

# MARANATHA MESSENGER

Weekly Newsletter of

MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28).

Private Circulation Only

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Sunday School: 9.45 am Worship Service: 10.45 am Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.00 pm

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## THE CHRISTIAN & THE MANAGEMENT OF THE TONGUE

### Introduction

One of the most used and abused organs of our body is the tongue and it is also probably the most potent and influential. It has the potential to praise, edify, exhort and pray and it also has the power to destroy and tear down with its incisive ability. The Bible teaches us to regulate the use of the tongue for good and not for evil (Jas 3:1-10). Telling the truth in love and exposing falsehood is the believer's duty. We shall consider the proper use of the tongue here.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment of the Decalogue forbids in general, anything, which may tend to the ill or prejudice of our neighbour. More particularly, two things are forbidden in this commandment.

### 1. Slandering our Neighbour

**Slander is a common sin of the tongue.** Slandering is 'to report things of others unjustly'. The Psalmist says, "*They laid to my charge things that I knew not.*" Holiness itself is no shield from slander. John the Baptist was a man of a holy and austere life, and yet they said of him, Matt 11:18 says, "...He hath a devil." The Scripture calls slandering, smiting with the tongue. Jer 18:18 says, "*..Come, and let us smite him with the tongue.*" One may smite another and never touch him. There is a saying that the tongue inflicts greater wounds than the sword. The wounds of the tongue no physician can heal; to slander someone is most odious. As it is a sin to raise a false report of another, so it is to receive a false report before we have examined it. Ps 15:1 says, "*LORD, ...who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*" Ps 15:3 says, "*He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*" Remember the children's song, "O be careful little tongue what you speak, for there is a Father up above and He is looking down below, o be careful little tongue what you speak". We must not only not receive a false report, but also not take it up and pass it around. He that raises a slander fulfils the devil's will in his tongue; and he that receives it, carries the devil's word in his ear. The Bible warns against being a talebearer or gossip (Prov 18:8), which is destructive and unedifying behaviour and is to be avoided by every Christian.

### 2. Bearing a False Witness

Another aspect of the proper control of tongue is swearing that which is false accusation against your neighbour is unbecoming of a Christian.

- i. Prov 12:22 says, *“Lying lips are abomination to the LORD.”* To lie is to speak that which he who tells a lie serve the cause of the ‘devil the father of lies’ one knows to be an untruth. There is nothing more contrary to God than a lie. The Holy Ghost is called the ‘Spirit of Truth’ (1 John 4:6). Lying is a sin that does not go alone; it ushers in other sins. Absalom, the rebellious son, told his father a lie, when he said that he was going to pay his vow at Hebron, while he was planning treason against King David (2 Sam 15:7). Acts 5:3 3 says, *“.. why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie..”* Rev 22:15 *“For without .. sorcerers, and .. whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”* Let our words be authentic all the time. **Let us imitate God, who is the pattern of truth.** The character of a man that shall go to heaven is he that (Ps 15:2) *“...speaketh the truth in his heart.”* We can see from the negative examples of worldly men in the US Enron bankruptcy case that even the CEO lied just to save his own skin. For the sake of profits, some CEOs of tobacco companies lied that they do not know about the ill effects of nicotine, when they actually do.
- ii. Perjury in the court is bearing false witness against another, when we accuse him in open court falsely. This is a serious offence and it is to imitate the devil, who is the ‘accuser of the brethren.’ Solomon says, Prov 25:18 says, *“A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.”* In his face he is hardened like a hammer; he cannot blush, he cares not what lie he witnesses to; and he is a sword: his tongue is a sword to wound the person he witnesses against in his goods or life. I King 21:13 says, *“And there came in two men, children of Belial, and witnessed against ...Naboth, ...saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king.”* It is a serious sin to blaspheme against God and there will be consequences. A false witness perverts justice and corrupts the judge by making him pronounce a wrong sentence, and causes the innocent to suffer. Solomon in Prov 19:5 says, *“A false witness shall not be unpunished.”* Deut 19:18 says, *“And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother.”* Matt 28 related of the Roman soldiers at the empty tomb who were bribed to tell a lie concerning the resurrection of Christ but their lies are exposed by the evangelist.

