

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## Sins Of The Tongue

By Bobby Witherington

***“If anyone among you thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless” (Jas. 1:26). “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell” (Jas. 3:6). “For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:37). “I said, I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue: I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me” (Ps. 39:1).***

The above are but a few of many scriptures which stress the dangers of an unbridled tongue. Unbridled tongues have destroyed friendships, wrecked marriages, divided churches, ruined reputations, alienated whole communities, created global strife, weakened nations, broken the hearts of millions, turned people away from the Lord, furthered the cause of Satan, and will doubtlessly prove to be a major contributing cause of millions of precious souls “spending eternity” in a devil’s hell! The Bible repeatedly mentions different sins of the tongue, concerning which we need to be informed. In the following paragraphs, we shall mention several common sins of the tongue.

**Lying Tongue.** Scripture says ***“...all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).*** Among the things which ***“the Lord hates”*** is ***“a lying tongue,”*** and ***“a false witness who speaks lies”*** (Prov. 6:17, 19). Even so, multitudes think nothing of lying, especially in the business world when many routinely lie for the sake of financial advantage, to make a sale, etc. I well remember a car dealer saying of another car dealer in the same community, “He will climb a tree to tell a lie before he will stand on the ground and tell the truth!”

**Hasty Tongue.** Solomon said, ***“Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him”*** (Prov. 29:20). Solomon also said ***“Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few”*** (Eccl. 5:2). James said, ***“So then, my brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”*** (Jas. 1:19). However, notwithstanding these warnings, multitudes, like race horses raring to go, are determined to be “first out of the gate” when it comes to spreading rumors, and dispensing questionable, reputation-destroying misinformation.

**Filthy Tongue.** To the saints at Ephesus, Paul admonished, saying, ***“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification...”*** (Eph. 4:29). The same writer referred to others, saying, ***“their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”*** (Rom. 3:13-14). Many who use their tongues as sewers of filth think they are smart, and that they show great intelligence in their ability to express themselves. But little do they realize how stupid they really are. Surely, with some 400,000 words in the English language, an intelligent person ought to be able to express himself without spewing filth from his dirty mouth, and without making garbage dumps out of the unfortunate ears of those in their midst. It just so happens that decent, respectable, God-fearing people, with a passion, resent having to be subjected to that kind of language!

**Tale Bearing, Gossiping Tongue.** Solomon said ***“The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and***

*they go down into the inmost body*" (Prov. 18:8). He further said *"where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases"* (Prov. 26:20). Moses said *"you shall not go about as a talebearer among your people..."* (Lev. 19:16). Paul referred to some who *"learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not"* (1 Tim. 5:13). Millions, by bitter experience, have learned that *"a perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends"* (Prov. 16:28). Sadly, but correctly, it has been observed that some on Sunday morning sing *"lift up the fallen,"* and spend the rest of the week greasing the skids so he will slide faster to the bottom! For shame! The word *"devil,"* from *diabolos* (Greek), means "an accuser, a slanderer," (*Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, by Vine). This same word is translated *"slanderers"* in 1 Timothy 3:11, "where the reference is used to those who are given to finding fault with the demeanor and conduct of others, and spreading their innuendos and criticisms in the church," (ibid). In 2 Timothy 3:3, in citing the sins which inspiration said would bring about *"perilous times"* (v. 1), the inspired writer said there would be those who are *"unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of God."* It seems more than merely coincidental that *"devil"* and *"slanderer"* are both translated from the same word, for people are seldom more diabolical than when they stoop to gossip and slander!

**Murmuring Tongue.** *"Murmuring,"* from *Gonguzo* (Gk), means "to mutter, murmur, grumble, say anything in a low tone," Vine. Often it refers to those who are voicing unwarranted dissatisfaction. For example, in Luke 5:30 we read of certain scribes and Pharisees who *"murmured against"* the disciples of the Lord. In John 6:60-61, mention is made of the Lord's disciples, having heard what they perceived as *"a hard saying,"* and how that *"Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it."* Study the history of the Israelites, who had been miraculously delivered from their bondage in Egypt, but who continually murmured because of their self-exaggerated difficulties. Regarding this very point and those same people, Paul urged the saints at Corinth to not *"murmur...as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer"* (1 Cor. 10:10; Num. 21:6-9. cf. Ex. 17:2,7; Num. 14:37). Yet, how many times do we grumble, murmur, and complain, even though we have so much for which to be thankful in this life, and we live in hope of eternal life in the world to come!

**Flattering Tongue.** The psalmist said of some, *"they speak idly everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak"* (Ps. 12:2). To flatter means "to praise too much or beyond the truth; praise insincerely" (*World Book Dictionary*). Some of us call it "buttering up." Generally, people flatter, or "butter up" others because of their own hidden agenda. Ananias and Tertullus, whose agenda was the death of the apostle Paul, flattered Governor Felix, saying that *"through you we enjoy great peace and prosperity is brought to this nation by your foresight"* (Acts 24:2). Properly understood, it is difficult to distinguish between a lying tongue and a flattering tongue!

**The Tongue That Takes the Lord's Name in Vain** (Ex. 20:7). We often apply taking God's name *"in vain"* to the use of His holy name with a curse word, and this is one form whereby this is done. Concerning this point, I remember a lady in California saying, "I was almost grown before I realized that God's last name is not a four-letter word beginning with D!" Such language is dis-respectable, degrading, disgusting, and damnable! However, in more "polite" ways, and often inadvertently (by using euphemisms, which reduce His name to a by-word, or an exclamation), there are many people who take God's name *"in vain."* We hear such expressions as "My God," "Gosh," "Golly," "Good God," "O God," "My Lord," "Gee whiz," "Goodness gracious," "Lord have mercy," and other expressions too numerous to mention in the remaining space. Concerning God, David said, *"holy and reverend is His name"* (Ps. 111:9). God's name must always be hallowed; it must never be used as a by-word!

**Conclusion:** Like the Psalmist, each one of us should be able to truthfully say, *"I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle..."* (Ps. 39:1). Or in the language of James 1:26, each one of us must learn to *"bridle"* our tongue, lest we make *"vain"* our religion! ■