



REFINEMENT OF CHRISTIAN SPEECH

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"The power of speech is a talent that should be diligently cultivated. Of all the gifts we have received from God, none is capable of being a greater blessing than this. With the voice we convince and persuade, with it we offer prayer and praise to God, and with it we tell others of the Redeemer's love. How important, then, that it be so trained as to be most effective for good." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 335.

In light of the foregoing thoughts, it can be seen that the world diverges far from the God-given instructions and follows its own course. The power of speech has often been tainted with evil that has well-nigh saturated society. People do not see the high standard of purity, innocence, and nobility that emanate from Christ. No matter where we live or go, we hear words and phrases that are casually used by all classes of people that are totally inappropriate and unacceptable to God.

Unsuitable words are spoken by professionals, factory workers, students, governmental officials, and even nominal Christians. Common slang, cheap expressions, curses, and swearing are frequently used without thought; and these ugly sounds have a strong impact on the minds of both the hearer and the speaker. Generally, their influence is more detrimental upon the speaker.

Sometimes something is said to get attention or merely to shock someone. Some crave to be a part of a given clique or crowd and thus yield to peer pressure in the way they speak. It is a recog-

nizable fact that young people desire to have a feeling of belonging and being accepted among their peers. Many youth sacrifice their high and holy principles to yield to the wishes and whims of the crowd. Young people may be led to compromise and use words that are welcomed among their close friends while they refrain from using the same words in their immediate family. They realize that certain things are not tolerated and approved. In essence, this is a "double" tongue attitude that God loathes. In James 8:10 is a reminder of our obligation in this matter: "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

Putting up a facade or having a "double tongue" will eventually be exposed as hypocrisy. No matter with whom we associate, our speech should always be "with grace, seasoned with salt." Colos-



sians 4:6. In other words, we should always speak pure, refined, and uplifting language that is acceptable to all classes and that will glorify the Saviour.

It would be good to carefully examine the following timely Bible verse: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Ephesians 4:29.

Dear reader, God disapproves of corrupt communication, and "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matthew 12:86. "No evil speaking, no frivolous talk, no fretful repining or impure suggestion, will escape the lips of him who is following Christ." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 337.

In using degrading or uncouth speech, we dishonor God and may turn people away who are seeking for the Pearl of great price—Jesus. As His representatives, we should reflect His light and influence others with our pure, sanctified speech.

To have sanctified lips, we need to have a sanctified life centered in Christ. Only through Him can our thoughts be controlled, and then our speech will reflect those thoughts. 2 Corinthians 10:5.

By thinking upon things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, our characters will be of a different fashion, one which conforms to Christ's beautiful character. By eliminating every ungodly expression, foolish joking, and witticism—or whatever coarse speech characterizes the unconverted man—a new power and influence will pervade the heart, resulting in the refinement of speech that is befitting a follower of Christ.



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The principles of God's moral law—love, justice, truth, and purity—are the foundation of His kingdom and the wall of protection that He has placed around His children. Unfortunately, the history of God's people is abundant with examples of direct and blatant transgression of that law. In each case, there were sharp contrasts between sin and holiness, between hatred, falsehood, and treachery on the one hand and nobility and devotion on the other. While fearful, eternal results follow the transgressors of God's commandments, He is ever ready to pour out rich blessings on the obedient and the truly penitent.

When God called Moses up into the mountain to receive further instructions following the day He spoke the Commandments from Sinai, the days of waiting turned into weeks; and the people became at first restless, then careless and lawless. Though God had strictly forbidden any material representations of Himself or worship of other gods, they lost their faith in Him as the invisible and only true God and returned to the old superstitions and idolatry they had acquired in Egypt. Only a short while before, they had heard God's own voice solemnly proclaiming, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me"; and although the cloud of His presence was still before them, they turned away and asked for other gods.

This terrible act of treason and apostasy was not to go unpunished. God's covenant with His people had been annulled by their actions, and He was ready to pour out His wrath on Israel. But Moses, the faithful, noble shepherd, interceded for the people with deep love and earnestness; and the Lord granted his prayer. Yet, as he descended from the mount and saw the dreadful degradation of Israel, Moses, though longsuffering, meek, and humble, was overwhelmed with righteous indignation.

"Though God had granted the prayer of Moses in sparing Israel from destruc-

tion, their apostasy was to be signally punished. The lawlessness and insubordination into which Aaron had permitted them to fall, if not speedily crushed, would run riot in wickedness, and would involve the nation in irretrievable ruin. By terrible severity the evil must be put away. Standing in the gate of the camp, Moses called to the people, 'Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me.'... In the name of 'the Lord God of Israel,' Moses now commanded those upon his right hand, who had kept themselves clear of idolatry, to gird on their swords and slay all who persisted in rebellion. 'And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.' Without regard to position, kindred, or friendship, the ringleaders in wickedness were cut off; but all who repented and humbled themselves were spared." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 324.