### A World of Iniquity

Our Lord was maligned and slandered too by the Jewish religious leaders. Paul was slandered as a mover of sedition and the head of a faction (Acts 24:5). Some think it is no great matter, to misrepresent and slander others. The slanderer wounds three at once: he wounds him that is slandered; he wounds

him to whom he reports the slander, by causing uncharitable thoughts to arise up in his mind against the person slandered; and he wounds his own soul, by reporting of another what is false. This is a great sin. You may kill a man in his name as well as in his person. Some steal by taking away people's corn out of their field, or wares out of their shop; and yet others take away someone's good name through falsehood and deception. This is a sin for which no reparation can be made; a blot in a man's name; surely God will deal with this sin. If idle words shall be accounted for, shall not unjust slanders? Be careful with our words and think twice before speaking. It is a sin under the law to defame a virgin (Deut 22:19) and is it not a greater sin to defame a saint, who is a member of Christ? Every redeemed soul should abhor the sin of slander and flattery. Flattery is also an offence because though it is positive, it is still a half true. It is saying something untrue notwithstanding in a positive sense when you do not mean it. **Let us strive to tell the truth and the God of all truths is honoured and glorified.**

Liars are reprov'd who bear false witness against others. Eusebius, the celebrated church historian, related of one Narcissus, a man famous for piety, who was accused by two false witnesses of unchastity. To prove their accusations, they endeavoured to confirm it with oaths and curses. One said, 'If I speak not the truth, I pray God I may perish by fire:' the other said, 'If I speak not the truth, I wish I may be deprived of my sight.' It pleased God that the first witness who foreswore himself should be burned in the flames, his house being set on fire; the other being troubled in conscience, confessed his perjury and continued to weep so long that he wept himself blind. A biblical example is the wicked Queen Jezebel, who suborned two false witnesses against Naboth in order to take his land but finally she herself, was thrown down from a window and 'the dogs licked her blood' (2 Kings 9:33). There are serious consequences for lying. Jestings, filthy communication and uncouth speaking are not allowed nor encouraged among believers but things that edify and build up the saints. Let us be careful and weigh every word we say.

#### Checks against the Sin of the Tongue

a. Take heed for our speech to avoid these sins and grow in the fear of God. David says in Ps 19:9. Love your neighbour as yourself as Jesus says (Matt 22:37-40). If we love a friend, we shall not speak evil or attack him verbally. Men's depraved minds who are cankered with envy and hatred; can result in slandering and false-witnessing. 1 Cor 13:5 says, of true love that it "thinketh no evil". We should put the best interpretation upon another's words and give others the benefit of the doubt. Love is a well wisher, and it is rare to speak ill of him we love. Love is also a facet of the fruit of the Spirit that which cements Christians together in Christ; it is the healer of division and the hinderer to any slander.

b. On the other hand, if we meet with slanderers and false accusers, **let us exercise restraint and wait upon the Lord's justice.** Like David (2 Sam 16:10) if one is slandered, or falsely accused, we need to **examine ourselves**

**first, check to see if you have any sin unrepented of, for which God may suffer you to be calumniated and reproached.** If you are slandered, or falsely accused, and are innocent, be not too much troubled; let your quiet rejoicing and confidence be the witness of your conscience. **(Remember do not prevaricate the truth or equivocate yourself. It is telling a lie in a skilful way, like a ½ truth).** As no flattery can heal a bad conscience, so no slander can hurt a good one. God will clear up the names of his people one day and we are to wait patiently upon Him for perfect justice. Believers shall come forth out of all their slanders and reproaches by God's help one day. We on our part are to **be resolute, discipline and resolve to use the tongue consciously for good and the glory of God and not for evil serving Satan.**

