

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...” (1 Peter 4:11).

GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

Ron Halbrook

For the truth’s sake, we need to guard the tongue. “It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (Jas. 3:8). Every power for good is also a power for evil when misused. And, the tongue is a great power, either way it is used. “Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” (v. 5). The tongue is used to “bless...God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (vv. 9-10).

Cursing, swearing, profanity, and vile speech of every kind have become the order of the day for many people. Such speech often uses the name of God in a degrading way, to strengthen cursing and profanity. And, generally, such speech expresses extreme bitterness, disgust, or a desire for harm toward another person (for some real or imagined injury). The speaker sometimes even directs such expressions toward himself (for some weakness or mistake he has made). *All such speech shows a lack of respect for God, self, and others!*

The solution is threefold. (1) *We must exalt God in our hearts* —“love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy

soul, and with all thy mind.” (2) *We must have a proper regard for ourselves.* As spiritual beings, we are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). Man is the crowning work of God’s creation. God “made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour” (Ps. 8:5). In view of his eternal destiny, man is of greater value than all material things combined. “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mt. 16:26). (3) Just as we are to love (seek the good of) ourselves, *we are to love others.* “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mt. 22:39). Proper regard for God, self, and others stops vile speech of all descriptions.

“Polite” cursing and compromise with profanity are found in the form of euphemisms. Euphemisms are substitutes for direct cursing. To damn, in profanity, is to curse. *Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary* (1975) defines “dern” and “darn” as “damn: a euphemism for the curse.” “Heck” is “an exclamation used as a euphemism for *hell*.” “Blamed” is “a substitute for *damned*.” Others include “gosh” (“euphemism for *God*”), “gee” (euphemistic contraction of *Jesus*), “golly” (“euphemism for *God*”), “doggone” (“an imprecation, or perhaps a euphemistic remodeling of *God Damn*”),

and “confound” (“damned, a mild oath”).

Christians who love God, self, and others properly will avoid all such speech. Sinners need to obey the Gospel of Christ to be forgiven of such speech; they must believe in Christ, repent of sins, confess Jesus Christ, and be baptized in water for remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:16; Rom. 10:10; 1 Pet. 3:21). *“Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more,”* God promises (Heb. 8:12).

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HONOR CHRIST AT ALL TIMES OF THE YEAR

Ron Halbrook

For the truth’s sake, we should honor Jesus Christ as God’s Son. “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11). Many people are wondering: How can we honor Christ *at special times of the year?* The answer is simple: The same way we honor him *at any time of the year!* How is that?

(1) *We honor Christ when we study God's Word and pray to Him in Christ's name.* Those who "search(ed) the scriptures daily" are "noble" in God's sight. Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Not only must we listen to God's voice in His Word, but we must also draw close to the Father through His Son as we "pray without ceasing" (Acts 17:11; Jn. 6:63; 1 Th. 5:17). (2) *We honor Christ when we obey the Gospel, and tell others that their sins can be forgiven too.* When Jesus sent his Apostles "into all the world" to preach "repentance and remission of sins in his name," he gave the conditions of salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Those who are converted should go "every where preaching the word" (Mk. 16:16; Lk. 24:47; Acts 8:4). (3) *We honor Christ when we worship God every Sunday and live as He directs throughout the week.* After obeying the Gospel, we must "continue(d) stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine." Under the guidance of inspired Apostles, "upon the first day of the week...the disciples came

together to break bread." That is, they partook of unleavened bread and juice of the grapevine to remember Christ's death. Consistent with such profession of faith, they "put off...the old man" and "put on the new man...in righteousness and true holiness" each day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Eph. 4:21-32).

"But, what about the tradition of religious holy days, like Christmas and Easter?" someone asks. The Father said *nothing* about such. The Son said *nothing*. The Spirit said *nothing*. God did warn against "commandments and doctrines of men." He said of those who "pervert the gospel of Christ," "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." When Christ said human doctrines make worship "vain," his disciples feared some "were offended." "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Mt. 15:8-14; Col. 2:22; Gal. 1:7; 4:10-11). Much done at special times of the year to honor Christ, is no honor in God's sight!

(1) *Christ is not honored by beer, wine, and liquor parties.*

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." It is a shameful disgrace at any time of the year to engage in "drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties" (Prov. 20:1; 1 Pet. 4:3 NASV). (2) *Christ is not honored by making debts we cannot pay.* We may give gifts to anyone in December or any other time. But, it is always wrong to make promises we know we must break. "Providing for honest things" does not mean "buying" (?) gifts we can never pay for (2 Cor. 9:21). (3) *Christ is not honored by "special" religious services unauthorized by Christ.* Masses and other religious services unauthorized in the doctrine of Christ are sinful. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God" (2 Jn. 9).

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Note: We thank brother Ron Halbhook for his exemplary work faithfully preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ among us October 10-16. The lessons have been true to the Book and much needed!

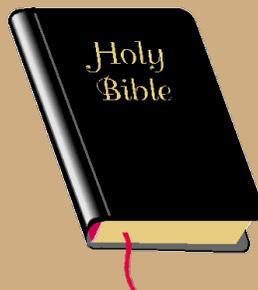
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