

Our Little Member

This past week I overheard two men talking in the hallway. One said, “Have you talked with the old-timers recently (referring to those who had retired)?” The second man replied, “When I see them they only talk about their health and God.” It is true that some people become more spiritually minded and talk about God more often when they get into their “golden” years. Furthermore, visit almost any congregation of the Lord’s body and you will find a significant number of the faithful members are elderly. But should it be just the elderly people that talk about God with their friends and acquaintances?

There are some rather strong statements in Scripture about how we should conduct ourselves in speech. To me, the most worrisome passage in the Bible is Matt. 12:34b: *For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*. Couple that verse with verse 36, where Jesus said, *But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give an account for it in the day of judgment*. The conclusion of the thought follows: *For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned* (Matt 12:37).

The truth is our speech can be both a powerful force for good and for the cause of Christ. We can also be instruments of discouragement and destruction. James wrote, *Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brethren, these ought not to be so* (James 3:10). Most of us mis-speak from time to time and likely we are silent when we should speak. But how can we become more Christ-like in our speech?

We must make a conscious effort to follow daily a few simple biblical commands to bridle our tongue and guide our speech. First, the negative: Let no corrupt speech proceed out of our mouths (Eph. 4:29a). And the way to accomplish this is to *let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice* (Eph. 4:31). Next, on the positive side, *let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers* (Eph. 4:29b). To this end we must fill our hearts with, and meditate on, things that are true, things that are noble, things that are just, things that are pure, and things that are good (Phil. 4:8).

All of us need to speak freely and often about God and spiritual things. but *Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one* (Col. 4:6).