

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY

by John Isaac Edwards

Words matter! The Bible speaks of “...*the words of the wise...*” (Prov. 1:6; 22:17; Eccl. 12:11) and “...*the lips of a fool...*” (Eccl. 10:12, 14). There are many different words spoken of throughout the Scriptures. Thus, we study.

1) **GOODLY WORDS.** In blessing his sons Jacob said, “*Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words*” (Gen. 49:21). Goodly words are words of beauty and elegance.

2) **VAIN WORDS.** Pharaoh said of the Hebrews, “...*let them not regard vain words*” (Ex. 5:9). Rabshakeh, a captain of Sennacherib king of Assyria, accused Hezekiah king of Judah of speaking “...*vain words...*” (2 Ki. 18:20; Is. 36:5). Job answered his “*miserable comforters,*” “...*Shall vain words have an end?...*” (Job 16:1-2). Paul admonished, “*Let no man deceive you with vain words...*” (Eph. 5:6). Vain words are empty, like an empty pit (Gen. 37:24) and empty pitchers (Judg. 7:16) which contain nothing.

3) **GOOD WORDS.** Rehoboam consulted with the old men, “*How do ye advise that I may answer this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou*

wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever” (1 Ki. 12:7; 2 Chr. 10:7). Paul warned saints in Rome of those who “...*by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*” (Rom. 16:18). This is ‘the smooth and plausible address which simulates goodness.’

4) **WORDS OF PEACE AND TRUTH.** Esther 9 finds sorrow turned to joy and mourning into a good day as letters devised by Haman, the Jew-hater, were reversed and letters were sent “...*unto all the Jews...with words of peace and truth*” (v. 30). If only more words like these could be dispersed from powers that be!

5) **RIGHT WORDS.** Job exclaimed, “*How forcible are right words!...*” (Job 6:25). To speak right words is to speak that which is true or right.

6) **PURE WORDS.** “*The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times*” (Ps. 12:6).

7) **WORDS OF INIQUITY AND DECEIT.** The Psalmist recorded, “*The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart...The words of his mouth*

are iniquity and deceit...” (Ps. 36:1-3). Such are the words of a mischievous and fraudulent person.

8) **DEVOURING WORDS.** The Psalmist said of the mighty in mischief boasting man, “*Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue*” (Ps. 52:4). Devouring words are words that swallow up or destroy!

9) **SMOOTH, SOFT WORDS.** It is said of the covenant-breaker, that put forth his hands against such as be at peace with God, “*The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords*” (Ps. 55:21).

10) **BITTER WORDS.** The Psalmist petitioned God for protection from the enemy, the wicked, workers of iniquity, “*Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words*” (Ps. 64:3). These are destructive and pernicious. Bitter words are as pungent as piercing arrows!

11) **WORDS OF HATRED.** Of “*the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful,*” it is said, “*They compassed me about also with words of hatred...*” (Ps.

109:1-3). How would you like to be surrounded by hateful words?

12) **SWEET WORDS.** Such is the nature of the Lord's words: "*How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*" (Ps. 119:103). In Psalm 141:6, "...*they shall hear my words; for they are sweet*" (Ps. 141:6). Proverbs 23:8 mentions "...*sweet words.*"

13) **FLATTERING WORDS.** The "*strange woman*" of Proverbs "...*flattereth with her words*" (Prov. 2:16; 7:5). This has the signification of smoothness. Solomon said "...*her mouth is smoother than oil*" (Prov. 5:3). Proverbs 7:13-20 is a classic example. Verse 21 reports, "*With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.*" Paul reminded the Thessalonians, "*For neither at any time used we flattering words...*" (1 Th. 2:5). These men of God did not speak with motives of self-interest.

14) **GRIEVOUS WORDS.** Wisdom literature says, "*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger*" (Prov. 15:1). Grievous words are words of pain, such as a woman in labor (Gen. 3:16). These produce grief of mind. Contrary to "*a soft answer,*" words pronounced with anger are bitter, sharp words!

15) **PLEASANT WORDS.** Proverbs 15:26 says, "*The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.*" Again, "*Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones*" (Prov. 16:24). Pleasant words are suitable, becoming words.

