

Sins of the Tongue

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Man's heart is the spring from which all language flows (Matt. 12:34-35). We should be careful to be swift to hear and slow to speak (Jas. 1:19); we should speak to edify (Eph. 4:29).

What the Scriptures Say About Speech

"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:34-37).

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6).

"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" (Eph. 4:29).

We need a clear definition of the Bible terms used to describe some of the sins of the tongue. The definitions of these words are taken primarily from W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words, and Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary.

1. **BACKBITING** - W. E. Vine says the word is formed from **kata**, "against," and **laleo**, "to speak." It is used in Rom. 1:30: "Backbiters" in 1 Pet. 2:1: "Evil speaking," and "backbiting" in 2 Cor. 12:20. The word means, "to censure, slander, reproach, or speak evil of the absent." (Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary) The result of backbiting will devour and destroy both the backbiter and those against whom he speaks (Gal. 5:15). The man who is not a backbiter is identified as in the tabernacle of the Lord and dwelling in His holy hill (Psa. 15:3). Among those whom God has given up because of their evil is the backbiter (Rom. 1:28-32). Backbiting is slander, evil speaking of others in their absence, and he does so openly; he is usually a liar.
2. **GOSSIP** - "One who runs about tattling and telling news; one who talks too much about the affairs of others.

Gossip is related to: 1. **Idle talk** - Tattlers: the noun does not appear anywhere in the New Testament, but the verb is in 3 John 1:10. "Prating" To utter nonsense; idle accusations; empty charges. "Gossip" would well translate the word. It is associated with a busybody and

being idle. "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13).

2. **TATTLING** - "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church" (3 John 1: 10). It signifies to talk nonsense, to babble; the adjective **phluaros**, babbling, garrulous; to raise false accusations.
3. **SLANDER** - "A false tale or report maliciously uttered, and tending to injure the reputation of another": "...and a whisperer separateth chief friends" (Prov.16:28); in 1 Tim. 3:11, the wives of elders and deacons in particular must not be slanderers, but sober and faithful in all things.

Slander is related to: 1. **False accusers** - "Without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good" (2 Tim. 3:3). 2. **Whisperers** - (Prov. 16:28; Rom. 1:29). "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers" (Rom. 1:29). Speaking evil reports into one's ear; secret slander. To insinuate, hint evil reports of others, while trying to avoid personal responsibility. He is a very dangerous person.

4. **LIARS** - (Lying - deceit). Rom. 1:29; Eph. 4:25; Rev. 21:8. Pseudes "false, a falsehood." Used of false witnesses, Acts 6:13; false apostles, Rev. 2:2; adjective for many words; calculated to deceive; it is elsewhere rendered "lie," John 8:44; Rom. 1:25; 2 Thess. 2:11; 1 John 2:21,27; to deceive, not telling the truth as it is. To deliberately tell or insinuate anything but truth; an effort to mislead.

Lying comes from the devil (John 8:44; Acts 5:3-4). God hates liars (Prov. 6:17); Rom. 16: 17). All liars will receive eternal damnation (Rev. 21:8,27; 22:15).

5. **SWELLINGS** - "Phusiosis, denotes a puffing up, swelling with pride . . . , 2 Cor. 12:20, "swellings." "For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults" (2 Cor. 12:20), "Huperonkos, an adjective denoting of excessive weight or size, is used metaphorically in the sense of immoderate, especially of arrogant speech, in the neuter plural, virtually as a noun, 2 Pet. 2:18; Jude 16, 'of great swelling words,'" doubtless with reference to Gnostic phraseology. It means arrogant boasters in Rom. 1:30. It is empty claims; pride in speech.
6. **STRIFES** - Several related words will be considered under this term because they belong under the definition by Greek Lexicons and English Dictionaries. Some are found in 2 Cor. 12:20: "For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be

found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults."

W. E. Vine says: "Eris: strife, contention, is the expression of enmity, Rom. 1:29." Debates: used in a good sense (Acts 17:17; Gal. 2:5; Jude 3; Heb. 12:4): to struggle against, reason with opposition. It is used in a bad sense: contention, wrangling, quarreling (1 Cor. 1:11-12; 3:3; 2 Cor. 12:20; 1 Tim. 6:5). It is strife, party spirit (Gal. 5:20; Jas. 3:16). Other words that have similar meaning are: faction, contention, dispute, fightings, strife of words (1 Tim. 6:4).

7. **MALIGNITY** - Vine says of this word: "lit., bad manner or character, . . . hence, an evil disposition that tends to put the worst construction on everything, malice, malevolence, craftiness, occurs in Rom. 1:29, as the accompaniment of *dolos*, guile." The word signifies depravity of heart; the act of applying words or actions of others in the worst possible sense. The idea is to hurt, injure and destroy others.
8. **FALSE ACCUSERS** - To falsely accuse one of evil, a form of slander. "Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good" (2 Tim. 3:3).
9. **TALEBEARING** (Prov. 11:13; 26:20-22). A walking busybody; trader in scandal. One who tells all secrets of evil and seldom reports good. "From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling" (1 Tim. 1:6). "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:4). "It denotes more than mere idle talk" (W. E. Vine). "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision" (Titus 1:10).
10. **CORRUPT COMMUNICATIONS** - It means shameful, disgraceful speaking; it is used in Eph. 5:4, of obscenity, all that is contrary to purity. "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:4). "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" (Eph. 4:29). This signifies profanity and vulgarity; a conveyer of the basest garbage and filth of the mind. "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Col. 3:8).
11. **BLASPHEMY** - As an adjective, "blasphemos, abusive, speaking evil . . . railing," As a verb, "blasphemeo, to blaspheme; rail at or revile, is used (a) in a general way, of any contumelious speech, reviling, calumniating, railing at etc., as of those who railed at Christ, e.g., Matt. 27:39 . . . (b) of those who speak contemptuously of God or of sacred things, e.g., Matt. 9:3 . . . (W. E. Vine). "Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord" (2 Pet. 2:11). "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" (2 Tim. 3:2). The noun form: "The word 'blasphemy' is practically confined to speech defamatory of the Divine Majesty." (W. E. Vine).

To understand the meaning of these words is to realize the horrible consequences of their use by Christians under any circumstances. Not only will the soul of the one using these words be in danger of eternal damnation, but the souls of many will be doomed to eternal punishment because of their use. Any use of any speech as characterized above is sin against Almighty God. All such speech comes from the heart and indicates its condition. Think on these things.

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Preacher of the Word (Vol. 1, September 29, 1996, #40)
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