

JAMES 3:7-12

SPIRITUAL SCHIZOPHRENIA

“Every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.”¹

Since the fall of our first parents, each member of the race is afflicted with a form of spiritual schizophrenia. In stating the obvious, I do not mean to disparage the tragic medical condition that plagues some of our friends and family members; but I do want to point out the obvious. Though we Christians profess to be children of the True and Living God, too often we are more thoroughly identified as belonging to this dying world rather than exhibiting characteristics reflecting our position as people of promise.

James is not the only biblical writer who compels us to confront this spiritual malady. It appears as a constant theme in Paul’s writings, and it is central to the message of many of the Old Testament prophets. Even the Psalmists occasionally address this tendency of attempting to live simultaneously in two worlds. Jesus did not hesitate to expose this disturbing tendency when He ministered in Judea. We should, therefore, take heed to the warnings and instruction provided through the Word of God so that we can be pleasing in the sight of God.

THE PROBLEM OF THE TONGUE — “Every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue.” Though we may seek to deny our malady, God deliberately removes whatever comfort we think to derive from hiding our condition. God did not create us to be fallible creatures, but because of the rebellion of our first parents, we are nevertheless fallen. We cannot keep ourselves from sin, and ultimately the tongue exposes our fallen condition, forcing us to confess that we are sinful.

Man may be said potentially to experience one of four states. Before the Fall, Adam was *able not to sin*. Since the Fall, fallen people have been *unable not to sin*. When people are regenerated, they are *able to sin* and they are also *able to do good works pleasing to God*. Ultimately, when transformed into our glorified state, redeemed people will be *unable to sin*. Though we live in anticipation of what shall yet come to pass, we must still contend with the present. Though we sin, we who are Christians cannot enjoy sinning—the Spirit of God convicts us. In our hearts, we long to please God with our words and with our deeds.

God’s Spirit, dwelling within the believer, urges the child of God to discover what pleases the Father and to do those things. Therefore, throughout the Word of God we are warned against sin and informed of what is pleasing to the Master. James’ instructions confront the condition that afflicts each of us, exposing the sinful nature we inherited from our first parents. The evidence for our sinful condition, apparent to all who permit themselves to reflect on the current state, is revealed through our speech.

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James' bald statement is that "no human being can tame the tongue." The reason for such a strong statement is revealed whenever we recall a statement Jesus made on one occasion. "What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person" [MATTHEW 15:18-20a]. His teaching iterates a truth stated earlier in His ministry. Then, Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" [MATTHEW 12:34b].

Another time the Master said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" [MATTHEW 6:21]. He continued by making what superficially may appear to be an enigmatic statement. Jesus said, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness" [MATTHEW 6:22, 23]!

While the context makes it clear that the Master is speaking of the dangers arising when one is consumed by materialism, there is a broader application which fits with the caution James is giving. When we are blinded by prejudice, jealousy or conceit, the heart is darkened. Consequently, the darkened heart provides the impetus to injure others with the tongue. Prejudice erupts in calumny and malicious words. Jealousy within motivates us to gossip and to defame people we would not otherwise attack. Conceit drives us to tear down rather than to build up. Focused on ourselves, we become destructive. No wonder the tongue cannot be tamed! Its root is in the heart, and "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick" [JEREMIAH 17:9].

There is an old saying that cautions, "Scratch a saint, and you find a sinner underneath." It is a reminder that we are capable of grave injury when we imagine we have been wronged. Until the heart is tamed, the tongue can never be tamed. However, because the heart is "incurably bad,"² the tongue will continue to reveal the wickedness that lies within. For this reason, the child of God is compelled to place a watch over the tongue, to examine the heart constantly, and quickly to seek forgiveness from those whom we offend. Especially, if we will please God, we must remember the promise of the Master that, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" [1 JOHN 1:9].

THE PERIL OF THE TONGUE — The tongue "is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." Before Cain murdered Abel, God warned him, "If you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it" [GENESIS 4:7]. As was true for Cain and is also true for us, sin is ever present, and we are susceptible to its allure. The Word of God cautions, "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins" [ECCLESIASTES 7:20]. Therefore, we are warned, "Let not your mouth lead you into sin" [ECCLESIASTES 5:6].