**Be thankful to God, if He has preserved you from slander and false witness.** Job calls it 'the scourge of the tongue' (Job 5:21). It is a great mercy to be kept from the scourge of the tongue; that God stops malignant mouths from bearing false witness. It is the Lord who muzzles the mouths of the wicked from the strife of tongues." We on our own part are to let our speech be yea, yea and nay, nay. Col 4:6 says, *"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."* Let us use our tongue prudently for the spiritual edification of the saints and the saving of souls.

#### Evaluation and Application

Positively, we Christians should use the tongue prudently for the following:

1. Worship and praise God in singing and reading of the Word (Ps 95:1-3).
2. The encouragement and exhortation of the saints (Heb 10:24-25).
3. The sharing of the Gospel as a witness and testimony.
4. The proper rebuke and correction of believers, if necessary (Act 18:23-28, Gal 6:1,2).
5. The prayers of the saints to God (Ps 5:3).
6. The verbal reading of the Holy Scriptures to the enrichment of the saints (Neh 8:8-10).
7. The instruction of others in the most holy faith in preaching/teaching of the Word (2 Tim 4:2)
8. The careful and vigilant defence of the truth in sound reasoning and persuasion and exposing lies and heresies (Jude 3,4).

Positively the speech of a believer should be seasoned with salt and grace (Col 4:6). Let us be accountable for every word we say. There are to be four sentinels that should guide our speech and before we mutter any words; consider the following carefully before you speak a word:

1. Charity (is it said out of love or out of spite or even hatred)?
2. Verity (is it true or is it false or am I unsure about its origin)?
3. Necessity (is it necessary to say it and must I say it now or at a later

- time)?
4. Sagacity (is it wise to say it in this manner or can I say it in a more tactful way)?

### Conclusion

The tongue is an important member of our body. Many problems arise when we do not have a sanctified use of our lips and rashly say things that we may regret later and may even suffer the consequences. **Our relationships with others can be adversely affected and it is prudent to be slow to speak, slow to anger and swift to hear (and forgive) (Jas 1:19).** Let us ask the Lord for wisdom to know when to be silent and when to speak the truth in love, in meekness and sincerity (Gal 6:1,2) for the enrichment of others in the body of Christ and to the saving of souls. Will you strive to do it by the Spirit's enablement?

Jack Sin

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### **Q & A**

Q: One of my colleagues wanted to read my palm. As a Christian, should I allow him?

A: We need to be careful. Palmistry is the art of forecasting the future through the interpretation of the lines in a person's palm. According to occultists, there are four main lines and seven planet mounds on each person's palm. Palmistry can also go by the name of chiromancy or the study and interpretation of the shape of the lines of the hands as well. We do not want to be bound by some false teachings of the evil one.

Historically, Palmistry can be traced back to ancient Rome. Early astrological ideas were mixed up with Palmistry, many believe that it was invented by Babylonians priests and therefore goes back some 4000 years. Palmistry just like fortune telling, astrology and divination are strictly forbidden in the Scriptures. Deut 18:10-13 says, *"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God."* We do not want to open ourselves to the forces of darkness and allowed ourselves to be deceived, seduced or misled by the evil one. Jas 1:5 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Pray and ask the Lord for guidance instead. We do not want to dabble with the occult as there are serious consequences.

As Christians, we do not need any external supernatural help except for the Almighty Jehovah through fervent praying and the reading and application of His holy Word. Hope this helps.

Jack Sin

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**At the Pulpit**

*Theme for the Quarter:*

**“The Holy Spirit & The Believer Today”**

Rev Prabhudas Koshy

**“The Filling of the Holy Spirit” (Eph 5:18-20)**

\*These hyperlinks work with Word 97 and later version.

*[End of MM, 10 August 2003]*