

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Jackson, TN 38305

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January 05, 2014

Volume 34, # 02

Watch Your Mouth!

According to legend many years ago, there were an eagle and a turtle who became very good friends. They always traveled together on long trips. One day, however, the turtle became very tired and informed the eagle that he could not make the return trip. They sat and tried to think of some way for the turtle to make the return journey. Finally, the turtle had a bright idea. He said to the eagle, "You can fly and carry a stick in your claws and let me hold to the stick with my mouth." They tried it and it worked fine. As they flew over a farm, two farm hands looked up and saw the unusual sight. One said to the other, "That's a clever idea. I wonder which of them thought of it?" The turtle, desiring the praise, opened his mouth to say, "I did." You can figure out the rest of the story. Unable to bridle his tongue, the turtle met his death.

The tongue is the cause of the spiritual death of many. The gift of speech is a blessing and a gift of God, but it is the will of God that we bridle the tongue. James said, "If any man thinketh himself to be religious while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his

heart, this man's religion is vain." (Jas. 1:26.) Jesus let it be known that if we use the tongue in an unsuitable fashion it can destroy us. (Matt. 12:36.) David wrote, "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." (Ps. 39:1.)

Sins of the tongue are probably the most prevalent sins among men today. The religion of many is made vain because of improper use of the little member, the tongue. But what are some of these sins of the tongue that make a man's religion vain? Let us examine some of the more common ones:

Talking Too Much or Too Hastily

Psychologists estimate that the talkative person uses about 100-thousand words a day. The tongue is the only part of the human body that can run from morning till late hours of the night and never get tired. Too many people talk too much. We say they "run off at the mouth." A writer in the Atlanta Constitution once put it: 'We think too little, and talk too much, and often get ourselves in real 'dutch.' And to quote the words of my old grandpap, 'You don't catch much till you close your trap!'"

Also, many times in anger or great disappointment we "fly off the handle." This is the fellow that talks too hastily. Many harsh words are often spoken that do not manifest the spirit of a true Christian. James said, "But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." (Jas. 1:19.) We need to be reminded of the cliché, "Think twice before you speak." We often, feel we need to "put in our two cents worth" and really speak our mind. If we do, God says we are a fool: "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards." (Prov. 29:11.)

Unbridled Tongues

Preaching on gossip, false witness, and lying will really hit some folks concerning unbridled tongues. The apostle Paul said, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor." (Eph. 4:25.) Lying is from Satan. The Bible says he "is a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44.) Solomon tells us that the Lord hates "a lying tongue" and "a false witness that speaketh lies." (Prov. 6:17, 19.) These verses should guard the reputation of man from false testimony whether it be in court, over-the-fence gossip, slander of a neighbor, or out-and-out lying.

Four good questions we need to ask ourselves before we say anything about another person are: (1) Is it true? (2) Even if it is true, will it do any good to tell it? (3) Is it necessary? (4) Would I say it in the presence of that person?

The tongue is called "a fire." (Jas. 3:16.) It is a destructive force that can destroy individuals, businesses, families, and/or churches. It is also called "a poison." (Jas. 3:8.) The Bible says one who misuses his tongue is as a snake. (Ps. 140:3.) There is more deadly poison in the tongue of some than in the mouth of a rattlesnake. You can measure the venom of a snake, but there is no way to measure the deadly poison in the mouth of the ones unable to control their tongues. James says the tongue is full of poison.

Bearing false witness robs one of his most valuable possession, his good reputation. Liars are included in the list of those that shall have their part in the lake of fire. (Rev. 21:8.) There are no

big lies and little lies, black lies and white lies in the Lord's sight. A lie is a lie and all lies are sin! Let us be careful then to weigh our words carefully lest we speak that which is untrue and lose our souls.

Profanity and Filthy Talk

The Bible forbids us to use God's name in any way except with love and reverence for our Maker and Creator. His name is holy and should not be used except with reverence and awe. "Holy and reverend is his name." (Ps. 111:9.) It is a common talk of many men and women to use God's name in vain — either as a byword or as a curse word. And when they do they are guilty of sin.

It must surely sicken the Lord to hear some using their mouth on Sunday to praise God and with the same tongue use God's name in vain on Monday. The Bible says, "Out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." (Jas. 3:9,10.)

