

**Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (25):  
Watch and Pray (part 3)**

We are approaching the end of the main instruction of this epistle of Paul to the church at Colossae (it ends with 4:6). Beginning with 4:7 the apostle addressed specific persons he knew in the church. And so, verses 2 through 6 contain the last words of Paul's general instruction to this church. Of course there are lessons for us in the concluding words of Paul written directly to his friends--it is all the Word of God for us. But when the church had first received this epistle, the words of Colossians 4:7 through 18 would have been read as Paul's concluding greetings to his friends.

Once again we will read these verses, Colossians 4:2 through 6, in which we are instructed to watch and pray.

<sup>2</sup>Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. <sup>3</sup>At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— <sup>4</sup>that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

<sup>5</sup>Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. <sup>6</sup>Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Last Lord's Day we considered the apostle's request that the church pray for the Lord's blessing upon the proclamation of His Word (Col. 4:3-4). Paul desired to be fruitful and faithful in his calling. He saw the need for the blessing of God upon him if this were to be realized. He, therefore, very much desired that these Christians pray for his ministry.

Now we finished last Lord's Day before we could address a phrase that the apostle used. It depicts the message that the apostle Paul wanted to proclaim widely He wrote, "At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, *to declare the mystery of Christ*, on account of which I am in prison-- that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak."

The "mystery of Christ" is an expression Paul used elsewhere.

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— <sup>2</sup>if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup>how that by revelation He made known to me *the mystery* (as I have briefly written already, <sup>4</sup>by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in *the mystery of Christ*), <sup>5</sup>which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: *that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel*, <sup>7</sup>of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

<sup>8</sup>To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup>and to make all see what is *the fellowship of the mystery*, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; <sup>10</sup>to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, <sup>11</sup>according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup>in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. <sup>13</sup>Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

The Lord had called Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles. He was to proclaim the gospel to the Gentile world, establishing churches throughout the Roman world. But his ministry of the word was not to bring salvation to *individuals* throughout the world. Paul was to make known the mystery that had not been fully revealed until the Lord had revealed it to him. This mystery is that all believers everywhere are in one body of Jesus Christ. There was no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile within the body of the redeemed, rather, any and all who are converted through faith in Jesus Christ are of one entity, one body.

Paul describes this “mystery of Christ” as being the cause of his imprisonment. Again, he wrote, “At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, *on account of which I am in prison.*” And as one reads the account in the Book of Acts of Paul’s arrest, imprisonment, trials, and transport to Rome under guard, one can see that it was this message of “the mystery of Christ” that was at the heart of his experience. For Paul had gone throughout the world declaring that the ethnic Jewish people were not the true Israel, the covenant people of God. He had declared that Israel was comprised of both Jews and Gentiles who embraced Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, the Son of David, the King of Israel. It was this message of no longer excluding Gentiles from the covenant people of God that caused such a reaction and uproar among the Jewish people wherever Paul proclaimed the gospel. It was the Jewish leadership who had sought to kill Paul. And when they were unsuccessful, they sought to prosecute him before the Roman authorities. Paul was in prison because he had proclaimed openly “the mystery of Christ”, that “*that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.*” And that message is still resisted and rejected today. Most “Bible believers” still cling to the idea that there are two separate peoples, Israel and the church, and the two are never to be seen as one people, whose identity as the people of God is founded upon their faith and submission to the crucified, buried, and risen, Son of David.

Let us now turn our attention to Colossians 4:5 and 6.

### **III. Command to live with view to furthering the Word among unbelievers (Col. 4:5-6)**

*Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*

Christians are always to be concerned for the souls of those “who are outside.” These are unconverted people who need to come to know and call upon the Lord Jesus to govern their lives. It is our responsibility to “walk in wisdom” with regard to them.

