

Your Speech Betrays You

By John R. Gibson

As Peter warmed himself by the fire he was told, “Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you” (John 18:18, 25; Matthew 27:73). While Peter’s denials of Jesus would make a good study, I want to focus on the idea of our speech betraying us. On more than one occasion Jesus pointed out that one’s words are reflective of his heart, some-times for good and sometimes for evil (e.g. Matthew 12:34-37; 15:18-19). What does our speech say about us? Does it betray something about us that, like Peter, we would prefer to deny?

The speech of some betrays the fact that they are committed to lives of immorality. Their jokes, their songs, their daily conversation display an obsession with the immorality that will keep us from the kingdom of heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Galatians 5:19-21; et al). Since the Bible condemns all sexual relations outside the lawful marriage of a man and woman (Hebrews 13:5), it is beyond dispute that one’s heart is not right with God when his words are focused on such immorality. But what does it say about those of us who would not speak those same words, yet find the songs, jokes, conversations, etc. entertaining? Could it not be said that the speech we listen to betrays us?

For some, their speech shows that they are focused on self. We are commanded to put away selfish ambition and look out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3, 4). Jesus told His disciples that the only way to truly save one’s life was to sacrifice it on a cross of self-denial (Luke 9:23, 24; 14:25-27, 33). But do we have the mind of Christ when our speech is filled with the pronouns of self-interest such as “I,” “my,” and “mine?” If we are like the rich fool of Luke 12:16-21 who used “I” and “my” 11 times in 3 verses, then our speech betrays us as those who need a better perspective on self.

Could our speech betray the fact that the things of God do not occupy their rightful position in our lives (Matthew 6:33)? While work and money, food, recreation, and pleasure are important parts of our lives and have a rightful place in our speech, is it ever the case that the amount of speech devoted to these things betrays us? We must work, eat, relax, etc., and have every right to watch some television, play some golf, go to the mall, travel, etc., but if not careful we will become that thorny ground which never brings any fruit to maturity because we are “choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life” (Luke 8:14). We can easily lose our proper focus without even being aware of it, but if we will take an honest look at our speech and the things that occupy the biggest proportion of it we may learn the hard truth others have already heard in us, and more importantly what God knows.

While Paul wrote, “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content” (Philippians 4:11), the speech of some betrays the fact that they are rarely content. Are you one that continually finds fault with the circumstances of life? Do your words lead others to believe you lack faith in the God who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies of the field (Matthew 6:25- 34). Are we truly a people of faith? Do we have that deep, abiding trust in God that allows us to overcome any circumstance because of our faith in Christ (Philippians 4:13; Romans 8:37), or does our speech betray us as those of little faith?

I hope all who read this will do so with an honest heart, one that is willing to carefully consider what their speech has been saying about them. I suspect few will be able to read these

words without some degree of guilt. But whether it is a problem with immorality, self, the cares of this life, or too little faith in God's power and willingness to provide for us, we can do better. We can clean up our speech by cleaning up our hearts. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matthew 12:34b, 35). Let's set our hearts upon our God, His kingdom and righteousness, our individual sanctification, the salvation of the lost, the edification of our brethren, love for our neighbors, growing in the knowledge of God's word, etc. and soon our speech will lead others to say of us as they said of Peter and John, "They [have] been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Hang in There

"If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small" (Proverbs 24:10). When we think of the wiles of the devil, we often think of immorality, drunkenness, false teaching, and other obviously sinful things, but how often do we think of adversity? Discouragement and difficulties may come from poor health, financial difficulties, personal problems, persecution, or a host of other sources, but it is certain they will come, and the challenge before us is to build a faith that will not faint when the difficult days do come.

Spend time with God's word and strengthen your faith in the future reward. Find in God's word the hope that comes from trusting His promises. Read the inspiring stories of men and women who put their faith in God and persevered. Walk with Jesus through the Garden of Gethsemane. Go with the Lord before the Sanhedrin and into Pilate's hall. Carry the cross with Him to Calvary and in doing these things your faith will be strengthened. Learn to pray without ceasing when times are good and it will be easier to lean on Him in the day of adversity.

"For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?' " Hebrews 13:5-6

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