

Sins of Speech

Matthew 12:36

After former president Richard Nixon resigned the presidency in the 1970's and his White House tapes were released to the public, many people were shocked and disturbed by the foul language the president had used in his conversations. There was public shock at the general tone of the conversations and the foul language used by Nixon and others in the Oval Office. It is apparent that people from all walks of life often use foul language from the least to the more important people (President Nixon, for example.) (*On April 16, 1974 Special Prosecutor Jaworski issued a subpoena for 64 White House tapes*).

We have become aware in recent years of an unprecedented explosion of vile speech in our society. Some of us were taught in our younger years that to resort to the use of slang or profanity indicated that we had a poor grasp of the English language. While there may be some truth to it, God declares that the use of foul, untrue, or disagreeable speech is a sin. As Christians, we still have to deal with our sinful natures. We need to change any sinful speech patterns.

Matthew 12³⁶ But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

(Let's pray)

Speech is important, for it reveals the heart of man. Man's speech is the mirror of his soul. Speech reveals our thoughts, betrays our secret interests and shows the level of our moral and intellectual development. It manifests our attitude toward God and those about us, as stated in Mt 12:34 that *'out of the abundance of heart the mouth speaks'*. Thus speech reveals the sort of treasure stored in the heart of a man - Mt 12:35. There is no habit to which we can become addicted which more accurately reveals the character and heart of man than the language he uses. Observing speech is one good way that people use to decide what kind of individual another person is. For this reason, our very words will be taken into account on the day of judgment! We ought to give careful thought concerning the words we use. It is imperative that our speech be in keeping with God's standard and not the world's! Jesus made a compelling statement about careless speech: *"But I tell you that men will have to give account of the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken"* (Matthew 12:36).

Four examples of sins of speech:

- I. Foul Language
- II. False Testimony
- III. Disagreeable Speech
- IV. Fighting words

I. **Foul Language** (**Corrupt**, Nasty, Dirty, Vile, Wicked, Filthy, Foolish, **Profane**, Slang, Off-color Jokes) *Eph. 5:4 (NIV) ⁴Nor should there be **obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking**, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*

Many people speak slang words that are crude and inappropriate. Coarsely using words that are on the edge of acceptability, or in good, clear, clean, and wholesome speech. Some even use God's name in ways other than worship, honor and praise. (How many have heard people exclaimed – Jesus Christ! When they really don't mean it, nor do they know anything about Christ? Do you use any slang to add emphasis to what you're

saying? Remember one of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.) Still, some are engaged in off-color jokes or conversation, and the filthiness of our society crept into their speech. We should replace foul language with clean, wholesome words. With jokes and stories that would shock, let us replace with those that would edify, in some way.

One good excuse for foul language can be carelessness. We don't plan it – we just don't think before we speak. Careless speech is very dangerous, EVEN IF you don't use foul language. Sometimes, a simple 'No' response to a hard work you have done for the ministry can be discouraging enough for one to continue meaningful ministry (Eve/Chinese Corner). Other times, we responded to our brothers and sisters in worldly way, when spiritual requirement is clear that we must be understanding and accepting. We really cannot be careless since it is one thing to know what you want to say and another to put it into the best words for communicating it to a particular hearer. We tend to assume that language can carry the thoughts in our minds accurately and clearly to the minds of others. At best, though, it is a matter of approximation. We hope to get at least close enough to the idea in the words we use that those around us can generally understand. It is not that our language cannot handle precise communication. It is rather that we are too careless with our words and to not choose them with the hearer in mind.

II. False testimony (Untruthful, Lying, Exaggeration, Misleading, Broken Vows, Deceiving, "White Lies", Cheating, Rumors) Col. 3:9 (NIV) ⁹Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

Everybody lies, are guilty of some form of cheating: Untruthful, Lying, Deceiving, "White Lies", Cheating. Remember one of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

On untruthfulness - Do you frequently fall short in things you said you would do? Some exaggerate to make yourself look better, and mislead people or institutions. Are you characterized by giving partial truths and not whole truth? **Are you careful to follow through with promises, vows and commitments** you make to God and others? Is your word your bond or are you somewhat unreliable?

III. Disagreeable Speech (Murmuring, Grumbling, Complaining, Griping, Irritable, Unkind, Impatient, Contentious) 1 Cor. 10:10 (NIV) ¹⁰And do **not grumble**, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. 1 Thess. 5:18 (NIV) ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

All too often, we gripe and complain about situations in our lives. We fail to give thanks in all things and at all times as commanded by the scriptures. When we should be filled with an attitude of gratefulness and praise, our attitude is of grumbling and complaining. We say, "I have good reason to complain" because we always are looking on the dark sides of things. Therefore, instead of trusting God for supernatural joy, we give into murmuring and complaining.

Eph. 4:31 (NIV) ³¹Get rid of all bitterness, **rage** and **anger**, brawling and **slander**, along with every form of **malice**. 1 Cor. 1:10 (NIV) ¹⁰I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be **no divisions** among you and that you may be **perfectly united in mind and thought**.

Do you increase the faith of your church by a positive attitude or, do you tear it down by focusing on its imperfections? Are you quick to divide up and "take sides"? Do you tend to be a part of church cliques?

Instead of putting God's armor, we carry the wrong arms (weapon):

Anger is something that builds within us. It usually comes because we are frustrated that we are not getting our way about something. People didn't respond the way we expected so we are angry. This anger begins to boil within us and eat away at our defenses.

Rage is the boiling over of anger. It is seen in a quick-tempered person. Rage is when we "lose control". We "fly off the handle". Rage is when anger comes spewing out. And it always leaves casualties in its wake.

Malice is the bitterness that seeks to hurt another. It is malice that causes us to say hurtful things. It is malice that leads us to a viciousness of mind, act like a "self-appointed" critic and judge to set everyone else straight.

Slander follows suit. This is hurtful speech that defames a person's character. It is often speaking hurtful or distorted truth to make another look bad.

IV. Fighting words (Bitter, Angry, Wrathful, Clamor, Evil Speech, Malicious, Bickering, Argumentative) *1 Tim. 5:17 (NIV)* ¹⁷*The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

From day one when I responded to the call to serve as pastor, Bro. Phil gave me an analogy that I would be wearing a target. Nothing has been more true in the past month than before.

You've an inexperienced pastor. You've a pastor without any seminary education. Your church is unorganized. Look at our church – ABC – great preacher, music, and budget... (Can you love your pastor after hearing all of these negative, derogatory, and rumors speech? Can you be proud of your church? Are you going to take a stand for your pastor?)

Therefore, rid yourself of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind. I Peter 2:1. It is important that we find ways to make our speech reflect the spirit of Christ and stay away from the malicious or hateful speech that we often purposely engage in.

Invitation:

- (1) Let us put speech to good use - The word that manifests God's righteousness is in our mouth. When we confess that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and cling to Him, we shall be saved. With the heart, man believes and with the mouth, the word of confession is spoken to manifest salvation. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. We are born again when we confess God's word concerning salvation. We are born again by the incorruptible word of God.
- (2) What are some of the practical aspects of demonstrating love through our speech?
 - (1) Use words that build up others rather than tearing them down - Eph. 4:29
 - (2) Never say things that hurt others, and
 - (3) We should disagree agreeably, in a spirit of love, and always respect the other person and his/her opinions. (*Eph. 4:29 (NIV)* ²⁹*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*)