When we become Christians, our relationship with the non-Christians undergoes change. Our belief is now different from theirs. Our behavior has undergone noticeable change and we are no longer like them. They are “outside” of the covenant community of God. Of course we desire that they would come to know the Savior as we have known Him, but their aversion to the Lord and His ways is there. Their aversion to us as the people of God is also there to a degree. Peter wrote of this:

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, <sup>2</sup>that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. <sup>3</sup>For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles-- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. <sup>4</sup>In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil. (1 Pet. 4:1-4)

#### **A. We are to “walk in wisdom” with regard to unbelievers.**

When Paul wrote, “*Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time*”, he was urging the Christians in the church at Colossae to seek to be good and consistent witnesses for Christ while they are in view by unbelievers. We are to redeem the time, look for opportunities to display before others what a Christian is to believe and how he lives before the Lord. **William Hendriksen** expressed Paul’s spirit well:

In the spirit of the principles to which Paul has bound himself and in connection with which he has just now asked the Colossians to remember him and his companions in prayer he now urges them to adhere to a similar way of life... In the days of the early church believers were often slandered by these outsiders. For example, they were called *atheists* because they served no visible gods, *unpatriotic* because they did not burn incense before the image of the emperor, and *immoral* because, of necessity, they would often meet behind locked doors. The apostle knew that the best way to defeat this slander was for Christians daily to conduct themselves not only *virtuously* instead of *wickedly* but also *wisely* instead of *foolishly*... It was then as it is now: in the long run the reputation of the gospel depends on the conduct of its devotees. It is as if the apostle were saying, “Behave wisely toward outsiders, always bearing in mind that though few men read the sacred scrolls, all men read you.”<sup>1</sup>

The thought of this verse is similar to what we read in **1 Peter 3:15f**.

<sup>15</sup>But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; <sup>16</sup>having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. (1 Pet. 3:15-16)

We are to be “*redeeming the time*” in this matter. Our lives are filled with activity. Just to live day by day takes a great deal of time and effort. But we are to carve out as much time as possible to give to reaching the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are to be redeeming, or buying back the time, to give to this important task, to seek through wisdom to bring those who are now outside the family of God to experience new life in Christ along with us.

## **B. We are to give careful attention to our speech.**

We should be particularly guarded in our speech as we seek to win those who are “outside.” “*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*” Our speech is always to be governed by self-control with view to those “outside.” **John Calvin** wrote:

He requires suavity (charm) of speech, such as may allure the hearers by its profitableness, for he does not merely condemn communications that are openly wicked or impious, but also such as worthless and idle. Hence he would have them *seasoned with salt*. Profane men have their seasoning discourse, but he does not speak of them; nay more, as witticisms are insinuating, and for the most part procure favor, he indirectly prohibits believers from the practice and familiar use of them. For he reckons as tasteless everything that does not edify. The term *grace* is employed in the same sense, so as to be opposed to talkativeness, taunts, and all sorts of trifles which are either injurious or vain.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> William Hendriksen, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Baker, Academic, 1964), p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, Vol. 21 (Baker, 1993), p. 225f.

Paul wrote, “*Let your speech always be with grace.*” Christians are to be gracious in the manner that they speak with others. They are to speak with grace to believers about them. They are also to speak with grace to unbelievers with whom they interact.

### 1. Our speech should be with grace.

What is it to have your speech always be with grace?

(1) *First, it is to speak to others in a manner that reflects their **dignity** as human beings.* Every person is of great worth, for every person is the created image of God.

Man, consisting of a body prepared in such a skillful and elegant fashion, as well as with such a noble soul, was created in a state of perfection. All that God created was good. The goodness of every creature consisted in the measure of perfection required to function as such a creature. The goodness of man consists in the image of God.<sup>3</sup>

Here is a good setting forth of man as the image of God.

