declaring the wonder of God. The evidence of a spirit-filled life was a changed tongue. We should use our tongue to communicate the love and grace of Jesus Christ to one another. Paul writing to the Corinthian church said, " Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:1). What is prophecy? Paul says " But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to

men” (1 Corinthians 14:3). Let us live for the glory of God by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and be a believer where the gift of prophecy is constantly evident.

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