

WORDS – A MOUTHFUL OF?

We have all sermons in church or lessons in Sunday School about words and our mouth, more specifically our tongue. The words we speak, the power of those words and the truth in them.

How important is this subject to God? I was amazed when I began looking in the Bible! The verses on something to do with words, the tongue, and lying begin as early as Leviticus the 6th Chapter about the *sin of lying* through over thirty different books of the Bible ending in the last Chapter in Revelations, Chapter 22 Verses 14 and 15 “*where blessed are the believers for they shall have the right to the tree of life and enter the gates*” while in Verses 15 near the end “*...outside are the immoral persons, murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices lying*”.

There are only four Verses left in the Bible and yet *lying* is mentioned, must be an important subject in God’s view. He fully realizes the havoc and the destructive nature of it. Think about these words in Proverbs 12:18 says “*there is one who speaks rashly like the thrust of a sword, but the tongue of the wise bring healing*” words can cut like a sword and the wound last longer than any physical cut.

In the eight Verses of today’s reading there are reasons given for not behaving like we did before we knew Jesus Christ and what he has done for us as told us in the Verse 32. **Disciples are to behave differently.** John Wesley emphasized this point in his society or small group meetings. That if we indeed have experienced Christ in our lives that our behavior on the outside should reflect that “new life” within. Verses 23 and 24 define that “new life” “and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God...” one more thing I would add to this is there are a number of “good” people, who may display the same behaviors, but from inside what motives come? It is not our right to judge another heart and their motives, that is God’s and God’s alone.

What can we take from these Verses that will help us to walk and make a difference? What behaviors are we not to exhibit? Earlier in the Chapter Paul is telling the Ephesians “*to no longer walk as the gentiles*”, which means “as heathens” when used in the plural, in the futility of their mind or as The Message puts it – no going along with the crowd – empty-headed and mindless.

Paul certainly had a way with words!!! I really believe that a number of people are exactly the way Paul has described them “*darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of not knowing and the hardness of their heart*”, and guess whose calling it is to inform them of

what we as disciples already know? US—we are called to do this in a unique way as God has gifted us through our personality.

We should remember too, that many times words do not have to be spoken. It is our actions and behavior that speak for us – in a good or bad way. The interesting take from these verses is that the subject of words is front and center, in the spotlight.

The first behavior mentioned is lying – “lying” *a false statement made with deliberate intent to deceive; an intentional untruth.* How many times in our recent history have people ended up ruined because they simply did not tell the truth. Even in the culture people tend to forgive when told the truth as opposed to being lied to time after time. We are told here to speak the truth with our neighbor, which Jesus expanded the definition from the narrow one the Pharisees held – *that being a neighbor was one who kept the law.*

There is action here in Verse 28 that as disciples of Christ in our “new life” we are told not to steal, because many converts to the faith came from a segment of society that stealing was normal.

Why work?, because then we have something to share with one who has need. *We no longer work with the motive to acquire more and more, but have added meaning to why we do work. It is no longer about me and remember Christ came to serve not to be served.*

Not getting far off the subject we again are reminded about words and the speaking of words. We are encouraged to let *no unwholesome word* comes from our mouth, *but words that build up* at the moment so that the words can give grace to the one who hears it. **When you are in a rush, in a line, at a traffic light or waiting for a meal are our words wholesome, uplifting or something else?** Even if we are being waited on does that mean we have some “right” to speak harshly? If we are his disciples then the answer very clearly is “no”, “no”, “no”. Clerks, waitresses anyone in a service job is not our slave, and if they make a mistake roll with it, and give someone a chance to correct it. It say so much in Verses 32 “...of being tender hearted, forgiving each other just as God in christ has forgiven us”.

So much spoken today is not wholesome, and by tolerating it there is a small section of our heart that becomes hardened to it. (friend and story of Chicago) just read a newspaper, listen to TV, view a movie or listen to conversation around you. We, even as disciples, have accepted language in theses mediums we would have never thought possible not so long ago. Has such acceptance made lives better? The standards of conversation have fallen to a place where articles are now published on when it is proper to use the most vulgar of cuss word, saying that if you know the people in the room it’s okay. Really?????

Young people, many of the songs today talk of one night stands, women in unflattering terms, and very suggestive wording, which carries right into videos. Who would have ever thought anyone would ever attend a Miley Cyrus concert? In my younger days parents thought rock and roll was bad, but if you go back and listen to the words, which is what we are really talking about here, the songs spoke of love, marriage, and elevated young women. I am saying there are not songs out there that do that today, but the vast majority and the language is less than wholesome!!!!

I want to say another thing about the words. God tells us in His Word the powerful effect of words and that applies to music. I listen to an old 50's station on my car radio. There are many of the songs that I can sing along with, even sings ahead of the words, and those songs are over 50 years old!!!! Even songs I did not like, I can remember the words.

This power in words is especially strong when used in commercials. Again, some jingles as we called them remain in our heads today. I believe that is why a number of commercials today play music or songs in the background appealing to the 18-34 age group. There must be proven studies that demonstrate the effect of word and song on people, something that clicks and people connect to the product and buy it.

In Verses 31, Paul gives us a number of traits that because of our "new life" in Christ we are to, as he says it, "put away from us". These are bitterness, revenge, anger, slander, wrath or anger with the idea to punish someone, and malice the idea of causing harm or suffering to others. **Basically, we are called in our "new life" not to seek what we think we have a "right" to do because we have been wronged, because if we really trust in God then we turn it over to Him.**

The reason we should do that is God knows the effect on us as stated here in Verse 31 and any of these traits are not a good example for others of our "new life" in Christ. We are encouraged in the last verses of this chapter of Ephesians to be more Christ-like by being **"kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you"**.

In the first Verses of the next chapter, we are further encouraged to be *"imitators"*, that is to follow as a pattern, model, or example, which as a disciple of Jesus Christ we are to follow His example, and what is that? The very next verse tells us to *"...walk in love just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us..."* **it is the trademark of our "new life", because without love none of these positive traits are possible and the negative ones are too easy to fall into.** However, we are not left alone because of the love of God, He gives us the Holy Spirit to guide and help us in such circumstances so that with Him all things are possible including the "new life".

One of today's more familiar commercials asks the question "what is in your wallet?" The question for us is **"what is in your mouth, what words are ready to come out, what words have you**

already spoken? There is a saying that can really apply in this situation posted in a high school – **“before you speak, think...T - is it true? H - is it helpful? I - is it inspiring? N - is it necessary? K - is it kind?”** This is very much like Verses 29 and connected to Verses 32.

In closing this “new life” we are called to means:

- 1) we are to think differently than the world,
- 2) we are to talk differently than the world,
- 3) we are to work differently than the world,
- 4) we are to treasure people differently than the world,
- 5) we are to conduct our lives differently than the world.

According to a radio report, a Middle School in Oregon faced a unique problem.

A number of girls were beginning to use lipstick and would put it on in the bathroom. After they put on their lipstick, they would press their lips to the mirrors leaving dozens of little lip prints. Finally the principal decided that something had to be done. She called all the girls to the bathroom and met them there with the custodian. She explained that all these lip prints were causing a major problem for the custodian, who had to clean the mirrors every day. To demonstrate how difficult it was, she asked the custodian to clean one of the mirrors. He took out a long-handled brush, dipped it into the toilet, and scrubbed the mirror. Since then there have been no lip prints on the mirrors.

We must in our “new life” realize fully how our words affect those who hear them. Pray that are mouth is full of words that are good for encouraging and building up one another to give grace to all who hear them. Amen.