Scripture teaches that God made man and woman in His own image, so that human beings are like God as no other earthly creatures are (Gen. 1:26, 27, echoed in 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9). The special dignity of being human is that as men and women we may reflect and reproduce at our own creaturely level the holy ways of God. Human beings were made for this purpose, and in one sense we are truly human to the extent that we fulfil it.<sup>4</sup>

Now it is true that because of our fall into sin that we have spoiled the dignity that was ours. That God made us His image and that we have defaced that image through sin compounds our guilt and warrants our damnation. But sin did not extinguish the image of God in us, for that is who we are. The effect of sin can be stated this way:

The fall diminished God’s image, not only in Adam and Eve, but in all their descendants, the whole human race. We retain the image structurally, in the sense that remain human beings, but not functionally, for we are now slaves of sin, unable to use our powers to mirror God’s holiness. Regeneration begins the process of restoring God’s moral image in our lives. But not until we are fully sanctified and glorified shall we reflect God perfectly in thought and action as we were made to do and as the incarnate Son of God in His humanity actually did (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29, 46).<sup>5</sup>

But because every human being remains the image of God, value and regard should be rendered to all people everywhere. That this is the will of God may be seen in the divine institution of the death penalty. After Noah had come forth from the ark God had given instruction to Noah:

From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; *for in the image of God He made man.* (Gen. 9:5f)

Here we see the value of the human being, though he is fallen in sin, he nevertheless retains the image of God. He is of such value that anyone who murders a man should forfeit his own life.

The New Testament tells us that we should be civil in our speech toward people because they are the image of God. James wrote:

---

<sup>3</sup> Wilhelmus a Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, vol. 1 (Heritage reformed Books, 1992), p. 323.

<sup>4</sup> R. C. Sproul, gen. ed., *The Reformation Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 9

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. <sup>3</sup>Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. <sup>4</sup>Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. <sup>5</sup>Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things.

See how great a forest a little fire kindles! <sup>6</sup>And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. <sup>8</sup>But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>*With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.* <sup>10</sup>Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. (James 3:2-10)

What is it to have your speech always be with grace?

(2) *Second, it is to speak to others in a manner that displays our general love for all human beings.* Christians are to be like their heavenly Father. God has a general benevolence for all mankind. This does not mean that He loves everyone the same, for that is not the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. God has a covenant love for His people that He has only for them and for no others. Nevertheless, God is kind and good to all of His creatures because that is His nature. We are to be like Him. We are to treat others kindly because we are to be as our Father. Our Lord Jesus taught us:

“But I say to you, love your enemies, *bless those who curse you*, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup>that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup>For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup>And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? <sup>48</sup>Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matt. 5:44-48)

What is it to have your speech always be with grace?

(3) *Third, it is to speak to others in a manner that does not bring reproach upon our witness of the gospel.* As Christians we desire that many others would come to know the mercy and grace of God in Jesus Christ that we have known. We are mindful of our testimony before unbelievers. We are mindful that unbelievers in order to justify their condition, to scrutinize us to find some basis of discrediting our witness to them. Our speech will ruin our witness before others. We should be careful, therefore, that our speech should always be with grace. Paul wrote to Titus,

<sup>6</sup>Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, <sup>7</sup>in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, <sup>8</sup>*sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.* (Tit. 2:6-8)

What is it to have your speech always be with grace?

(4) *Fourth, it is to speak to others in a manner characterized by gentleness and kindness, but with conviction.*” To speak with grace is the “kindly, winning pleasantness, which makes the talk of a good and thoughtful man attractive.”<sup>6</sup> This was the common understanding of a godly man in the ancient

---

<sup>6</sup> H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, eds., *The Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 20 (William B. Eerdmans, 1962), p. 210.

world. Ecclesiastes 10:12 reads, “The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious, but the lips of a fool shall swallow him up.”

Of course this is what characterized the speech of our Lord Jesus. This was made known prophetically in Psalm 45, in which the psalmist wrote of the Son of David, ultimately realized in the Messiah:

My heart is overflowing with a good theme;  
I recite my composition concerning the King;  
My tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.  
<sup>2</sup>You are fairer than the sons of men;  
***Grace is poured upon Your lips;***  
Therefore God has blessed You forever. (Psa. 45:1f)

Those who heard the Lord Jesus were struck with the manner in which He spoke. We read, “So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth” (Luke 4:22).

We are to speak with grace because we desire that our Lord would impart grace to our hearers through our speech. We read instruction of the apostle to the Christians at Ephesus in this regard.

