

**I. THE FINAL IMPORTANCE OF OUR SPEECH**

- Final = the end, last; the final result; not to be changed or reconsidered; unalterable
- James 1:26
  - one who believes himself to be religious (professing Christian)
  - doesn't bridle (harness, restrain, direct) tongue (speech); Illustration: bridle of a horse
  - this does two things (1.) deceives his own heart (as to the reality of their religion) and (2.) their religion is useless
  - not salvation by works, but true salvation has real fruit of a bridled tongue
- James 2:12
  - (directed to Christians) so speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty
- Matthew 12:36-37
  - I say to you (Jesus, Judge of the world)
  - For every idle word (not just well thought out, but all)
  - They will give an account on the day of judgment
  - One's words will display the justice of God's salvation or God's condemnation

*Summary: One of the most basic marks of being a true Christian, both in this life and in the judgment, is the redemption of one's speech. In light of this, the Christian should labor to bridle words to use in the way God intends.*

**II. THE ESSENTIAL REASON FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR SPEECH**

- Why does God put such an emphasis on our words? Why are the stakes so high?
- A. Because of What It Reveals About Our Hearts**
  - Matthew 12:35
    - It reveals what is in the heart, what we truly are
- B. Because of What It Does to Others**
  - Proverbs 18:21
    - The tongue has power; like God's Words that create or destroy, God has given certain creative/destructive power in our words
    - Our speech has the power of death (kill, destruction, devastation) and life (vitality, animating force)
    - The "Word of Faith" movement isn't exactly right in their application (you can create reality, wealth, health, riches for yourself), but they are talking around a true principle;
    - Those who love it (the tongue) will eat its fruit; Illustration: cultivating a garden and benefiting from the fruit
  - Proverbs 15:4
    - A wholesome tongue is a tree of life (to others, giving life and strength)
    - Perverseness in it breaks the spirit (brings death)

**The Life Giving Use of Our Speech**

- Proverbs 10:20, 21, 31
  - Choice silver (precious); feeds many; brings forth wisdom

**The Destructive Use of Our Speech**

- James 3:2ff
  - Negative example of fire/forest; poison; defiles whole body
- John 10:10
  - Devil comes to steal, kill and destroy; he does so by words, lies, deception, accusation
  - Jesus comes to give life; He does so through His Word and through His people

*Summary: God has given our words as a means to be used for good and bring about life. It can also be used to kill and destroy. All of our speech is doing one or the other. As we do the first (including both "positive" and "negative"), we are like God. As we use our tongue for destruction, we are reflecting the use of words as the devil uses them.*

**III. SOME GENERAL DIRECTIVES FOR BRIDLING OUR SPEECH**

- Ephesians 4:15
  - Speak – the call not to retreat and come under a monastic vow of silence (Mark 9:25)
  - The truth – what is true, right, beautiful, noble, right
  - In love – with the underlying principle of love (1Corinthians 13:4-7)
- Ephesians 4:29-32
  - Let (personal responsibility) no corrupt communication (bad, rotten, worthless, harmful) proceed out of your mouth
  - But what is good for necessary edification (upbuilding, strengthening, encouragement)

- That it may impart grace to the hearers
- Illustration: a building renovation, having wisdom of what to tear out, how to tear it out for replacement, and what to strengthen
- What is at stake is the grieving of the Holy Spirit; one reason for lack of fruit can be the misuse of our speech
- Negative examples found in v.31 and positive in v.32

*Summary: We are to speak the truth in love, consciously thinking about what we say. Our goal is for the righteous renovation of one another, using wisdom to know what, how, and when to speak. If we do not, we are in danger of grieving the Holy Spirit.*

- These things are true in our relations with our spouse, our children, other Christians, the world.