James' description of the tongue is reminiscent of a caged beast pacing back and forth before the bars. The beast is restless, and prepared to attack anyone that is so incautious as to stumble into the enclosure. On July 14, 2008, three Siberian Brown Bears at Mykolaec City Zoo in Ukraine killed a man after he fell into their enclosure. The 22-year-old man was drunk and trying to take close-up shots of the Siberian Brown bears when he lost his footing. The three bears charged the man immediately, tearing him "limb from limb" as he tried to escape. The man was dead before keepers could separate the animals from their victim. The tongue has a response somewhat akin to that exhibited by these brown bears. It is restless, opportunistic in injuring people that should not be hurt.

² See **NET Bible** on JEREMIAH 17:9

We are quick to strike out at anyone we imagine has hurt us. It does not matter whether the person intended to attack us, what matters is that we use our tongue as a weapon to injure and destroy. Moreover, we use our tongue as an offensive weapon much more frequently than as a defensive weapon, for we are intent on disabling every perceived threat. The tragedy is that the perceived threats are people—most of whom do not deserve our vicious assaults.

Soon after acquiring the capacity for speech, we discover how to injure with the tongue. How old was your child the first time he or she said, “I hate you?” Throughout the teenage years, how often did your child say, “You’re not fair?” Who taught your son or daughter to use that statement in order to put you on a guilt trip? Have you ever noticed how quickly children learn to set parents against one another? No one needs to teach us how to deliver a telling blow with the tongue; it is all together too natural and far too easy.

I marvel at the language skills women possess. Early in life they master the language skills necessary to destroy another woman with a smile. Perhaps you have seen an ad for green tea on television that portrays such vicious skills. The ad depicts a man and woman seated in a doctor’s waiting room? The woman, seated next to the man, clearly finds him attractive. The receptionist, observing the woman’s interest in the handsome fellow, and herself attracted to the young man, cattily asks the first woman, “So, how is your rash?” Sliced and diced with only four words, the first woman flees the office, horrified at her exposure before the man in whom she was interested! The ad is humorous precisely because we recognise the common nature of what has been portrayed. This does not mean that men are incapable of delivering telling blows with the tongue. However, with men, the tongue is usually more of a cudgel than a rapier.

It is one thing when we acknowledge that “With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbour” [PROVERBS 11:9], but it is quite another thing when we are forced to confess that as Christians we sin with our mouths. Each of us has wounded someone dear to us; and I dare say that we will wound again. It is a symptom of our fallen condition. This does not, however, excuse us from making things right when we have sinned with our tongue.

I wish I could say that I had never hurt a family member or friend with my words; alas, I cannot make such a claim. I wish I could say that any injury delivered to others was inadvertent and never on purpose; however, such a claim does not fit the facts of my life. I wish I could tell you that I never snapped at my children when they were growing up. I wish I could say that I never erred in what I said to them. But should I attempt to say otherwise, I would be a liar. I wish I could tell you that I had never spoken harshly to my wife. However, truth compels me to admit that I have spoken harshly on more occasions that I care to admit.

Each of us would undoubtedly be compelled to make similar admissions. Though we make excuses for our speech, we nevertheless do hurt our loved ones; and often the injuries we inflict are for no other reason than that we know we can get away with it. Tragically, we will likely hurt those we love again in days to come. Such things should not be.

My ministry for many years has been to churches in conflict. Churches in crisis almost always have at the heart of the controversy a pioneer-heritage clique that has for years managed to “run things,” often intimidating with vicious speech. Consequently, among those churches I have almost always encountered angry people who are far too willing to destroy others with their tongues. It should not be surprising if I were to tell you that on multiple occasions I have been on the receiving end of verbal attack from parishioners. When enraged because they cannot sin with impunity, religious people can be every bit as vicious as those thoroughly ensconced in the world. When professed Christians slander and malign fellow believers with the tongue and refuse to correct what they have said, my mind turns to the night when Jesus was taken prisoner.

Addressing the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, Jesus asked, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness” [LUKE 22:52, 53]. Later, when questioned by the high priest, Jesus stated, “I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret” [JOHN 18:20].

