

CHRISTIAN – KEEP YOUR TONGUE FROM EVIL AND YOUR LIPS FROM SPEAKING GUILE

This study is a practical instruction for professing Christians on what constitutes the fear of the Lord (CP Job 27:1-4; Psa 34:11-13; Pr 4:20-27). Throughout scripture God's children are warned to keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking guile, otherwise they will come under condemnation and forfeit eternal life. *Evil* means evil speaking, while *guile* covers a broad spectrum of meanings including craft, deceit, subtlety, fraud; feigned, false, idle; a snare, bait. Guile must never be used as a tool by God's children, but if they were not guilty of using it, these warnings would not be in scripture (CP Ex 21:14; De 23:21; Psa 5:6; 12:1-3; 15:1-5; 34:11-13; Pr 4:24; 10:6; 19:21; 12:19; 13:3; 15:4; 17:27-28; 18:21; 19:9; 21:23; 30:32; Ecc 5:2-6; 10:12; Zech 8:16-17; Mt 5:36-37; 12:36-37; Eph 4:25-31; 5:3-4; Col 3:8-10; 4:6; Jas 3:2-12; 5:12; 1Pe 3:8-12; Rev 21:7-8). Those scriptures are not exhaustive but merely representative of the many warnings in the Bible for God's children to keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking guile. They will suffice for the purpose of this study. We will examine them in more detail as the study progresses.

In Psa 5:6, 12:1-3 and 34:1-13 the Psalmist refers to Godly men forfeiting their salvation for not keeping their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking guile, while in 15:1-5 he extols the virtues of those inheriting eternal life for disciplining their tongues to edify and not pull down or deceive (CP 5:6; 12:1-3 and 34:11-13 with 15:1-5). A *froward mouth* in Pr 4:24 (KJV), is a deceitful mouth, and *perverse lips* are devious lips, lips that lie (CP Pr 4:24). In Pr 10:19-21 Solomon observes that having control of the tongue is a show of wisdom; whoever exercises control in their speech is wise (CP Pr 10:6:19-21). In Pr 13:3 the lesson learned is that the ones that guard their speech control their own life, whereas those who exercise no self-control are in for trouble. God's children must be careful what they say – it could be used against them (CP Pr 13:3 and 21:23 with Psa 39:1). In Pr 18:21 Solomon teaches that the tongue is the source of life and death, which is essentially what Jesus also teaches in Mt 12:36-37 and Peter, in 1Pe 3:8-12 (CP Pr 18:21 also 12:13 with Mt 12:36-36 and 1Pe 3:8-12).

Jesus uses the word *idle* in Mt 12:36 metaphorically of the insincere, false and worthless words spoken by the Pharisees in blaspheming the Holy Spirit in V 22-35. They attributed the miracles Jesus performed to Satan's power instead of acknowledging it was the Holy Spirit (CP Mt 12:22-37). But V 36-37 are referring to Christians also, for Jesus is clearly teaching here that everyone will be judged by their words, believers and unbelievers alike (CP Mt 5:36-37; Jas 5:12). Jesus and James both admonish Christians here to be scrupulously honest in all their communications. Christians must never embellish the truth nor speak with forked tongues, saying one thing but meaning something entirely different. They must say exactly what they mean and mean exactly what they say, at all times. They must never talk just for the sake of talking or use words simply as the means to an end, saying anything to suit the occasion or to gain an unfair advantage over someone else, whatever the circumstances.

Christians should not have to take an oath to attest to the veracity of what they say; oath-taking is an implicit confession by those taking the oath that they do not always tell the truth, whereas the Christian demand is for absolute faithfulness and truthfulness in all speech (CP Job 27:3-4; Psa 15:1-5; 17:3; 19:14; 39:1; 141:3). But God's children do tell lies as scriptures plainly teach (CP Pr 12:19; 19:9; Zech 8:16-17; Eph 4:25; Col 3:8-10 with Rev 21:8). Lying includes in its meaning every form of dishonesty, cheating and deceit; false and fictitious statements; broken promises; betrayal of confidences; flattery, etc. Without they confess and repent Christians who engage in these practices fail God's grace and will forfeit their place in His Eternal Kingdom (CP 1Jn 1:9-10 with Rev 21:7-8). *Filthy communications* in Col 3:8 (KJV), means shameful speaking. It describes that which is lewd, indecent, corrupt. It is disgraceful, impure language.

Absolute truthfulness in all their communications is a debt Christians owe to all men, particularly fellow Christians. As we have learned throughout this study, only those who speak the truth from their heart and keep their word even to their own hurt, will inherit the future Eternal Kingdom. A Christian's agenda must always be an open book, nothing hidden. Truth must never be sacrificed for the sake of expediency. Every word Christians speak must be strictly in accordance with the truth that is in Christ, otherwise they condemn themselves to eternal damnation (CP Rev 21:7-8).

