

Bridled and Unbridled Tongues

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (Jas. 1:26).

It is impossible to over emphasize the power of the tongue, whether for good or evil. The tongue can be an instrument *“of righteousness unto God”* or an instrument of *“unrighteousness unto sin”* (Rom. 6:13). Whether or not it is an instrument of *“righteousness”* or *“of unrighteousness”* is determined by its **use**, and by the controls placed on the tongue. In other words, it may be bridled or unbridled. One can be religious; he may “know the Bible like the back of his hand;” he may be a hard worker for the Lord, but if he neglects to bridle his own tongue his *“religion is vain.”* A bridled tongue is a tongue put to good use. An unbridled tongue is a tongue put to evil use.

A tongue is put to good use when: (1) It is used to confess Jesus Christ *“before men,”* Matt. 10:32. (2) It is used to praise God in the singing of *“psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,”* Eph. 5:19. (3) It is used to petition God through the avenue of prayer, in the Name of Jesus Christ, I Thess. 5:17; John 14:13-14. (4) It is used to tell others about Jesus Christ, John 4:28,29. (5) It is used to preach the gospel to lost souls, Acts 8:4; 2 Tim. 2:2. (6) It is used to restore a brother whose reputation has been undeservedly maligned, Acts 9:26,27. (7) It is used to restore a brother who is *“overtaken in a fault,”* Gal. 6:1. (8) It is used to encourage and commend those who have exercised faith, or done that which is noble, Matt 8:10; I Thess. 1:7,8.

A tongue is put to evil use when: (1) It spews out corruption and profanity, Eph. 4:29. (2) It takes the name of God in vain, Ex. 20:7. (3) It is used for lying, Eph. 4:25; Rev. 21:8. (4) It is used for the purpose of talebearing or spreading gossip, Lev. 19:16; Prov. 26:20. (5) It is used for backbiting and engaging in a whispering campaign to create confusion and unrest, Rom. 1:29,30. (6) It is used for murmuring against God and His servants, I Cor. 10:10; Num. 14:2,29. (7) It is used as a tool to slander others (I Tim. 3:11), or in an effort (either consciously or unconsciously) to be a *“busybody in other men’s matters,”* I Peter 4:15.

Conclusion:

A doctor can learn much about a person’s general health simply by examining his tongue. By the same token, the way we **use** our tongues reflects to a larger degree the state of our spiritual health. Perhaps the fact that God designed us with two ears and one tongue should impress us with the importance of being *“swift to hear, slow to wrath,”* Jas. 1:19. At any rate, let each of us develop the attitude of the Psalmist who said *“I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue...,”* Ps. 39:1. A good question for each of us to ask ourself is this: “Would my family, my neighbors, my friends, and the local church be better off, or worse off, if I lost the use of **my tongue?**”

-B. Witherington