Though I may have presented weekly sermons and Bible studies in a congregation over a course of years, when the pioneer-heritage group realise that they cannot any longer call the shots, they invariably initiate a whisper campaign, privately speaking to those whom they imagine they can influence. Frequently, they will say such things as, “He never did preach what was right.” Or, “He was preaching the wrong doctrine.” To such people, should they have the courage to confront openly me, I simply say, “I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in churches and wherever the Lord has provided opportunity. I have said nothing in secret. Why did you not confront me before this time?” Unfortunately, those craven whingers whose tongues strut through the earth seldom have sufficient courage to say anything directly to me, except when barking in a pack as they seek to injure and destroy. Like the grumblers and malcontents Jude describes [see JUDE 16], they boast and bruit surreptitiously.

God is a God of light; He speaks openly, and not in secret when addressing His beloved. Those who follow Him reflect His glory when they speak openly and with boldness. Again, God speaks truthfully; it is the devil who is a liar and those who follow the devil speak his language. Neither does God change His speech to suit the situation or allow Himself to worry about the feelings of those whom He addresses. Christians, who are redeemed, speak truthfully, as does their Heavenly Father. Likewise, the child of God does not change what must be said merely to avoid hurting the feelings of those addressed. To be certain, the speech of a Christian is to be tempered with love; but it must be truthful and unchanging. Though we each acknowledge the veracity of such statements, we know in our hearts that our speech lacks consistency.

Christians must not be like the world. Whereas those in the world may be able to justify lying, or as is frequently heard, “stretching the truth,” Christians are commanded to eschew lying. Writing the Colossians, Paul commanded all who are believers, “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practises and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator” [COLOSSIANS 3:9, 10]. Undoubtedly, you recall that these words are echoed in the Ephesian encyclical when the Apostle writes, “Having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another” [EPHESIANS 4:25]. So Christians must be truthful, not conniving, but open and honest. Christians must not form cabals, but they must speak truthfully and openly.

Preparing the message, I pondered the Love Chapter. Though actions are certainly in view, the potential for good or evil is intimately bound up with the language of the child of God. Pay especial attention to the spectrum of love outlined in verses 4 through 7. Paul writes, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” [1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-7]. So Christian speech reveals love; it seeks the best for others.

Consistency is also a mark of godly speech. Of God, James has previously stated that “there is no variation or shadow due to change” [JAMES 1:17]. Because of the character of our Heavenly Father, James will insist that Christians must also be steady, especially in our speech. As he draws this missive to a conclusion, he will insist that each one who is a Christian must take care to, “Let your ‘yes’ be yes and your ‘no’ be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation [JAMES 5:12].

The peril of the tongue is that at any given moment it is capable of betraying us, embarrassing us as children of the King. The poisonous tongue surprises us by exposing our old nature at unexpected times, and we are caught unawares both by its pernicious nature and the suddenness with which it strikes. We are not surprised when earth dwellers use their tongue as a weapon; but we are shocked whenever those whom we imagined to be fellow believers demonstrate the brutal character of the tongue. When our sinful nature has been exposed through our speech, we discover an unwelcome kinship with Cain, who with feigned words lured his brother into the field where he slew him. Figuratively, we destroy our brothers and sisters, those who we love most, because we are every bit as capable of evil as was Cain.

THE PATHOLOGY OF THE TONGUE — “With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.”

James is confronting a disturbing aspect of spiritual pathology. How can one who is born from above and into the Family of God continue unchanged in speech? It is impossible to imagine that one who fails to show any evidence of a redeemed tongue knows anything of grace. However, even the godliest Christian will on occasion sin with the tongue. James acknowledges this when he says “we bless” and “we curse.” What shall we say about such failure? Certainly, we dare not excuse our sin; rather we must confront our sin and change our habit.

Before examining this question further, it is necessary to distinguish between the occasion lapse into speech sins and a pattern of using the tongue as a weapon to destroy. The Qoheleth has testified, “There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins” [ECCLESIASTES 7:20]. It is the identical testimony Solomon made when dedicating the first Temple [see 1 KINGS 8:46]. From the Fall of our first parents onward, the life of mankind is marked by ruin and desolation, and each of us is contaminated by sin. In the Proverbs, Solomon asks,

“Who can say, ‘I have made my heart pure;
I am clean from my sin’?”

