

Sinful Words, Part 2: what are they and how to overcome them

“Speak, that I may see what you are” for what is in the heart is vented by the tongue.

- Given what our Lord says in Mt 12.33-37 and what James says in Js 1.26, there is, perhaps, no one test or proof of the reality of a work of grace upon the heart, more simple, clear, and infallible, than the general tenor of our language and conversation. By our speech our profession of faith will be justified or by our speech our profession of faith will be condemned.

6 Propositions (Venning)

1. Sinful words are forbidden and good words are commanded, Ex 20.16; Eph 4.25, 29; 5.3-4; Col 4.6; Ps 34.11-14
2. Unless a man takes heed to his words and bridles his tongue, his religion is useless, Js 1.26
3. Sinful words are evidences of sinful hearts, Mt 12.34; Ps 12.2
4. Evil words corrupt the lives of ourselves and others, Js 3.5-6; 1Cor 15.33
5. The tongue is either man’s glory or man’s shame, Pr 10.20; Ps 37.30-31
6. God will judge us by our words as well as by our works, Mt 12.36-37; Pr 18.21; Ps 50.21

12 Directives

1. Let your words be few, Ecc 5.2-3, 7; Mt 6.6-9; Pr 10.19; 17.28; Js 1.19
 1. “Little said, soon mended.” The more you speak, the more you have to be sorry for and the more you have to take back.
2. If we must speak, let us speak as we should, Ps 15.2; Zech 8.16f; Eph 4.25, 15; cp. Jer 9.5
 1. When speaking of ourselves, let us restrain our tongues from boasting.
 2. When speaking of God, let us speak honorably and rightly.
 3. When speaking to others, let us speak the truth, seasoned with love, and marked by purity.
3. Use your tongue for the work for which God gave it: to speak of His truth and to sing His praise, Ps 66.16-17
4. Consider again what an evidence it is against yourself that you’re not a Christian if your speech is filled with the talk of the devil and the language of Egypt.
 1. “Stinking breath is a sign of putrid lungs.” (Henry) Say what you will about your relationship to Christ, if you do not bridle your tongue, your own mouth betrays you, for it speaks out of the abundance of your heart, it produces the only fruit your heart is capable of.
5. Consider seriously the great damage you do by an unruly tongue.
 1. What an offense it is to God, who gave you a tongue to commune with Him.
 2. What a great deal of hurt you do to others, who should instead be edified by you.
 3. What a fire of sin you set in the lives of others, whom you lead astray by your bad example.
6. Seriously fix Mt 12.33-37 upon your mind.
 1. The Judge Himself has told us that, unless it’s been pardoned by the grace of God and cleansed with the blood of Christ, every unsavory word we speak will be held against us on the Day of judgment and will condemn us to an everlasting hell. Let this text put a bridle on your loose and wayward tongue.
 2. No profession of religion on that Day will make up for or excuse an unbridled tongue.
7. Solemnly resolve against all sinful speech, Ps 39.1.
 1. Merely hoping to do better in the future is not enough. Merely hoping to control your tongue is not enough. You must, before God and dependent upon His grace, resolve and purpose and promise that you won’t swear, curse, flatter, gossip, slander, and lie any more—and see that you

renew it daily, at the foot of His cross. This is to set a door over your mouth, doubling it when necessary, and confiding in divine strength.

8. Keep out of bad company, for speech is learned by listening and adopted by imitation, Pr 14.7
Make no friendship with those who make no conscience of their words and have no respect for the Maker of their tongue.
9. Think twice before you speak.
 1. “He that speaks what he thinks not, speaks *hypocritically*; and he that thinks not what to speak, speaks *inconsiderately*.” (Flavel 5.314)
 2. There’s good reason to weigh your words before you speak them, but whether or not you do, never forget that the Lord ponders them and records them.
10. Look well to your hearts, Pr 4.23; Ps 39.3; Ps 19.14; Ps 45.1; Pr 16.23
 1. If the springs are to be good, then the fountain must be first kept good. “If the fountain of your heart is bitter, the streams of your words cannot be sweet.” (Venning)
 2. Labor to get your hearts cleansed and purified by faith and possessed of gracious principles. Nothing good will ever come out of your mouth and much harm will ever be done by it, unless you bring it to the Maker to make it new and to the Potter to mold it true. So bring your heart to the Word, keep it under the ministry of the Spirit, and count no lesson truly learned that didn’t reach and affect the heart.
 3. Let the throne of Christ be set up in your heart, and His love shed abroad within it, and you’ll be more careful of your words.
 4. “The mouth needs to go to school, and if we would have it wise, let us get it a wise heart to be its tutor, to teach it the art and grace of speaking wisely and well.” (Venning)
11. Seriously lament every sinful word you’ve spoken.
 1. Loathe yourself for your sinful speech. Repent with Job, in dust and ashes, Job 42.3, 6. If you easily forgive yourself for what is past, you’ll likely easily do it again.
12. Pray to God for His grace to keep you from sinning with your tongue, Ps 19.14; Ps 51.15; 71.8; 141.3-4
 1. Let us ask God to cast the salt of His grace into our hearts, that the streams of our conversation may be seasoned with grace to the edification of our hearers and the promotion of His glory.
 2. Ask God for a coal from His altar to touch your lips and cleanse them of unclean speech, Isa 6.7

**A Check to an Ungoverned Tongue*, Matthew Henry