Many, however, who would not dare think of openly cursing or using God's name in vain are using slang expressions that are called euphemisms. If you've never used that word, look it up in a good dictionary. It means to use a mild expression instead of one that is more unpleasantly direct. A person that desires to swear or curse will use a euphemism so as to be less offensive to the hearers.

Such expressions are "gosh" or "golly" — substitutes for God. "Gee" is a euphemistic contraction of Jesus. "Darn" is a

euphemism for the curse, damn. The expression, "My Lordy" is repeating the name of the Lord in vain. Exclamations of "Good grief," "Good night," or "Good gracious" are similar euphemistic terms for God. If you've been using these terms, please stop!

And Christians cover their ears in shame when they hear "Hell" used in an oath. They show great concern but then turn right around and say, "For heaven's sake." If anything, this is even worse. Jesus said, "And he that sweareth by the heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon." (Matt. 23: 22.)

And, finally, let it be pointed out that filthy, obscene, lewd talk is also sinful. Smutty jokes and vulgar talk ought never to come from the lips of one claiming to love the Lord. Paul said, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (Eph. 4:29.) In Colossians 4:6 the Christian's speech is to be always with "grace."

Conclusion

In light of all the above (and much more that could be said if space would permit), why do you talk the way you do? The gift of speech is wonderful and a gift of God, but it can be abused. The tongue is certainly powerful. "He that would love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." (1 Pet. 3:10.)

- Bob Buchanon

THE MEANING OF CONVICTION

Nowadays it is almost considered a virtue to be in doubt, and a rash presumption to be sure of anything. It is fashionable to be so flexible in your beliefs that you aren't positive of anything; so tolerant and agreeable that you practically agree with everyone about everything.

I guess this is part of the "do-your-own-thing" philosophy: "You do your own thing...I'll do mine; and we won't worry about whose 'thing' is right." What is right and wrong; what is true and false; what is valuable in the long-run as opposed to what is fun now -- these distinctions are held in contempt; they are considered to be so much out-moded trivia, by those caught up in the modern spirit of things.

And, it is considered a social expedient to agree with everyone. If getting along with people is "where it's at" for you, conform and "fit in," but by all means **DON'T ASSERT SOME UNPOPULAR BELIEF**. Be friendly and sociable; aspire to be the "life of the party." And that means: don't disagree with people.

The apostle Paul was a caring person, a man of profound sympathy and charity toward people, toward those who differed with him and even toward his ardent enemies. Read about his life (in the book of Acts) and note the personal remarks in his epistles. Here was a man willing to go the extra mile; ready to adjust to the social customs and conscientious whims of people.

Yet, he was firmly persuaded and convinced of certain things, and he taught these things without apology. He cared about people, and he enjoyed pleasant relations and friendships with people. But that orientation to people did not cause him to ignore truth or compromise it.

He taught, publically and with boldness, that Jews and Gentiles were both "under sin" and in need of Christ (Rom. 3:9, 23-26). This didn't set well with the Jewish community; neither were the Gentiles particularly fond of being charged as sinners. BUT IT WAS THE TRUTH, and people needed to know. Paul's interest in people didn't keep him from telling them the truth; IT COMPELLED HIM TO TELL THEM THE TRUTH. Many other things Paul had to teach caused people to turn against him. This doesn't mean he was hard to get along with; it doesn't mean he didn't care about people; it doesn't mean he wanted to be disagreeable for the sake of creating friction, IT MEANS HE LOVED GOD FIRST; IT MEANS HIS DEDICATION TO CHRIST AND THE TRUTH OF CHRIST WAS GREATER THAN HIS INTEREST IN SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE. It means he was mature and wise. Are we?

- Warren E. Berkley, (via Gospel Anchor, Jan., 1984, p. 11.)

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- > *God provides food for the birds, but He doesn't put it in the nest.*
 - > *You may not think quick, but you had better think right.*

- Tact is the ability to hammer home a point without hitting the other fellow on the head.
 - A wise person doesn't tell everything he knows, but he knows everything he tells.
 - We rise by the things we put under our feet.
 - He who has light thoughts of sin does not have great thoughts of God.
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Abraham's Surrender!*" (text: Gen. 12:1-3); Sunday evening: "*HAGGAI: Break Away From Habits of Idleness!*"