

Reading: James 3:1-13

“If anyone thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless” (Js 1:26)

In the light of the New Testament, the word “perfection” is understood as growth and maturity. One of the important qualities that shows maturity in a man is his ability to control his tongue. This is what the Bible says: “We all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body” (Js 3:2).

The Epistle of James is among the most practical books in the New Testament. One of his main subjects is tongue. He tells a lot about it. He goes to the extent to say, “If anyone cannot control his tongue, his religion is useless.”

The warning of Jesus that “for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment” (Mt 12:36,37), shows us the seriousness of our unnecessary talks.

Jesus spoke truthful words (Mk 12:32), graceful words (Lk 4:22) and faultless words (Lk 20:26). When Peter pointed out the spotlessness of Jesus he said, “He committed no sin, nor was guile found in His **mouth**” (1 Pet 2:22). Mothers Day is celebrated during this season. Our mother was strict with me and my brother concerning our words. The childhood training in tongue-control is an asset.

Almost all the Epistles emphasise the necessity of speaking the right words and avoiding unedifying talk. It is stated, “No man can tame the tongue” (Js 3:8). It must be taken control of by the Holy Spirit. A confession of the sins of our tongue and a consecration of the tongue at the altar of God will bring down fire from Above for cleansing and commission (Isa 6:5-9). Of all the organs of their bodies the Holy Spirit primarily took hold of their tongue when He came upon the early disciples (Acts 2:4). We cannot ignore the significance!

Someone said that of all the parts of the body, nothing helps Satan as much as the tongue! During Samson’s time, the jawbone of a donkey was used to kill. Even today it’s the same. “Reckless words pierce like a sword” (Prov 12:18). Tongue is a small part of the body, but it boasts a lot (Js 3:5). Words of gossip (Prov 18:8), mockery (Prov 19:29), strife (Prov 18:6), harshness (Prov 15:1) and lying (Prov 19:5) should be avoided. Let the 32 white soldiers stop the tongue coming out unnecessarily! Thiruvalluvar, an ancient Tamil poet has said, “Going for bad words when there are good ones is like choosing an unripe fruit when there’s a ripe one!”

Gracious Heavenly Father,

We thank You for the gift of speaking so we could communicate with You in prayer and praise. We remember Your words of challenge to Moses: "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the dumb? Is it not I, the Lord?" Forgive us, Lord, for taking for granted our ability to speak, when there are millions in the world who are deaf and dumb. We thank You for those who are running schools and homes for these disabled men and women, and even children.

Father God, we confess to You that our words of complaint and dissatisfaction outnumber our words of praise and appreciation. We find it easier to criticize others than encourage them. We do more of backbiting than talking in person with the concerned with love and concern for his restoration. We are more prone to exaggeration than speaking the truth. Dear Lord, forgive us our words of anger, insult, mockery and abuse. Cleanse our tongue, O God, by Your fire from above. Purge our tongue, O Lord, by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Help us, O Lord, to be swift to listen, slow to speak, and still slower to get angry. Sanctify our speech organs, O Lord, as we surrender them now on Your altar.

Father God, we specially pray for those of us who preach and teach Your Word. Let the words of our mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to You. Guard us, O Lord, from diluting Your Word to please the audience. Help us to always realize that You are watching our words from Heaven when we stand on pulpits. Enable us to interpret the Scriptures rightly and faithfully without twisting them. Deliver us from the temptation to impress people with enticing words of human wisdom.

Dear Lord, we confess to You our words which disturb our family peace. Help us spouses to be respectful to one another in our conversations. Guard our mouth from speaking words in haste. Help us avoid unkind words that hurt our children. Let all the members of our family keep in mind that Jesus is the silent Listener of all conversation. Let Bible verses decorate not only our walls but also our words. We decide to guard our mouths from speaking whatever does not edify and encourage others.

In the Name of Christ our Lord, we pray! Amen!

*(Ex 4:11; Prov 19:29; Js 1:19; Isa 6:6,7; Psa 19:14; 2 Tim 2:15;
1 Cor 2:4,5; Eph 6:4; Mt 26:63; 27:12-14; Col 4:6)*