

1 Peter 3:8-12

1Pe 3:8 (NKJV) **Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. ¹¹ Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."**

Sometimes we have to ask the simple question “*What is it that God specifically wants me to do? How does He want me to live?*” We have to ask those questions, understand what it is that He desires for our life, and then embrace those things as to how we will actually live. In v10-12, there are six additional areas of obedience for our life that Peter lists. We are to (1) refrain from speaking evil and (2) to refrain from being deceitful. We are (3) to turn away from evil, (4) we are to do good, (5) we are to seek peace, and (6) we are to pursue peace. The word for “**evil**” is “*kakos*” and we saw previously that it indicates a very specific lack of godly qualities and attributes in a person. It means to be “bad in character”.¹ It means that someone is actively trying to harm someone else, trying to make life very difficult for them. It denotes someone being bad and doing destructive things that are damaging and unjust towards someone else. So, in v10 where Peter writes that we are to “**refrain our tongue from evil**”, it is referring specifically to the fact that we should never find ourselves saying something that we know is not what God would want us to say. It is so easy, something that can almost be effortless, to say something negative, something harmful, and something that hurts someone else. If I can say it in a very simple way, we must “learn” how to talk in a godly way so that our words are edifying and are always reflecting what God would want us to say. Controlling what we say and how we say things to people is a very deliberate, conscious, and intentional effort. It demands constant thought, self-control, and personal discipline. There are many Christians who know that how they talk to people is rarely edifying, but it just does not seem to impact them at all. It is as if they are totally satisfied with how they talk and completely unwilling to exercise the personal will and discipline needed to change. In my mind personally, that is someone that God will not use. If a believer cannot and will not control their tongue, then God simply will not use them. Rather than glorifying Christ, their life will actually dishonor Him.

I am fully convinced that as a believer that God has removed the right, the privilege, and the entitlement for me to just say to someone what I want to say. He has just completely removed it from my life. We may want to say something that is harmful, something that is ugly, something that is demeaning, and something that is damaging to someone else – but as a follower of Christ we simply cannot say what we may want to say. We have not been given that spiritual freedom. For the committed Christian, that option has been removed. We can say corrective things, but even then what we say has to be embellished with grace and with healing. What we are addressing is qualitatively different than properly reproofing or correcting someone who has done something that is wrong. If that were not the case, then the words “**reprove**”, “**rebuke**”, and “**correct**” would not be in the Scriptures. However, those three words do not give the believer the right to communicate their correction in an ungodly way.

¹ Vine, *kakos*, ep.

What Peter is defining here is the kind of speech that is simply unnecessary and unprofitable in its character, and the reactions it creates in others. If you want to know what someone thinks about your speech, then just see how they react when you talk to them. Brenda and I were in a restaurant on Thursday in Rutherfordton, NC where we had travelled for a meeting with a dean and an assistant dean of one of our extensions. As I normally do, I asked the waiter what her name was, then I looked up its meaning. I told her that her name meant “beautiful woman”. She just lit up like a light bulb and said “*you have just made my day*”.

So, Peter is addressing the kind of speech that hurts someone intentionally, and even unintentionally. Careless, thoughtless words can hurt anyone unintentionally. Very often it is our way of getting back at someone, of taking revenge on them for how we feel that we may have been treated by them. So, we just speak our mind, just say what we want to say, and just tell them that they are always the problem. The result in that scenario is that both the hearer and the one speaking are being hurt. Listen very carefully. You cannot always be reminding someone of how they have failed you, of how they have disappointed you, and of how they have let you down. As a believer, you cannot do that. Those are words that produce the exact opposite results of what God desires. To speak that way is unbiblical. I know someone is sitting here thinking to themselves “*Well, what you do not understand pastor is that the other person deserves what I say to them*”. No they do not, not biblically, not as far as God is concerned. If you are thinking like that, then you had better be thankful that God does not talk to you the same way when you fail Him and dishonor Him and ignore Him in how you live.

That kind of rhetoric in our relationships with other people is a spiritual disaster that only exacerbates the problem. For instance, I never, I never, I never want to be telling my wife how she has failed me or how she may have disappointed me – never! Nor do I want her to be telling me how I have constantly failed her. To the contrary, I want to always be building her up, to always be strengthening her life with what I say to her, and her doing the same for me. That is the way that a godly marriage is to work. It has always been like that, and not this jawing back and forth with words that actually destroy a marriage. It is a part of God’s work in my life to “**love my wife like Christ loved the church**”. The more that I am building her up, the more edified she is. Proverbs is clear that wives do this all the time when they constantly nag at their husbands about every little thing that they may not like. The word that Solomon used is “**contentious**”. Listen to these verses in Proverbs,

Pr 21:9 (NKJV) **Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.**

Pr 21:19 (NKJV) **Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman.**

Pr 25:24 (NKJV) **It is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.**

Pr 27:15 (NKJV) **A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike;**

The same is true for a husband.