Christians must never go back on their word regardless of the cost. They must honour all commitments – their word must be their bond (CP Psa 15:1-5 with De 23:21-23). Christians are to use only words befitting the occasion for Spiritual profit that will minister Grace to the hearer (CP Eph 4:29-31). *Corrupt communication* (KJV), is unwholesome or worthless talk. It is used here figuratively in a moral sense, but it applies to everything Christians say that does not Spiritually build up and minister Grace to their hearers, which grieves the Holy Spirit (CP Col 4:6). This teaches that Christians' speech should always be meaningful not meaningless; mindful not mindless; sensitive not insensitive; purposeful not purposeless; worthy not worthless; thoughtful not thoughtless; Spiritual, wholesome, fitting, kind, gentle, loving, courteous, humble and Christlike. That defines to some extent what speech is that is "*always with Grace and seasoned with salt*". It should act not only as a blessing, but also as a purifying influence upon all who hear it (CP Ecc 10:12; Mk 9:50; 1Pe 3:15).

Now let us examine Eph 5:3-4 (CP Eph 5:3-4). What a contrasting passage of Scripture this is to Col 4:6, yet if Christians were not guilty of discussing these things Paul would not be forbidding them to do so. "*As becometh saints*", teaches that as Christians have been separated from the corruption that is in the world, they should live in practical separation from dark passion, both in word and deed. *Foolish talk* is mindless stupid talk, idle talk, talking foolishly. It is

Christian – Keep Your Tongue from Evil and Your Life from Speaking Guile

foolish in the lack of forethought and wisdom – the talk of fools, which is foolishness and sin together: Godless, sinful talk. Whoever engages in it neglects and despises what relates to salvation (CP Pr 13:3; 14:3; 18:20-21 with 1Pe 3:10-11). For Christians' *yes* to be *yes*, and their *no, no*, careful consideration has to be given to what they are going to say, before they say it. They must choose their words wisely and never be given to exaggerating or employing any form of deceptive techniques to mislead or gain unfair advantage over anyone, for whatever reason. They must bridle their tongues (CP Psa 39:1; Pr 21:23; Ecc 5:1-2 and Jas 1:19-21 with 3:1-12).

The *sacrifice of fools* in Ecc 5.1 is the presumptuous talk of those who speak rashly and make hasty vows they cannot keep. In Jas 1:19-21 James admonishes Christians not to speak hastily or foolishly. They are to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath which means they have to carefully consider what to say before taking part in any conversation. Jas 3:1-12 is primarily addressing those in the church who aspire to be teachers, but secondarily it is addressing all Christians, so it too is applicable to this study. James is highlighting the nature of the tongue. He compares the damage it can inflict to a raging fire originating in hell: horses are large animals but they can be controlled by a tiny bit in their mouth; great ships can be steered by small rudders. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures have been tamed by humans, but not the tongue. It is a very small part of the human anatomy, but it is full of wickedness, and unless it is controlled, will defile the whole body (CP Psa 62:4; Pr 17:20; 26:28; 28:23; Tit 3:1-2; Jas 4:11). The activity of the tongue is hypocritically

inconsistent. It is used to bless God, and also to curse people who are made in God's image.

Because of the tendency to sin with the tongue Christians must monitor every word they speak. Like Job and King David, keeping their tongues under control is a discipline they must develop (CP Job 27:3-4; Psa 39:1; with Pr 21:23; Mt 5:36-37; Jas 5:12; 1Pe 3:10). Christians must avoid, among many other things also, tale bearing, criticism, slander and gossip (CP Psa 15:3; 101:5; Pr 11:13; 20:19; 25:13; 26:20; 1Cor 10:9-12; 2Cor 12:20; Php 2:14-15). In order to be *swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath* as James commands in Jas 1:19, Christians must also take into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ as Paul commands and constantly self-evaluate where they are in Christ (CP Pr 10:18-21 with 2Cor 10:3-5 and 13:5). Scriptures also teach that the mouth and the tongue only speak that which is stored up in the heart. This is a warning to Christians to always ensure that their hearts are filled with the things of God which glorify Him, not that which is a reproach to Him (CP Pr 4:23-27; Mt 12:34-35 (also Lu 6:45); 15:11, 18-20 and Mk 7:14-23).

(See also author's comments on Mt 12:36-37, Eph 4:25; 5:3-4, Col 4:5-6, Jas 1:19-21, 3:1-2 and 5:12 in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**, and his studies *How Christians are to Love One Another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith, The Heart, and Christian – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).**