

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Mouth Sins

"The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness." (Psalms 18:28). Believe it or not the tongue is the most used muscle in the body. In a typical week the average person will speak enough words to fill a 500 page book. Often many of these words spoken would fall into the category of sin. "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless," (James 1:26). The idea being expressed by James is that of controlling the tongue. "I said, I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle," (Psalm 39:1).

Christians must be very careful in how the tongue is used. If our language is out of control then we are hypocrites and our professed Christianity is useless. Sinning with the mouth (mouth sins) is not a trivial matter. Sins committed with the tongue are equal in destruction to sins committed through the lust of the flesh. Consider where Paul placed whisperers (gossipers) and backbiters (badmouthing) in Romans 1:28-32. He places these in the same class with homosexuality, adultery and even murder.

It is disheartening to learn that some Christians fail to take seriously mouth sins. Some seem to feel that gossip, slander, and bad-mouthing are simply naughty little habits; nothing too serious.

Gossip (the revealing of personal or sensational facts or rumors) has been condemned by God for thousands of years. Under the Law of Moses we read: "You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people" (Leviticus 19:16). Also, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Proverbs 18:21). The prophet Jeremiah pictures a gossip as a two-faced back shooter (Jeremiah 9:8). Paul writes of some women who ". . . learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13). Gossip is idle talk revealing intimate details of another's life. It wounds, it hurts, it destroys relationships and reputations, and gossip is sinful! It cannot be justified under the guise "well it's the truth." The very definition of gossip tells us that the tales we carry, even if true, is still gossip.

Gossips are often like stalkers. They lurk in the shadows watching, listening so they can find out some scandalous bits of information and then tell it to as many as will listen. "An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue" (Proverbs 17:4). Friends have become enemies, family relationships broken and churches have split because of gossiping tongues. "A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends" (Proverbs 16:28).

The irony of all this is a Gossip will often appear to be a friend and flatter us in order to learn some piece of information to tell. "He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips" (Proverbs 20:19).

However, gossip is not the only mouth sin that proves our lives are out of control and our Christianity is a fraud. Lying is another such sin! God says that a lying tongue is like a deadly weapon. "A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow" (Proverbs 25:18). Furthermore, God hates a "lying tongue" (Proverbs 6:17).

Lying is sternly forbidden under the gospel of Christ. "Therefore, putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25). And the New Testament is equally clear as to the final address of all liars. ". . . all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Occasionally people behave as if they do not know what a lie is. A lie is asserting something known or believed to be untrue with the intent to deceive.

But a lie is also an untrue statement that one may or may not believe to be true. Let's see if we can clear this up. One might know he is telling a falsehood and that is a lie. But a lie also might be passing on some false information I might genuinely believe to be true. For example, I might have been told that "Ralph" is guilty of adultery. I might have confidence in the source who told me that Ralph was an adulterer. As a result I genuinely believe that Ralph committed adultery against his wife and I tell you: "I know for a fact Ralph committed adultery." However, in truth Ralph did not commit adultery—I lied! This is why it becomes imperative that we have our "facts" right before proceeding. ". . . by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15). "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1). "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses" (1 Timothy 5:19).

Also a lie would be giving misleading or incomplete information. Information that might in fact be true but not complete. For example I might have a car for sale and I don't tell you about a mechanical problem I know it has. I withhold from you vital information under the mask of "buyer beware." I lied! I led you to believe something that was false!

Another mouth sin is filthy language. "But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth" (Colossians 3:8). This kind of mouth sin can be subdivided into two groups, and both are equally sinful.

One is profanity. Profanity is a form of the word profane, which means "to treat something sacred with abuse, irreverence or contempt." It would be what we normally call taking the name of the Lord in vain. I will not be giving written illustrations of this but I think we understand how this might be done. Anytime we use the name of Jesus, or God or anything sacred in a way other than holy is profane.

Another would be corrupt language (Ephesians 4:29). Corrupt speech is speech that is disrespectful or dishonoring. Telling someone he/she is fat, ugly, stupid or any other humiliating term. But it would also include speech that is vulgar, rude or offensive. This is usually done by referencing bodily functions, or what might be called "bathroom humor."

Mouth sins are serious because they actually reveal a deeper problem—a heart problem. Vulgar words reveal a vulgar heart; "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34).

- J.R. Bronger

Quotes . . .

Many people have rejected the gospel command to be baptized in order to receive the remission of sins as taught in Acts 2:38. A good percentage of those people have suggested that their personal morality should be sufficient to save them from punishment by the Judge of all mankind on the great Day of Judgment. To these, we offer this New Testament passage for careful consideration, regarding what is stated about a man named Cornelius: "a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually." (Acts 10:2).

"Will those who pride themselves on their morality, and rely upon that to save them, give attention to this case for a moment? Are you better than Cornelius? Do you do as much in a religious and charitable way as he did? It is safe to say you are not his superior morally. But he was not saved when Peter entered his home. Acts 11:14 tells us that

Peter was sent to speak words whereby he might be saved. This may startle, but it is the testimony of God's truth. Cornelius was not saved till he had obeyed Christ in baptism. Nowhere in the Bible is there a promise that morality alone will save any one. Our salvation depends on our being in covenant relationship with Christ, and that is entered by faith, repentance and baptism into His name."

- W.R. Walker (1869-1963), Studies in Acts, pt. 1, p. 82.

Amazement Had Seized Them!

Luke tells us about some disciples of Jesus, Simon Peter, James and John, fishermen who worked hard all night and caught nothing. The Lord commanded them to put out into deep water and let down their nets for a catch. "When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink." (Luke 5:6-7).

This obvious miracle at the word of Christ immediately called for deep introspection by Peter. He felt unworthy to be in the divine presence of Jesus, affirming Him as "Lord." As he considered his own unworthiness and his own sinfulness he confessed what many self-righteous people refuse to confess: "I am a sinful man!" Apparently, without any difficulty, Peter's humility rises to the surface of his sensitive heart. It is no great surprise that this was the sort of man the Lord could use in service to the will of His Father. The Bible records several cases where men possessing faith in God reacted similarly in contemplation of their own unworthiness in the presence of deity (cf. Isaiah 6:5; Job 42:1-6; Matthew 8:8).

Notice what Luke indicates next: "For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken;" (Luke 5:9). Peter and all his companions were captured by amazement it enwrapped them because of the great power at the Lord's behest. First they were completely stunned by what they witnessed from their own familiar sphere of daily work; it was indeed a miracle. It moved them to faith. Notice: "When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him." (Luke 5:11).

Something worthy of our consideration: Humility led to immediate confession of unworthiness and sin in the presence of the Lord. Does this describe us when we approach the throne of grace in prayer and worship? The testimony of these credible witnesses of the Lord's divine power and authority is readily available to us in the Holy Scriptures. When we read of it, does amazement seize us? Do the Scriptures bring us to

faith, excite us such that we want more, and do we grow in faith? And here is the really big question; please think carefully: have I left everything to follow Christ?

- Gary Smalley

* "Patience is the ability to count down before blasting off!"

* "If fifty million people say a foolish thing over and over, it is still a foolish thing!"

* "Half the people who condemn Judas for selling Jesus for thirty pieces of silver are selling him today and paying for the privilege!"

* "We teach a little by what we say; more by what we do; most by what we are!"

* "Some people develop eye strain looking for trouble!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)