Pr 26:21 (NKJV) **As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife.**

Pr 29:20 (NKJV) **Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.**

Listen to these verses in Proverbs of how we are to speak to people. This is what God wants and how He wants us to talk.

Pr 10:19 (NKJV) **In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.**

Pr 15:23 (NKJV) **A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word *spoken* in due season, how good it is!**

Pr 16:24 (NKJV) **Pleasant words *are like* a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.**

So, Peter is speaking about the kind of words that intentionally hurt someone and that you know will hurt them when you use them. Every believer simply has to refrain, to stop, to cease, and to lay this kind of speech aside. I remember when I was a young child and doctors made house calls. When my doctor would come to our home, the first thing he would say to me was “*stick out your tongue*”. How you hear someone talking to other people is always a good index of their character and of their personal relationship to God.² Listen very carefully. As believers who want to truly be followers of Christ, we simply cannot always be reminding people of their faults and how much they may have disappointed us. That is one of the most unedifying qualities that a person can possess – always becoming someone else’s conscience for faults that we see in their life. That negative quality is the epitome of pride in a person’s life - of trying to play the role of the Holy Spirit in that other person’s life.

Unfortunately, some people just seem addicted to finding everyone’s faults and then casually reminding them of those faults. The person who is inclined to do that all of the time is full of personal pride. They see themselves as better than someone else, as more discerning than the other person, and invariably they are the ones that have so many personal blind spots that it defies description. I have iterated this all along and will continue to do so, but our tongue always betrays us and it always reveals where we really are in our personal relationship to God. It is probably the best indicator of a person’s spiritual life and of their spiritual progress that we have. The person who is always a faultfinder is generally full of pride, full of what they want, and full of their own illusions about where they may be in their Christian life. Our speech has to be edifying. It has to be speech that encourages and builds someone up. That is exactly how God has called on us to live. Just think about it for a moment. How do you like it personally when someone is constantly demeaning you, constantly chiding you, always berating and belittling you? How do you like it when someone is always reminding you of how you have failed and of how you have constantly disappointed them? Try to find just one passage of Scripture that defines that as good – just one. So, if you do not like someone always reminding you of how you may have failed them, then make sure that you are not guilty of doing exactly the same.

In what has been studied so far, we have seen that biblically the Scriptures consider this constant faultfinding to be a subtle form of “revenge” and “retaliation” against someone, and God forbids us to talk to and to treat people in that manner. God forbids us to take revenge and retaliation against someone with our words and all of the implications that our words communicate. So this idea of controlling our speech is absolutely essential to what it means to live out the Christian life. It is an area that every believer has to understand and accept. For me the question is simple. Do I really want to be used by God, do I really want my life to count as far as God is concerned? Well, if I do, then I must get a control

² Precept, *1 Peter 3:8-12, verse by verse*, ep

on how I talk to people. So, make sure that what you say is edifying and never in a spirit of retaliation or frustration with them. If you know that you are about to say something unedifying to someone, then just walk away, leave, go somewhere else.

As a believer, I love this simply because God is constantly removing any doubt as to how we are supposed to live. This is the Christian life, and if I can say it this way, it begins with the tongue. This is exactly how we are to live our life before a world that is unbelieving and rebellious – just say good things, speak things of value and worth, speak words of kindness and healing, speak words that build people up rather than tear them down. This is great. Listen to how Paul said this same thing in [Ephesians 4:29](#),

Eph 4:29 (NKJV) **Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.**

The word “**corrupt**” is “*sapros*” and it means to be bad, rotten, putrid, foul.³ Just make the decision and live by it that you will never say anything demeaning, degrading, or ugly to someone. Once again, if you feel inclined to do so, just walk away, turn aside, do something else until you are able to gain some self-control over your tongue – but do not let something foul and putrid “**proceed out of your mouth**”. This word for do not “**proceed**” is a present tense, imperative mood, middle voice verb which simply means that it is a command that we as believers are to be continually obeying. Because it is in the middle voice, it could be translated as “**You yourself (middle voice) let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth**” – emphasizing that I am the one fully responsible for ensuring that this happens in my life. The goal is to allow our speech to “**impart grace**” to other people. Build them up, encourage them, strengthen them, edify them, help them. Consciously make this your way of life, but never say something that is rotten and foul and demeaning to them. When we do, it is just rotten words that have no healing virtues in them whatsoever. Now, pastorally, I say this with grace, but for many Christians this is a complete paradigm shift because they feel like they have to right to just speak their mind, to constantly be reminding others of their faults. Nothing, absolutely nothing could be any further from the truth than that kind of mindset and thinking. We are forbidden by the Scriptures to always be tearing people down – utterly forbidden to speak to them in that manner.

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³ Zodhiates, 1278.