

TEXT:

THE TONGUE THAT GLORIFIES THE LORD

5 Even so, the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature; it is set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so (James 3:5-10 NKJV).

INTRODUCTION

The tongue perfectly exemplifies the saying that big things come in small packages. Like the helm of a ship, the tongue, though looking so small and insignificant, actually wields more power than all the other parts of the body put together. Physiologically, the place of the tongue in the human body cannot be taken for granted. Speech is made possible only by this little organ. Just imagine a home, church, neighbourhood, community, nation or world of tongue-less people? You will undoubtedly agree that communication would be generally burdensome and largely limited. Added to this is that the tongue is the only organ of taste in the body. Only by it can we differentiate what is sweet or tasty from bitter or harmful. It also helps immensely in the digestion process of food substances in the body.

Moreover, let us look at the tongue from the spiritual realm; the tongue performs even more significant roles. Jas. 3:9 says, " With it, we bless our God and Father, and with it, we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God." This verse brings to light the diverse possibilities of the tongue. It says it can be used both positively and negatively. Indeed, the tongue can be an instrument of tremendous good or catastrophic destruction. It can be used to build people up in the faith or destroy their hard-earned reputations. It can help bring about peace among friends, families, and nations or start a war. Also, it can be an instrument for good in a local church or can destroy the work of God. Therefore, in this lesson, emphasis will be laid on the positive use of the tongue. There are several ways the tongue can be used to the glory of God and be a source of blessing to humanity.

I. GLORIFICATION OF GOD'S NAME

One of the purposes for which God created our tongues is to continue to show forth his glory through the positive usage of the organ. Unfortunately, that is not to be, as we

channel our strength in deriding and castigating each other in ways that do not glorify the Lord because of our selfish motives and self-glorification (1 Tim. 6:3-5). God designed our tongue to extol him at all times because "in Him we live, move and have our being" (Psal. 66:16-17; Acts 17:28). Hence, the reason for which we continue to praise God is because of his loving-kindness and tender mercies toward us at all times (Psal.103:1-4). Equally important, Apostle Peter notes in his epistle, "...that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Pet. 2:9). In other words, God's children can never exhaust praising the Creator. If that is true, and yes, it is true! The question remains, why spend so much time dwelling on the negativity instead of building up positively with our tongues? This question is best answered when we realize the inherent power in praising God's Holy Name with our tongues. First, praises glorify and gladden God and usher us as Christian into the presence of the Lord (Psal.50:23; 96:8; 100:4). Second, through praise, souls can be won to the kingdom of God, and the value of a single soul cannot be quantified. In Acts 16:25-34, we see how the Philippian Jailer and his household were saved after the Roman authority had imprisoned Paul and Silas. The Bible says, "²⁵ But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly, there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were loosed" (25-26). In other words, praise moves God to intervene in dare difficult situations in our lives. It can break every prison door in our lives and set us free from every diabolical bondage.

To the Philippians, Paul would say, "rejoice in the Lord always and again I will say, rejoice!" (4:4). Third, intrinsic to praising God's Holy Name is that when we extol the majesty of God, the adversaries are going to be wholly mortified and subdued (2Chr.20:20-30, Emp. 20-22). Fourth, as we praise God, we gladden God's heart to release untold blessings into our lives through our obedience (Col. 3:16-17). May we continue to show forth his glory through the positive usage of our tongues in praising God because it makes us a better, happier and fulfilled individual due to the inner comfort, peace and joy that floods our hearts when will praise God. Indeed, praise is comely. God demands it, which accounts for one of the reasons God created us with a mouth (Isa.43:21.cf 1Pt.2:9). Would you now make up your mind to begin to use your tongue to glorify God?

II. CALL TO ACTION

EVANGELIZATION OF LOST SOULS- Telling others about the love of God is one of the most important uses of the tongue. From implicit inference, If there is any reason God gave the tongue, then it is to speak to the dying world around us about the love of the Saviour who gave His life for our sins. Like the psalmist, we too can say, "My tongue shall speak of thy word..." (Psal119:172). Isaiah says, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the

brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*" (Isaiah 61:1). Apostle Paul would say, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith" (Romans. 1:16-17). In other words, we need to be deliberate in using our tongue to proclaim the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ. In place of gossips in the office, neighbourhood, marketplace, and school, let us transform our tongues into one that will turn individuals and multitudes from the way of destruction and Death into the paths of righteousness and eternal life.

EDIFICATION OF FELLOW BELIEVERS- As much as we can use our tongues to tell others about the Saviour's love, we can also use it to edify fellow believers. To "edify" is to strengthen, build up or establish; it is to instruct and develop, especially in spiritual matters with God's word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Paul says to the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (3:16). In Colossian 4:6, he says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man". It, therefore, means that we will not make any utterance, reference or insinuation that could defile, mislead, embitter, agitate or incite another Christian. It means the thoughtful words of our little members can be such that stir up others to love and serve God more. Correspondingly, Paul admonished the Ephesians, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph.4:29). Hence, let us use our tongue to strengthen and build up, not weaken and pull down!

ENCOURAGEMENT TO OTHERS- To encourage is to inspire with courage, spirit and hope. It is an attempt to urge, spur on and stimulate others to good works. Since our words have the potency to cause an already stumbling Christian to fall entirely or strengthen him, we should therefore determine to speak only words that bring encouragement to others (Heb.12:12-13). The word that comes out of our tongues can make people feel loved, appreciated and wanted (Gen.50:21; Ruth 2:10-13). It brings relief to a distressed soul and soothes a heart that is aggrieved (Prov.15:4, 25:15). A gracious tongue speaks hope to those going through adversity in life (cf. Job 4:4). It causes anger and wrath to be dissolved (Prov.15:1). Peace and harmony are fostered in the home, church, neighbourhood, office, and the nation as a whole due to good use of our tongues (Eph.4:29). Also, it brings healing to an ailing body and mind (Prov.12:18). Isaiah says, "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary" (50:4). In other words, the ability to know how to speak a word in season is a grace that God's children need to ask from God.

EXPRESSION OF OUR HEART'S DESIRES- The positive use of the tongue is not just for the good of those around us; they are for our benefit too! To the Philippians, Paul says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"(4:6). Is it not cheering to know that our tiny tongue can be used to express all of our heart desires to God? That little member can communicate with Him in ways no other part of our body can. So, do not just keep quiet with the assumption that since God knows all our needs, He should automatically meet them. No! It does not work that way! God has given us a tongue to express our desires. Let us ask Him our needs. Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matt.7:7).

III. CALL TO SALVATION

Perhaps you have not surrendered your life to God, now is the time to demonstrate your faith in Him through the good use of your tongue by confessing that Jesus Christ is the son of God and you would be baptized for the remission of your sins(Acts 8:36-39.) After that, the grace to use your tongue for the glory of God will be bestowed on you. In contrast, if you have given your life to Christ, but you are still exhibiting the works of the flesh by using your tongue to glorify the devil, then you are not wise (Prov.10:18.) You need to repent! Remember, "Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Prov.18:21).

IV. CONCLUSION

The positive use of the tongue cannot be overemphasized. A tree must be suitable for its fruits to be good (Matt.12:33). However, it takes the grace of God before such can be made possible because the heart that has not got the touch of God cannot bring forth good deeds through the tongue. Many around us have been battered with psychological, emotional, and physiological problems that most of the time do not need any medical treatment. What they need is the soothing words of grace and comfort from a willing vessel. We can be that vessel that God has been seeking for today. Let life ooze out of our tongues to others. Let them feel the presence and comfort of the Holy Spirit through our purified and crucified tongues!