“Watch your tongue!” That’s a command that most of us probably heard while we were growing up. It was a warning from our parents or other authority figures to be careful about what we were saying–to cease with our sassing or arguing, because we were headed for trouble if we didn’t.

When my kids were younger they quickly learned that “sticking their tongues out” at each other was not allowed in our house, because I would display the multi-tool that I usually carried with me and threaten to pull out that offending member if they kept it up.

Of course they knew I would never actually do such a thing, but to this day they refer to a pair of pliers as Dad’s “tongue-puller-outer.”

James tells us in his epistle that the tongue can be a terrible thing, a tiny thing that causes all sorts of evil. He says that it is like a fire set by hell, that it is untamable, a restless evil full of deadly poison. In other words, well deserving of our Heavenly Father’s “tongue-puller-outer.”

It is sad the way that humanity can so distort every good gift that our Lord has given to us. Every blessing from him–from the work of our hands to all of our modern technology–can be used for either good or evil, and we so often choose to use them for self-serving or evil purposes. The same is true of our ability to speak, James tells us; out of the same mouth come blessings and curses–“such things ought not to be!” He says.

“Watch your tongues” is an admonition that this world still needs to hear; and while I doubt that the television producers or the politicians would pay much heed to this, as God’s people we are concerned with the things that we say.

Not only do we desire to build up and support each other with the things that we say, rather than tear them down; we know also that our Lord has given us the great privilege of using our gift of speech to praise his holy name for all of his many blessings to us, and to share our knowledge of the Savior with those who long to hear that life-giving message of peace and forgiveness that has been entrusted to us.

So use your tongues, please! But always to our Lord’s glory and praise.