

Sound Speech

Introduction. An ancient Arabian proverb says, "When you have spoken the word, it reigns over you. When it is unspoken you reign over it." Dynamite is stored and moved with great caution, because we know it can destroy. Likewise, Christians have something as powerful as dynamite, yet it is handled as if there is no danger at all.

The tongue is dangerous and we need to examine the importance of keeping this weapon under control (James 3:5-8). The scriptures speak on the subject of the tongue in no less than 31 passages, addressing God's disapproval of the uncontrolled tongue. David reflected on the necessity of controlling the tongue (Psalm 39:1)

Corrupt speech can take the form of profanity, taking the Lord's name in vain, coarse jesting, and euphemisms. It can furthermore mean gossip, backbiting, slander, and prating. May God help us if the church is made up of people who call upon the name of the Lord with the same lips that utter filthy words or destroy another brother or sister in Christ. As we study today, we must have an honest heart to examine our lips and speech to see that we are not guilty of participating in any of these forms of ungodly speech.

I. ***Gossip And Slander***

A. Not all sins of the tongue consist of ugly speech.

1. Whispering.

a) Psithurismos: "Lit., to speak into one's ear (in an evil sense); hence, secret slander, backbiting."

b) This word is used only in Romans 1:29-30 and 2 Corinthians 12:20 (it is translated as "gossip" in newer versions). Pierre de Marivaux said, "Some people will believe anything if it is whispered to them."

2. Backbiting.

a) Katalalos: "To slander, to speak evil of, to backbite; synonymous to whisperer, only more open."

b) Again, this word is used only in Romans 1:29-30 and 2 Corinthians 12:20.

3. Meddler.

a) Allotrioepiskapos: "Lit., another's overseer; an overseer of the business belonging to another, a busybody."

b) This word is only used in 1 Peter 4:15.

4. Slander.

a) Blasphemia: "To speak against someone in such a way as to harm or injure his or her reputation (occurring in relation to persons as well as to divine beings)."

- b) This word occurs several times in the New Testament (Mark 7:22; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8). In the KJV, it is translated as "blasphemy" and "evil speaking."
- 5. Prating.
 - a) Phluareo: "To bring unjustified charges against, malicious gossip, unfounded rumors."
 - b) This word is used only in 3 John 10 in speaking of Diotrephes.
- 6. Tattler.
 - a) Phluaros: "The adjective of phluareo (prating), and means: to prat against another; to raise false accusations; to gossip about another."
 - b) This word is used in 1 Timothy 5:13.
- 7. Busybody.
 - a) Periergazomia: "Lit., to be working round about, instead of at one's own business; signifies, to take more pains than enough about a thing, to waste one's labor, to be meddling with or bustling about other people's matters."
 - b) This word is used in 2 Thessalonians 3:11 and 1 Timothy 5:13.

II. ***Cursing And Euphemisms***

- A. Cursing means "to make light of something serious, to bring a serious matter into contempt, to show no respect, evil or wicked talk" (Romans 3:14; Ephesians 4:29; 5:4; Colossians 3:8). The Israelites were not to profane the name of the Lord (Leviticus 19:12). Profane means "to wound, defile or pollute" (cf. 1 Timothy 1:9). Obscene speech, dirty jokes, or coarse jesting are all furthermore examples of wicked talk.
- B. Virtually every Christian realizes that vulgar speech, curse words, swear words, using the Lord's name in vain, etc., are condemned in the Bible; yet how many saints have unknowingly been guilty of such by using words of a more "softened" nature? This is the case when using many of today's euphemisms.
 - 1. The definition of the word euphemism is, "The act or an example of substituting a mild, indirect, or vague term for one considered harsh, blunt, or offensive." What would be some examples of euphemisms that are wrong for a Christian to use?
 - 2. Maybe you use words like "golly," "gosh," "gee," "thank goodness," "darn," heck," "good heavens," etc. People who use these words think they are avoiding foul language or even think nothing about it whatsoever. But these kinds of words either take the Lord's name in vain or soften profanity.
- C. There is no excuse for anyone using foul language. Profanity is a sin against God. It is disrespectful, sacrilegious, and irreverent! A

Christian bridles their tongue (James 1:26), even though it is difficult (James 3:3-6).

1. Socrates, around 400 B.C., wrote, "Our youths love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority -- they show disrespect for their elders and love to chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up food, and tyrannize teachers."
 2. In a phone poll of 504 principals attending the National Association of Secondary School Principals convention in 1997, 89% say they face profane language and provocative insults toward teachers or other students on a regular basis. It sounds like youths have not changed much over the years (Leviticus 19:32; 2 Kings 2:23-24).
- D. We want to make sure that we understand that expressing ungodly speech in emails, on Twitter, and on Facebook still constitutes ungodly speech -- even though the words do not actually come out of your mouth.

III. ***What To Do About Your Speech***

- A. Guard your heart.
 1. Matthew 12:34-35.
 2. Proverbs 16:23.
- B. Guard your lips.
 1. Proverbs 13:3.
 2. Ephesians 4:29.
- C. Think before you speak.
 1. Proverbs 15:28.
 2. Proverbs 29:11.
- D. Pray about your speech.
 1. Psalm 19:14.
 2. Psalm 141:3.

Conclusion. The question that must be asked is would the Lord speak the way you do? Furthermore, if you talking trashy and sound low class, that is exactly what people will think of you. Is that really being "without rebuke" or "without blemish" (Philippians 2:15)?

Jesus said we should take our speech seriously (Matthew 12:36-37). Sobering thoughts, yes? For this reason we should think carefully about the words we use. It is imperative that our speech agrees with God's standards. We should never forget the power of speech to hurt others or to hurt ourselves; to bless others or to bring glory to God. As we examine our spiritual well-being, let us not only give attention to how well we hear, read,

pray, and sing, but let us also give conscientious attention to how well we talk.