

“Be Careful, Little Mouth, What You Say”

In the last **NEWSLETTER** article, we continued looking at some of the practical aspects of Christianity according to the book of James. James speaks of the tongue as a fire, able to cause great destruction if left uncontrolled. Lying is an excellent example of an out-of-control tongue and we looked at that closely last week. However, there are many other destructive things that one’s uncontrolled tongue can do.

James mentions one of them in in **chapter 3, verses 9 and 10** when he says:

“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.”

One of the most common sins of the tongue is using filthy language in all of its forms. Pronouncing some type of curse or damnation upon someone is strictly forbidden by God. In all of our communication with those with whom we come in contact every day, we should simply speak the truth in love, which sounds to me to eliminate all forms of what we call “cussing.” In addition, Paul tells the Colossians in **Colossians 3:8**:

“... you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.”

I have no idea what their “filthy language” was at that time, but all of us are familiar with language that is acceptable and that which is not acceptable in our society. If Paul denounced First Century filthy language, we must agree that he also meant our form of “filthy language.” Furthermore, he told the Ephesians in **Ephesians 5:4**:

“Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.”

He had already told the Ephesians in **Ephesians 4:29** to **“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.”**

No one is benefitted by unwholesome talk or filthy language. It is an additional sin of the tongue we must avoid.

One last sin of an uncontrolled tongue is gossip. Gossip is defined as “casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true.” Much of the time it is found to be malicious, intending to harm the reputation of the person who is the subject of the gossip. The wise man of Proverbs has much to say about gossips, none of it good. Gossips **“betray confidences”** (**Proverbs 16:28, 20:19**), they **“separate close friends”** (**Proverbs 16:28**), and their words add fuel to the fire that is an argument (**Proverbs 26:20**). Gossips are to be avoided. (**Proverbs 20:19**)

The apostle Paul, in Romans 1, puts gossips in with some very sordid company. Read **Romans 1:28-32**. In the end, he says that gossips “**deserve death**” according to God’s “**righteous decree.**” I don’t think anyone views gossip that seriously, but perhaps we should. Paul feared for the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 12:20**, afraid that he might find the Corinthian church engaged in “**slander and gossip.**” In addition, they quarreled, were jealous, had outbursts of anger, and were divided. Slander and gossip drove them apart and aided in making them unacceptable to God.

We need to take great care to control our tongues. God is accepting of those who, with “controlled” tongues, speak the truth to others and engage in praise for Him. Anything else is, as Paul put it in **Ephesians 5:4**, “**out of place**” for those who have declared their allegiance to God.