[PROVERBS 20:9]

Eliphaz, though incorrect in assuming that Job’s trials were the result of secret sin, was nevertheless correct in his assertion concerning man’s sinful condition. He describes man as “one who is abominable and corrupt,” and as one “who drinks injustice like water” [JOB 15:16].

The Apostle Paul has written, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” [ROMANS 3:23]. John testifies, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” [1 JOHN 1:8]. He continues by stating, “If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” [1 JOHN 1:10]. Indeed, the one constant of all human existence is the presence of sin, the wicked heart always influencing the tongue.

Though the child of God is not exempt from sinning with the tongue, having sinned in speech that one knows when she has transgressed the will of God, and she cannot condone her own evil action. Consequently, when the Christian sins, he must immediately confess the sin to God, against whom he has sinned. As Christians, we must also seek forgiveness from the person against whom we sinned, just as the Master has commanded. You will recall that Jesus taught the need to seek reconciliation when a breach in fellowship has occurred.

In a Sermon He presented on a mountainside, Jesus said, “If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” [MATTHEW 5:23, 24].

The wise man has cautioned believers, “Be not rash with your mouth” [ECCLESIASTES 5:2]. Good advice, that. He also warned, “Let not your mouth lead you into sin” [ECCLESIASTES 5:6]. Indeed, in another place he has warned,

“When words are many, transgression is not lacking,
but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.”

[PROVERBS 10:19]

This proverb of Solomon presents a law that is derived from observation.

In other words, the more we speak the greater the probability that we will stumble into sin through what is said. The reason for the greater probability of sin is that as we speak we edge closer to revealing the nature of our fallen hearts. This is especially true when we speak in times when emotion is heightened. It is immaterial whether the emotion is joy, or whether the emotion is sorrow, or whether the emotion is anger, sin is a constant threat. As passion increases, caution is disregarded; as caution is disregarded, the potential for sin increases exponentially.

For a period, anyone can speak graciously. For a while, anyone can appear to be what he is not. As proof of this statement, consider the experience of almost every woman who has met the man of her dreams. Courtship is carried on with the woman believing that she has met Sir Galahad. Her knight in shining armour is courteous and solicitous of her needs. He asks about her comfort and delights to be her soul mate, spending hours talking with her. Then, the morning after the wedding the woman is convinced that her groom received a brain transplant during the night! Her soul mate disappeared and a brute assumed his place. Focused on work or play, he forgets to open the door and resents being disturbed by conversation.

In a similar manner, it would be an unusual pastor who has not numbered among the membership of his church individuals who spoke the language of Zion for a period, individuals who though looking like a lamb ultimately spoke like a dragon. Like the man in the synagogue at Capernaum, such individuals are able to participate in worship. They are able to function in various roles within the community of faith. However, when the presence of the Lord is manifested, they cry out, “What have You to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God” [see MARK 1:24].

The point is that the nearer we draw to God, the greater the exposure of spiritual perfidy. The godly heart is humbled by the knowledge of God’s glory and goodness; and exposed by the light of His holy Person, the godly person cries out, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” [see ISAIAH 6:5]! The godless, however superficially religious they may appear, resent the presence of the Living God, and they especially resent His Word.

In the presence of God's Word, the godless respond with choler; they cannot help themselves when the Word is presented in power. They lash out, seeking to silence the spokesman who dares disturb their stupor. It is not so much that they are pained by what is said, though the blows delivered by the Word are painful; it is rather that the dark secrets of the heart are exposed and they cannot tolerate the hypocrisy of their lives being exposed.

We have already seen that the evil perpetuated by the tongue originates in the heart. Though the child of God has the capacity to sin, he also has the ability to please God. The Spirit of God, residing within the life of the child of God, both convicts the believer when he sins and enables him to turn from that sin, seeking forgiveness of the Father. Prompted by the Spirit of God, the Christian longs for fellowship with God and fellowship with believers who share a love for a godly walk. Therefore, though the child of God does sin, he quickly seeks restoration to fellowship with God, for God does not allow His child to sin with impunity.

This work of the Spirit is part of the discipline process God promises to each of his children. It is a mark of the perversity of modern life that people resent the discipline of God. We would do well to mediate on the words of the Letter to Hebrew Christians. "Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.
For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

“It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” [HEBREWS 12:5-11].