Through this terrible work of judgment, God's love and mercy, as well as justice, were demonstrated. The King of heaven had bestowed special blessings and benefits upon the Israelites, and they had voluntarily pledged themselves to obey His authority; therefore, they were guilty of treason. And yet, while He upheld His law, He granted an opportunity for repentance to all. Only those who persisted in rebellion were destroyed.

During the long, turbulent, seesaw history of His chosen people, God often raised up men of faith and prayer whose mission was to rebuke sin and evil, check the spread of apostasy, and carry out mighty spiritual reformations. One such moral hero, whose whole life was devoted to the work of reform and whose very name became synonymous with "reformation," was Elijah the Tishbite. The apostasy in Israel under King Ahab and his wife Queen Jezebel had become widespread as unbelief was fast separating the chosen nation from the Source of its strength. The people no longer acknowledged their dependence on God for daily mercies or attributed to Him the blessings of rain, sunshine, and rich harvest. Elijah's soul was filled with anguish as he saw how far the people had departed from God. As appeals and warnings failed to bring them to repentance, Elijah prayed that God would visit them with judgments. His prayer was answered, and the faithful prophet was entrusted with the mission of delivering to Ahab the message from the Most High: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." 1 Kings 17:1.

This terrible judgment from God was both just and merciful. In the first place, it was just because the Lord had prom-

ised them temporal blessings on the condition of obedience. "And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto My commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and He shut up heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you." Deuteronomy 11:13-17.

Secondly, it was merciful, for the devastating drought with the hunger and suffering that it caused was meant to help them recover their lost faith. It was "a divine interposition to save them from taking the fatal step beyond the boundary of Heaven's forgiveness." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 127.

Yet, in spite of their terrible affliction, the people neither repented nor humbled themselves during the three-and-a-half years of drought until the great show-down on Mount Carmel between God and Satan. Elijah alone was on the side of God, and all of Israel, Ahab, and some 850 prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth opposed him. You can read the account of what took place in 1 Kings chapter 18. This was the occasion when the prophet of God, alone but fearless before the multitude, cried out, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." 1 Kings 18:21. It would seem astonishing that not one person dared to show his allegiance to Jehovah. "Not all at once had this fatal apostasy closed about them, but gradually, as from time to time they had failed to heed the words of warning and reproof that the Lord sent them. Each departure from right doing, each refusal to repent, had deepened their guilt and driven them farther from Heaven. And now, in this crisis, they persisted in refusing to take their stand for God." *Prophets and Kings*, p. 147.

The climax occurred at the end of the day, with a triumphant victory for Elijah's God, as He sent fire from heaven and consumed Elijah's sacrifice, a large amount of water, and the entire stone altar! The people were convict-

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What is skin cancer?

Skin cancer is an out-of-control growth of abnormal cells in the outermost skin layer (epidermis) that is caused by unrepaired DNA damage that triggers mutations. These mutations lead the skin cells to multiply rapidly and form malignant tumors. The main types of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma (BCC), squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), melanoma, and Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC).

What does it look like? Skin cancers can look quite different from one person to another due to skin tone, size, type of skin cancer, and location on the body. One is well advised to contact a physician in the event of any unusual skin conditions or growth.

What causes cancers of the skin? The two main causes of skin cancer are the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays and the use of UV tanning beds. The good news is that if skin cancer is caught early, a dermatologist can treat it with little or no scarring and high odds of eliminating it entirely. The doctor may detect the growth at a precancerous stage before it has become a full-blown skin cancer or has penetrated below the surface of the skin.

Skin cancer can affect everyone. Regardless of what your skin color is, you can get skin cancer. Some people have a higher risk of developing skin cancer than do others. Age is a key factor, but there are many additional risk factors. People with a higher risk for skin cancer have:

- Light-colored skin
- Skin that burns or freckles rather than tans

- Blond or red hair
- Blue or green eyes
- More than 50 moles
- Irregularly-shaped or darker moles
- Used tanning beds and sunlamps
- A history of sunburns
- Received an organ transplant
- A family history of skin cancer
- A weakened immune system
- Received long-term x-ray therapy
- Exposure to cancer-causing compounds, such as arsenic or coal

Basal cell carcinomas (BCC) are abnormal, uncontrolled growths that arise from the skin's basal cells in the outermost layer of skin (epidermis). These cancers most often develop on skin areas typically exposed to the sun, especially the face, ears, neck, scalp, shoulders, and back. Most BCCs are caused by the combination of intermittent, intense exposure and cumulative, long-term exposure to UV radiation from the sun. BCC is the most common form of skin cancer, with approximately 3.6 million cases diagnosed each year in the United States. If not detected and treated early, BCCs can be locally destructive. Occasionally these cancers spread (metastasize); in very rare instances they can be fatal.

Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is an uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells arising from the squamous cells in the outermost layer of the skin (epidermis). SCCs are found on sun-exposed areas such



as the ears, face, scalp, neck, and hands. These are places where the skin often reveals signs of sun damage, including wrinkles and age spots. Most SCCs are caused by cumulative, long-term exposure to UV radiation from the sun and tanning beds. SCC is the second most common form of skin cancer. An estimated 1.8 million cases are diagnosed each year in the United States. SCCs can sometimes grow rapidly and metastasize if not detected and treated early.