<sup>29</sup>Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, ***that it may impart grace to the hearers.*** <sup>30</sup>And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. <sup>32</sup>And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (Eph. 4:29-32)

May our actions and our speech not only not distance others from Christ because they distance themselves from us, but may our actions and speech serve as attractants to them that they might come to know Him whom we love and serve.

## **2. Our speech should be “seasoned with salt.”**

Again, Paul wrote, “*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*” If our speech with grace addresses the ***manner*** in which we speak to others, our speech “seasoned with salt” concerns the ***content*** of our speech. It has been suggested that whereas “grace” *sweetens* our speech, salt *seasons* it.

The clause that follows indicates that “salt” denotes here, as commonly in Greek, an intellectual rather than a moral quality of speech.<sup>7</sup>

Salt is a subject that is found throughout the Scriptures. It was the manner in which food was preserved before the days of canning and later refrigeration. It was used for seasoning as well, of course.

A nation’s wealth was measured by its salt deposits. Whereas the wealth of many nations today is measured by their oil reserves, the resource to mine salt was a leading basis of national wealth in the ancient world. Throughout history communities were founded and built up over time either near salt deposits or places where trade for salt could be conducted. It was at the heart of civilization. The Roman armies were sometimes paid in salt. This was the origin of the word, “salary”, from the Latin word for “salt.”

It is understandable that salt was so intricately tied with the culture that the idea of salt would find expression in its religious institutions. Salt was used in ceremonies to seal an agreement, or a covenant between persons and peoples. As salt preserved meat and other perishables, salt was used to show forth

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

the permanence of a covenantal agreement, both covenants between men and those between men and God. We read in Numbers 18,

“All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD with you and your descendants with you.”

The chronicler set forth the covenant that God made with King David as a “covenant of salt.”

“Should you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt?” (2 Chron. 13:5)

God had made an everlasting covenant with King David, promising him that he would have an everlasting dynasty, that his seed would be established as king forever over the coming kingdom of God. The reference to salt speaks to the perpetual, unending duration of this covenant.

Here in Colossians 4:6, the expression, *seasoned with salt*, is obviously speaking to the quality of salt to season food rather than preserve it. It speaks of both substance and relevance of our speech.

Salt is seasoning. It gives pungency. Something similar should be found in our conversation. Dullness is an offence. It is an infliction of intolerable weariness on the listener. On the part of the speaker it either shows want of interest in his subject (in which case he should let it alone), or want of interest in his hearer (which is the direct result of lack of sympathy). Moreover, the Christian is called to be frequently bearing testimony for his Master. He weakens his testimony by giving it in an uninteresting manner. He should study his words. But, better than that, he should have his theme so much at heart as to speak with eloquence of enthusiasm.<sup>8</sup>

May our Lord enable us to present the gospel to others with grace and substance. May He bless our witness of Jesus Christ to our hearers.

**3. Our speech should be informed by wisdom, spoken with grace, seasoned with salt, *so that we may know how to answer each person.***

Now in their conversations believers must be mindful not only of the particular occasion that evokes their remarks but also of the person addressed. Hence, the apostle continues: **so that you may know how to answer each individual.** In other words, they should speak the right word at the right time to the right person.<sup>9</sup>

We are in need of graciousness in our speech and of substance in the content of our speech, but we also need to know how the Lord would have us answer those with whom we are witnessing with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This requires attentiveness to conversing and listening to the one with whom we are witnessing. While listening, we must ask for wisdom from God so that He may enable us to assess another’s spiritual condition, his present spiritual need, and where the Lord would direct this person in acquiring knowledge of Him and His will. We are in need of discernment so that we may “know how to answer each individual.”

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 241.

<sup>9</sup> William Hendriksen, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Baker, Academic, 1964), p. 184.

We might also consider Paul's instruction to Timothy regarding the importance that he guard his speech. In 1 Timothy 4:12-16 we read of the apostle Paul warning Timothy to watch himself and guard his doctrine.

