

Every Idle Word

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Matt. 12:34-37

The standards of God are much different than those of the world.

Isa. 55:8-9, “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*”

A striking example of this difference pertains to one’s speech. The world thinks lightly of certain kinds of speech (allowing profane speech in the name of free speech). Whereas, Jesus taught us to take all speech seriously.

Matt. 12:36-37, “*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*”

Speech is important, for it reveals the heart of man. Matt. 12:34, “*O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*”

Thus speech reveals the sort of treasure stored in the heart of man. Matt. 12:35, “*A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*”

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!

In this lesson, we shall review what the Bible teaches concerning acceptable and unacceptable speech. We begin by cataloging some types of speech that are condemned in the Scriptures.

Idle words for which we shall be judged

Idle words — unproductive words. Car in idle does not move forward.

Example of disagreement expressive words: “Horse feathers!”

Example of agreement expressive words: “Golly gee, yes!” Both are wrong.

Matt. 5:37, “*But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*”

Some obvious examples of unacceptable speech...

Using the Lord’s name in vain.

Exo. 20:7, “*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*”

That is, without an attitude of sincere reverence. One can be guilty of this in two ways:

- Using the Lord’s name in swearing or cursing.
- Using vain repetitions of His name.

This also applies also to the name of Jesus, for His name is to be held in honor.

Phil. 2:9-11, “*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

Words that are evil.

1 Pet. 3:10, “*For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.*”

Lying words, or those that cause trouble among brethren.

Prov. 6:16-19, “*These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*”

Lying tongue - 8267 sheqer - an untruth; by impl. a sham (often adv.) to cheat or defraud. Lying to extort. Prov. 11:18, “*The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.*”

Speaketh lies - 3576 kazab - to lie (i.e. deceive), lit. or fig. Desperate words in telling a falsehood. Sampson lied to Delilah about how he could be bound by being tied with new ropes. He was desperate because of her questioning.

The question, "Do I look fat?" could cause a similar reaction to a husband seeking a desperate answer.

Fair speeches that deceive.

Rom. 16:18, "*For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*"

Fair speeches — language artfully adapted to deceive; partial truths.

Filthy language.

Eph. 5:4, "*Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.*"

Other examples of unacceptable speech.

The overuse of words.

- James 1:26, "*If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*"
- Prov. 10:19, "*In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.*"
- Prov. 13:3, "*He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.*"

Words spoken in haste.

- Prov. 29:20, "*Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.*"
- James 1:19, "*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*"

Controlling the tongue can be difficult, but the Lord indicates that it can be done if we work at it.

Speaking evil of those in authority.

- Exo. 22:28, "*Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.*" (gods in the ordinary sense; also magistrates, as used here).

- Jude 1:8, “Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.”

Speaking evil of those around us.

Matt. 5:21-22, “Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” (Raca – empty-headed).

“Dummy!”; “Stupid!”; any other unkind name.

Such speech is known as reviling, and is clearly condemned.

1 Cor. 6:9-10, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

Flattery.

Vain words are also a form of lying. They are good sounding words, but false, intended to soften another person up for some favor. Example: “You look radiant!”

- Psalms 12:1-4, “Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?”
- Rom. 16:18, “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”

Rash oaths.

- Matt. 5:33-37, “Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let

your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

- James 5:12, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."

That is why the courts allow a Christian to say, "I do affirm" instead of "I do swear".

Any unwholesome word.

- Col. 3:8, "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." (foul & obscene speech).
- Eph. 4:29, "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."

This includes some euphemisms (An inoffensive expression substituted for one considered offensive).

Some examples of euphemisms (darn, shoot, gosh, gee, golly, gol-darn, Jeesh, dog-gone-it, horse feathers, etc.).

What is wrong with such expressions? They mean the same thing as the more offensive words or good words used in derision. Such as, "Oh, God!", "Jesus Christ!"

It is the same wrongful emotions behind the euphemism or its equivalent. They reflect an attitude of heart contrary to the proper spirit of Christian conduct.

- Eph. 4:31-32, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
- Col. 3:8-15, "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any:"

even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”

Often our speech is one of habit...but such habits reflect “*the abundance of the heart*”, i.e., what has been allowed to reside in the heart and reveal the true nature of our hearts when so used.

I had a cousin that couldn’t say a sentence without using a swear word. He had done it so much of his life it had become a habit he couldn’t break.

Matt. 12:35, “*A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.”*

As we attempt to store up “*good treasure*” in our heart, here are...

Some principles of acceptable speech

Two basic guidelines:

Our speech should lead to edification.

Eph. 4:29, “*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.*”

That which encourages and builds up.

That which extends grace to others.

Col. 4:6, “*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*”

Example: Words which cool down heated conversations. Prov. 15:1, “*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*”

Example: Words that are a delight to those who hear.

- Prov. 15:4, “*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.*”
- Prov. 15:23, “*A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!*”
- Prov. 25:11, “*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.*”

Our speech should be characterized with thankfulness. Eph. 5:3-4, “*But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.*”

Thankfulness is an attitude becoming of saints.

- Col. 1:12, “*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*”
- Col. 2:7, “*Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*”
- Col. 3:15, “*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*”
- Col. 3:17, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*”
- Col. 4:2, “*Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.*”

Murmuring and complaining is not becoming.

Phil. 2:14-15, “*Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.*”

No one likes a complainer.

Acceptable speech sometimes requires forethought.

The righteous person will give careful thought to his speech.

Prov. 15:28, “*The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.*”

The righteous person will be concerned about what comes out of his mouth. For he knows that his speech reflects the true condition of the heart.

- Matt. 12:34-35, “*O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*”
- Matt. 15:17-20, “*Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into*

the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

He looks to God for help, even accepting the rebuke of others.

Psalms 141:3-5, *“Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties. Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.”*

Conclusion

It has been my purpose...

To remind us of Jesus' words in:

Matt. 12:36-37, *“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”*

To raise our awareness of how easy it is to sin in our speech.

To remind us of the graceful speech that should proceed from our mouths.

I hope I have stimulated your thinking to give careful consideration to God's standard; may each of us possess the same desire as that expressed in the prayer of the Psalmist:

Psalms 19:14, *“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”*