Melanoma develops from melanocytes, the skin cells that produce melanin pigment, which gives the skin its color. Melanomas often resemble moles and may arise from them. They can appear on any area of the body, even areas that are not typically exposed to the sun. Melanoma is often triggered by the kind of intense, intermittent sun exposure that leads to sunburn. An estimated 186,680 new cases were expected to occur in the U.S. in 2023–89,070 *in situ* (noninvasive), confined to the epidermis (outer layer of skin), and 97,610 invasive, penetrating the epidermis into the skin's second layer (dermis). Of the three most common forms of skin cancer, melanoma is the most dangerous. Melanomas can be curable when they are diagnosed and treated early.

ABCDEs of melanoma detection

A stands for **ASYMMETRY**; one half does not look like the other half.

B stands for **BORDER**; irregular, scalloped or poorly defined border.

C stands for **COLOR**; varied from one spot to another; shades of tan, brown or black; sometimes white, red, or blue.

D stands for **DIAMETER**; melanomas are most often greater than 6 millimeters (the size of a pencil eraser) when diagnosed, but they can be smaller.

E stands for **EVOLVING**; a mole or skin growth that looks different from the rest or is changing in size, shape, or color.

Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC) is a rare, aggressive skin cancer. The tumors usually appear as firm, painless lesions or nodules on a sun-exposed area (about half the time on the head and neck and frequently on eyelids). The lesion is usually associated with a virus called Merkel cell polyomavirus and appears most on sun-exposed areas of fair skinned individuals over the age of 50.

Prevention and detection

The following can help detect and prevent new skin cancers:



- Perform skin self-examination.
- Check with your dermatologist in the event of any concerns.
- If you see anything changing, growing, or bleeding on your skin, see your dermatologist.
- Seek shade, especially between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun rays are strongest.
- Protect your skin when around water, snow, and sand.
- Wear protective clothing. This means wearing a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses.
- Generously apply sunscreen that offers broad-spectrum (UVA and UVB) protection, water resistance, and a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or

more. Because UV rays can penetrate clouds, one can be sunburned even on a cloudy day. Hence, it is recommended to wear sunscreen and protective clothing when it's cloudy and overcast.

- Protect your family and friends, especially children and the elderly.
- Never use a tanning bed.

If you have questions or concerns, see a dermatologist, log onto www.aad.org, or call toll free (888) 462-DERM (3376).

References

American Academy of Dermatology (AAD)
Dr. Kim Frederickson (Dermatologist)
www.skincancer.org

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THE FOUNDATION

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ed, aroused, and penitent as they cried, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God." 1 Kings 18:39.

Important lessons can be learned from two other great reformers of Israel's restoration period—Ezra and Nehemiah. Through them God brought about a mighty spiritual revival and reformation among His people. They were humble, self-sacrificing men and deeply devoted to God's cause; they labored untiringly to impress the people with the sacredness of God's law and the enormity of their sins. There was much wrong that had to be rectified, and the work of building Jerusalem's city wall went on amid much opposition, both from secret traitors within and enemies without. But truth is stronger than error, Nehemiah's faith and devotion were firm, and God fought for him, so that the wall was repaired and completed and the people returned to God with deep sorrow for their backsliding.

The spiritual restoration carried forward in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah is a symbol of the one outlined by the prophet Isaiah for the last days of this earth: "... They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities,..." "And they that shall

be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." Isaiah 61:4; 58:12.

"The prophet here describes a people who, in a time of general departure from truth and righteousness, are seeking to restore the principles that are the foundation of the kingdom of God....

"In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. The breach made in the law at the time the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired. God's remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God. In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to cooperate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 678.

Let us be loyal to the God of heaven, submitting our wills and plans to His word and letting its light shine forth to the world!

EVENTS

NORTHEASTERN FIELD MINI-CONFERENCE

Friday, May 10,
to Sunday, May 12, 2024

Boston, Massachusetts

SOUTHEASTERN FIELD CONFERENCE

Friday, June 28,
to Sunday, June 30, 2024

Norman Park, Georgia

AMERICAN UNION YOUTH CONFERENCE

Monday, July 1,
to Sunday, July 7, 2024

Norman Park, Georgia

NORTHEASTERN FIELD CONFERENCE

Friday, August 30,
to Monday, September 2, 2024

Location to be determined

AMERICAN UNION WORKERS' SEMINAR

Tuesday, October 22,
to Sunday, October 27, 2024

Norman Park, Georgia

AMERICAN UNION CONFERENCE

Friday, December 20,
to Monday, December 23, 2024

Norman Park, Georgia

AMERICAN UNION DELEGATES' MEETINGS

Tuesday, December 24, 2024,
to Wednesday, December 25, 2024

Norman Park, Georgia