God's discipline is not designed to restrict our freedom; rather His discipline is intended to enable us to enter into the freedom of the glory of the children of God [see ROMANS 8:21]. Without the ministration of the Spirit, jealously watching over us and carefully directing us into a walk of righteousness, we would soon speak a language indistinguishable from that of the world. Such would not be pleasing to God; such would be destructive to fellowship and to grace.

Where the Spirit of God does not reign, one can witness the phenomenon of people who use the same mouth to bless our Lord and Father and to curse people made in the likeness of God. No more can a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and salt water, than a Christian can repeatedly and continually pour forth blessing and cursing. No more can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs can a redeemed individual repeatedly and continually worship God while cursing fellow believers.

Where gossip and slander abound, the Spirit cannot dwell. Where calumny and malice reign, the Spirit will have long since departed. It matters not how well that group sings, it is of no consequence how frenetic the labours of that group appear to be, it does not matter how many people fill the pews week-by-week for such a group, they cannot worship—they cannot please God. Until they repent, they may make noise, but they will not worship.

The tragedy is that we will become just such a group if we fail to remember our fallen condition. If we think that our wisdom and our ability are required for God to accomplish anything, we are demonstrating arrogance that will eventuate in the heart impelling the tongue to contaminate our relationships through spewing its poison. If we forget that the tongue is a restless evil and cease to guard our lips, we will stumble into grievous sin with our mouth.

Establish in your mind that a true Christian will not make a practise of unchristian speech; and the practise of unchristian speech is evidence that the speaker is not a Christian and is therefore in danger of hell. This truth was emphasised by Jesus when He warned, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” [MATTHEW 12:33-37].

James insists on purity of speech as evidence that one’s faith is genuine. He recognises that Christians fail in this; but to accept impure speech or to tolerate it, instead of being horrified at it and repenting of it is unacceptable! Like springs and plants, we produce according to our true nature. The production of good fruit is an evidence of genuine faith and therefore of salvation itself. James says to each one of us: Purify your speech, or show yourself to be an impostor and therefore under judgment. Let the wise take heed!

To the person who speaks praise to God in the worship service and then abuses people verbally at home or at work, James commands, “Purify your speech through the week.” With the person who says, “Oh, I know I talk too much,” and laughs it off, James is not amused. He insists, “Be quick to listen, slow to speak.” By the person who boasts, “I always speak my mind, no matter who gets hurt,” James is not impressed. He commands, “Discipline your speaking.” Of the person who says, “I know I gossip too much, but I just can’t help it,” James still requires, “Control your tongue.” Of the person who is in the habit of speaking with insults, ridicule or sarcasm, James demands, “Change your speech habits.” He expects discipline in the life of a Christian. Any Christian can ask for the grace needed, for God gives good gifts [see JAMES 1:17], and gives His gifts with generosity [see JAMES 1:5]. There is, then, no justification for corrupt habits of speech in our churches today. We simply must repent.³

When offered on the altar for God’s glory, the tongue has incredible power for good. It can proclaim the life-changing message of salvation: “How are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” [ROMANS 10:14b, 15]! It has power for sanctification as we share God’s Word: “Sanctify them in truth; Your word is truth” [JOHN 17:17]. It has power for healing: “When we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more” [2 CORINTHIANS 7:5–7]. It has power for worship: “Through [Jesus] then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His Name” [HEBREWS 13:15].⁴

³ George M. Stulac, **James: IVP New Testament Commentary** (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 1993), Logos Electronic Edition

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, **James: Faith that Works** (Crossway, Wheaton, IL 1991) 143

That is my plea for those who know God. Offer your tongue to bring glory to Him. Determine that you will employ your tongue to praise His Name, and not to destroy those whom He has given life. Determine that you will assume responsibility for your words, and employ your tongue to build others, to encourage fellow believers and to console those who grieve.

For any who share the service and who are compelled by the Word to confess that they have never known the Lord, our message is simple: repent and believe the Good News that God has sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. Believe that He died because of your sin and that He is risen from the dead for your justification. For the Word of God declares, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. It is with the heart that one believes and is declared righteous and with the mouth that one confesses and is saved.” The Word of God specifically promises that “Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved” [**ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13**].⁵

May God be glorified as He grants repentance resulting in life, as He directs His people into paths of righteousness, and as He reveals the perfection of His work in each life. Amen.

⁵ Free rendering of the original language