“Let no one despise your youth, **but be an example to the believers in word**, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

Now in this passage Paul instructed Timothy to be **a good example to believers in six ways (4:12)**. “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers.” Six specific areas are cited in which Timothy was to be an example to other believers. Now let me stress this point. Although Paul is addressing Timothy as a minister of the gospel, we should not dismiss this as inapplicable to ourselves. Since Timothy was to be an *example* to believers in these areas, it follows that believers are to be also Christ-like in these six areas of life. But we will give our attention to only the first of these six.

**Timothy was to set a good example in word.** A Christian's speech will either give weight to his witness or bring discredit to it. We are to guard our speech. We are to be careful what we verbally affirm or deny verbally. We are to be careful to what we commit ourselves to before others and God. And we are to be careful to whom we speak our words, considering what they might do with them once they have gone from us. And very importantly, we are to guard what we say about others. And so, we are to do so for a number of reasons.

(1) Love dictates that we not speak evil to others, *“for love suffers long and is kind”* (1 Cor. 13:4), and *“love works no ill to his neighbor”* (Rom. 13:10).

(2) Our new life in Christ makes it incongruous that we speak ill of our neighbor. James wrote, *“Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be”* (James 3:10).

(3) We are to guard our words because they have potential of doing great harm to others. Again, James wrote, *“The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell”* (James 3:6).

(4) We are to guard our words for usually the words we speak about others is generally heard by them. Ecclesiastes 10:20, *“Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.”* That is where the expression comes from that responds to the question, “Where did you hear that?” Answer, “A little bird told me.” The point is that your speech, which you think is private and will not be passed on in fact, gets passed on until it arrives in the ear of whom you were talking ill.

(5) We are not to speak evil of others because the act is great evil itself; it is a sin that is deserving of severe punishment. David the king promised God that he would not allow a slanderer to live in his kingdom. It was a cause for the death penalty in ancient Israel under David. He vowed to God in **Psalm 101:5**, *“Whoso privately slanders his neighbor, him will I cut off.”* Now, we might immediately respond, “That is too severe.” But consider that...

(6) We are not to speak evil of others because the same standard by which we condemn others will be used to condemn ourselves. Jesus said, *“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what*



*judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Matt. 7:1ff). We usually measure another according to a stricter standard than which we examine ourselves. We cut ourselves slack, while condemning another.*

(7) We are not to condemn others because generally we do the same kinds of things and therefore God will judge us as responsible for our actions. When we condemn others we reveal that we know what is right and wrong. If we do the same things, therefore, we confess that we are deserving of the same condemnation we have rendered to others. Romans 2:1ff reads

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

(8) God Himself will judge and condemn sinners on the Day of Judgment based on the words they speak. The Lord Jesus told His disciples that people will be condemned to hell because their when their speech is weighed on the Day of Judgment in the light of God’s Word, they will be found to be guilty.

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. [Here “fruit” is one’s speech.] Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? 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. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

The Scriptures tell us that a man who is careless in his speech reveals himself to be a *fool*. The idea of “fool” is not merely someone who is a buffoon or stupid, but it describes one who lives in total disregard of God and the fact that there are consequences to his actions. What a person says will reveal that he is a fool. Ecclesiastes 5:13, “A fool’s voice is known by multitude of words.” And also in Ecclesiastes 10:11-14 we read,

“Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better. The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?”

Proverbs says a great deal about the fool’s speech. “He that hides hatred with lying lips, and he that utters a slander, is a fool” (Prov. 10:18). Proverbs 29:11 reads, “A fool utters all his mind: but a wise man keeps it in till afterwards.” And Proverbs 17:28 records, “Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise: and he that shuts his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.” And lastly Proverbs 29:20 reads, “See the man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him.”

Timothy was to be a good example to the believers in his speech because all believers must be very careful to guard their speech. Timothy’s good example would be very helpful to the congregation at Ephesus.

May our Lord help us to be responsible with respect to our speech. May the manner of our speaking and the content of our speech be blessed of our Lord to further the cause of the gospel in the world.

\*\*\*\*\*

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. (1 Chron. 29:11)

\*\*\*\*\*