



Scripture nugget – May my life be a fragrant song of praise to God

The tongue is also a fire. It exists among our members as a world of malice, defiling the whole body and setting the entire course of our lives on fire, itself set on fire by Gehenna. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison (James 3:6-8).

The tongue is driven by the heart and mind. *A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45).* The tongue is a very small part of the human body but has great power that the rest of the body does not have. As St James has pointed out, an unrestrained, malicious tongue can be likened to a fire which can get out of control, having harmful effects far and near. Lives, reputations, and careers can be destroyed by malicious lies, gossiping and calumnies. Behind a malicious tongue is a character defect. A critical or flattering tongue is fed by an inner sense of insecurity. A lying tongue belongs to one who does not live in the truth and, thus, makes easy compromises. A gossiping tongue belongs to one that has malice in the heart. Very few people can really control their tongue. It is in our fallen human nature to incline to be judgmental and this is manifested by what we say. This weakness is compounded by the double standards that we have for ourselves and others. Many times we are blind to our own faults but are quick to point out the faults of others. Thus Jesus says: *Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye? (Matthew 7:3).*

Let us use our tongue to praise God and to impart grace to others. To purify our tongue we need to purify our heart and mind. We need to exercise vigilance over our mind so that untrue, useless, impure, unloving or judgmental thoughts or mindset do not become embedded in it. The enemy of our soul, the Deceiver, is active, planting all kinds of impure suggestions into our mind. We need to recognize these subtle temptations, throw them out and do not entertain or dwell on such thoughts. The Deceiver also works diligently on our heart, tempting us with all kinds of negative feelings. Thus, St Paul exhorts us not to be led by our feelings but by faith (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:7). If we can control our tongue, we can use it to praise and thank God as He deserves, and to build up others that God entrusts to us especially those who are under our authority or care and who look to us to provide moral support and good examples. *Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one (Matthew 5:37).* May we be sincere in what we say and never use words to cover a bad ulterior motive or to cause confusion or dissension.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You said: *I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak (Matthew 12:36).* Purify my mind and heart, and sanctify my lips. Help me use my lips to impart grace to others, and let the praise of Your Name and Your wondrous deeds be always on my lips. Praise of God is an acceptable sacrifice (cf. Hebrews 13:15) and is fitting for those with upright hearts (cf. Psalm 33:1). Fill my poor heart with gratitude and love of You so that my life can become a fragrant hymn of praise to Your Sacred Heart that thinks nothing of assuming lowly human flesh, and dying painfully on the Cross for a worthless creature like me. Blessed Mother Mary, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.