

## USE YOUR TONGUE WISELY

James, the half brother of the Lord wrote, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (James 3:6). The word of God provides us with many examples of how we should not use the tongue. Teaching false doctrine, lying, talebearing and numerous other misuses of the tongue are condemned. But, certainly the tongue has many good uses as well. The tongue can be used for good just as it can be used for evil. Using one's tongue for good is to use one's tongue wisely. Consider briefly a few wise uses of the tongue.

The contrast to teaching false doctrine is to teach the truth. Certainly it is a wise use of the tongue to teach God's word, for it is truth (John 17:17). Paul pointed out that those who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Rom. 10:13). He then wrote, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14). He told the Corinthians that "...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21). No better or wiser use of the tongue could possibly be found.

A second wise use of the tongue would be to use it to exhort one another. The Hebrew writer said, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). An exhorter is one who encourages and builds up the strength of others. Joses was such a man to the point the apostles "surnamed him Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation" [exhortation--ASV] (Acts 4:36). Bitter and hurtful words can be used to destroy one's confidence, zeal and even desire to do the will of God. The same tongue that uses those bitter and hurtful words could just as easily use words that built confidence, zeal and even desire to serve God faithfully.

Words of compassion and kindness can aide the broken hearted, the hurting and the depressed and when used with those outside of Christ, may even be the catalyst for learning and obeying the gospel, thus a form of evangelism.

There is no doubt that one can use his/her tongue foolishly and cause damage with it, but it is also true that it can be used wisely resulting in much good. Use your tongue wisely!

*Robert*

## USE YOUR EARS WISELY

There is no doubt that each of us need to be careful about how we use our tongue. There is an old saying, "God gave us one mouth and two ears so we ought to listen twice as much as we speak". It is a fact that many need to throttle back their tongue and open up their ears. We wish to present in this article two avenues of thought concerning using our ears wisely.

First, Mark records our Lord saying, "Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given" (Mark 4:24). Every child of God should be careful about what they hear. Cursing, vulgarity, vulgar jokes and false doctrine are just a few examples of things it would be wise to not hear. Of course we realize that we often hear things that we should not when someone in our presence suddenly blurts out such. However, wisdom would mandate that we not deliberately put ourselves in the line of fire to hear these things. If you attend a comedy show by one known to use vulgar language, then you are putting yourself in harms way. If you turn on a denominational television or radio program, you can know without a shadow of a doubt that you are going to hear false doctrine. Be wise and take heed to what you hear.

Secondly, in Luke's parallel account of the passage just noted in Mark, Luke records, "Take heed therefore how ye hear..." (Luke 8:18). When both are put together, we are to take heed to both the matter we hear and the manner we hear; both the what and the how. Not every good thing that enters our ears benefits us. It takes an "honest and good heart" (Luke 8:15) to properly hear God's word. In the accounts of the Lord speaking to Paul on the road to Damascus, one account says that those with Paul heard the voice (Acts 9:7) while another account says that they heard not the voice (Acts 22:9). There is a difference in the Greek words used in those two instances. They heard the voice without understanding, but they did not hear the voice with understanding. Therefore, we not only need to listen with open hearts, but we must make sure we properly understand that which we hear. When we hear those things that we ought not to hear, we must recognize them as impurities that should be shunned and attempt to do just that. When it comes to hearing God's word taught, the best advice is to follow the example of those noble Bereans who searched the scriptures to assure truth (Acts 17:11). Listen wisely!

*Robert*