

## **THE TONGUE**

### **Ben Wright**

There is much talk in the world today of weapons of mass destruction. Nations are spending untold millions of dollars to develop weapons that destroy in better and faster ways than the weapons of their enemies.

What nation would not give such vast sums of money for a small weapon that had the power of a sword (Psalm 64:3); the swiftness and accuracy of an arrow (Jeremiah 9:8); the effectiveness of fire (James 3:5-6); and the potency of a deadly poison (James 3:8)? A small weapon so powerful as to have the power of death and life (Proverbs 18:21)? Surely, every nation on the face of the earth would pour out their national treasures for a weapon of such potential devastation.

Sadly, this weapon has been fully developed for thousands of years and is still in frequent use. You and I know this weapon to be the tongue. James, by inspirations, wrote:

“Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 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...But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:4-6, 8).

The tongue is the most terrible weapon known to man. It has the power to kill: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof” (Proverbs 18:21). A tongue used for evil is one of the things that God hates (Proverbs 6:17). The improper use of the tongue has brought down nations: “For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory” (Isaiah 3:8). Sins of the tongue are listed in the charges brought against the Gentiles by God (Romans 1:29-32). Eventually, improper use of the tongue can, and will, condemn someone for eternity (Revelation 21:8).

What makes the tongue such a tremendous weapon is that it can be used in so many different ways. It can lie, blaspheme, spread rumors, make false charges, boast, malign, slander as well as other sins. This weapon can be, and is, used in a multitude of ways and for a variety of purposes.

How can we control this fierce weapon to which nearly everyone has access? The only way one can control the tongue is to control the mind that oversees the tongue. Jesus said, “But those things that proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man...” (Matthew 15:18-20a).

Christians are to be those who have control of the mind. “And be not conformed to this world:

but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). According to Strong’s, “renewing” means, “complete change for the better.” One’s mind is renewed by the Holy Spirit: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). This renewing of the Holy Spirit is brought about by a study of the sword of the Spirit, the word of God (Ephesians 6:17).

God has given us examples of the devastation the tongue can cause (Isaiah 3:8), commands against committing sins of tongue (James 3), and warnings about the ultimate destination of those guilty of unforgiven sins of the tongue (Revelation 21:8). God’s word is our only defense against the sins of the tongue. It is the only weapon we have been given to battle against the tongue. It is the only tool we have to tame the tongue.

This tongue can be used for good when tamed. James tells us that we can bless God with this tongue (James 3:9). One whose tongue is under control will dwell in the tabernacle of the Lord (Psalm 15:1-3). It can bring health (Proverbs 12:18). Solomon wrote: “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (Proverbs 21:23). It is the tongue that is to be used in the proclamation and defense of the gospel. No greater use of the tongue can be found than that.

The tongue may cause more people to lose their souls than any other tactic of Satan. Many a Christian has ruined his reputation by a loose tongue. As someone has wisely said, God gave us two ears and one mouth. We should listen twice as much as we talk. We should pray the prayer of the Psalmist daily: “Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue” (Psalm 120:2). And we should probably add in our prayer, “Especially from my own.”