

## **The Christian and His Tongue**

### **1. Speech: A Reflection of the Soul**

- A. Man is unique among God's creatures in that he can deliberate inwardly and verbalize his thoughts to others.
- B. We demonstrate what is truly on the inside by our speech – Mt 12:33-37.
  - 1. The Pharisees' condemnation of Jesus betrays what is truly in their hearts: *"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"* (12:34).
  - 2. The importance of speech: *"for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment"* (12:36).
  - 3. Our words will either justify or condemn us (12:37).
- C. This is a high standard, but it highlights our responsibility before God to bring *"every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Cor 10:5) and thus measure our every word. *"The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips"* (Pr 16:23).

### **2. The Tongue's Potential for Evil**

- A. Jas 3:5-8 – A negative summarization of the tongue. For some reason it seems easier to speak negatively than positively. Everyone can find fault, but it takes a special person to seek solutions. Flagrant misuses:
  - 1. Speaking evil of men – Jas 3:5-8; 4:11; 5:9. Gossip, backbiting, harsh judgmentalism and general unkindness too often pass our lips. Brethren have the greatest power to hurt one another because we expect better from those who are our spiritual kindred.
  - 2. Other damaging forms of speech: Murmuring/complaining (Ph 2:14-15; 1 Cor 10:10); grumbling (1 Pet 4:9). Such negativism undermines the joy, optimism, hope and thankfulness that we must cultivate to overcome discouragement.
  - 3. **There are enough bad things going on around us without further distressing ourselves with negative speech!**
- B. Subtle misuses of the tongue: Shallow, flippant references to God, spiritual things (euphemism – "the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant"). Examples: Golly, gosh, gee

whiz, jeez, lord(y), lord have mercy, heavens, heavenly days, good heavens, heavens to Betsy, for Pete's sake (Peter), or mild oaths such as dang, darn, etc. While it is only natural to express strong feelings (pain, frustration, surprise), we must be careful in those moments because that is when we are susceptible to unrestrained speech.

C. The use of our tongues toward our family:

1. Parents/children – Too many idle threats by parents; too much disrespectful, disdainful speech by children; too much explosive anger because matters are not handled properly to start with.
2. Husbands/wives must learn to communicate love, respect, honor for each other.
3. Lines of communication severed by schedules, electronics (games, tv, cds), exhaustion, taking for granted, etc.

### **3. The Tongue's Potential for Good**

- A. Prayer – Instead of complaining, seek God's help and guidance. Lay your frustrations on Him instead of a fellow Christian. Pray for/bless enemies – Mt 5:44.
- B. Exhortation/encouragement – Never underestimate the power of a spoken word of praise, compliment, notice, etc. Pr 15:23; 16:24; 25:11.
- C. Teaching – Col 4:5-6; 1 Pet 3:15. We must be prepared to speak to outsiders with reason, grace and consideration. How many times our well-meaning defense of truth turns into a personal attack that drives others away.

**Conclusion:** The greatest use of the tongue: *"Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven"* (Mt 10:32-33). Have you made that confession?