16) **GRACIOUS WORDS.** The

Preacher said, "*The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself*" (Eccl. 10:12). Such words are a thing of gracefulness and beauty like the loving hind and pleasant roe (Prov. 5:19). The Psalmist said, "*Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever*" (Ps. 45:2). When Jesus stood up to read, all "...*wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth....*" (Lk. 4:22). Gracious is that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness.

17) **ACCEPTABLE WORDS OF TRUTH.** "*The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth*" (Eccl. 12:10). Not all words are acceptable! May our petition be, "*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in the sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer*" (Ps. 19:14).

18) **LYING WORDS.** The churl "...*deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words...*" (Is. 32:7). Jeremiah was instructed to proclaim, "*Trust ye not in lying words...*" (Jer. 7:4). "*Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit*" (Jer. 7:8). The Lord said there was villany in Israel because they "...*have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them...*" (Jer. 29:23).

19) **WORDS OF FALSEHOOD.** In Isaiah 59, transgressions were multiplied before God "*In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood*" (vv. 12-13).

20) **FAIR WORDS.** The Lord told Jeremiah, "*For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee*" (Jer. 12:6). They seemed to be his friends. Their words were pleasant and agreeable, like sweet-smelling ointment (Ps. 133:2; Is. 39:2). They were really his foes!

21) **LYING AND CORRUPT WORDS.** When King Nebuchadnezzar summoned men to reveal his troublesome dream he said, "...*if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me...*" (Dan. 2:9). Daniel answered in the presence of the king, "...*there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king...*" (Dan. 2:28). Thus, when men speak contrary to divine revelation, they speak lying and corrupt words!

22) **GOOD AND COMFORTABLE WORDS.** In Zechariah 1 the question is asked, "*O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?*" The Lord answered "...*with good words and comfortable words*" (Zech. 1:12-13). Good and comfortable words included the message: "*I am jealous for Jerusalem....I am very sore displeased with the heathen....I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it...*" (Zech. 1:14-16).

23) **BLASPHEMOUS WORDS.** Men bribed to commit perjury

said of Stephen, "... *We have heard him speak **blasphemous words** against Moses, and against God.... This man ceaseth not to speak **blasphemous words** against this holy place, and the law*" (Acts 6:11, 13). Evil, slanderous, reproachful, railing, abusive speaking is all under the class of blasphemous words.

24) WORDS OF TRUTH AND SOBERNESS. When Paul answered for himself before Agrippa (Acts 26:1-23), Festus said, "*Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the **words of truth and soberness***" (vv. 24-25). Paul did not speak the vagaries of madness. He told everything like it really was. He spoke words of sanity, soundness of mind.

25) WISDOM OF WORDS. Paul penned, "*For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with **wisdom of words**, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect*" (1 Cor. 1:17). That is, the art of the rhetorician, such as is taught in the schools, the wisdom which shows itself in speaking. The cross is made ineffective by such!

26) ENTICING WORDS. Again Paul said, "*And my speech and my preaching was not with **enticing words** of man's wisdom...*" (1 Cor. 2:4). Why Paul? "*That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*" (1 Cor. 2:5). Paul warned the Colossians, "*And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with **enticing words***" (Col. 2:4). We can be cheated, deceived and deluded by persuasive speech with nice style.

27) WHOLESOME, SOUND WORDS. Proverbs 15:4 says, "*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life...*" Timothy was taught, "*If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to **wholesome words**, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness*" (1 Tim. 6:3). That which is wholesome is sound, well, in good health. Paul urged Timothy, "*Hold fast the form of **sound words**, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim. 1:13).

28) FEIGNED WORDS. Peter alerted saints to false teachers who "*...through covetousness shall they with **feigned words** make merchandise of you...*" (2 Pet. 2:3). Feigned words are

words that are formed or molded, made up or fabricated. They are artificial or fictitious.

29) GREAT SWELLING WORDS. 2 Peter 2:18 continues, "*For when they speak **great swelling words** of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.*" Jude said, "*These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh **great swelling words**, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage*" (v. 16). "*Great swelling*" expresses arrogance.

30) MALICIOUS WORDS. Remember Diotrephes? John said, "*...his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with **malicious words**...*" (3 Jn. 10). This is expressive of unintermitted toil in uttering nonsense, bringing forth idle accusations and making empty charges. Such was bad, wicked, evil!

Jesus taught, "*For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*" (Mt. 12:37). So, choose your words carefully!

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