

The Misuse of the Gift of Speech

by J.R. Miller

The gift of speech is a noble endowment that can be used to bless or harm others, and it is essential to use it wisely and honestly.

Scripture: Psalm 19:14, Proverbs 10:19, Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 16:24, Proverbs 18:21, Isaiah 53:7, Matthew 12:36-37, Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 4:6, James 3:5-10

Topics: "The Power of Speech", "Using Words Wisely"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound gift of speech, highlighting its potential for both good and harm. He notes that while speech can inspire and uplift, it is often misused through negativity, gossip, and idle words that fail to reflect the character of Christ. Miller urges listeners to recognize the power of their words, as they can either bring hope or cause pain, and stresses the importance of speaking truthfully and kindly. He challenges the audience to evaluate their speech and to use it as a tool for encouragement and edification, rather than criticism and harm.

Transcript

Speech is one of the noblest endowments of humanity. We are so familiar with its use, that we do not appreciate the wonder of it. It is a gift, too, that is capable of measureless development. Now and then, we see or hear a person who has attained something marvelous in the power of expression in speech or in song -- as in the eloquence of Demosthenes, and the songs of Jenny Lind. But these remarkable achievements are only hints of what is possible in high degree, at least, in every human voice. No doubt there have been countless men and women who never attained any special power, who never became famous as speakers or singers -- yet who had the natural gifts and needed only education and training to make them as remarkable as the few whose eloquence or music has thrilled countless hearts. There is a serious misuse of the gift of speech, therefore -- in the failure to make the most of it.

There is also a misuse of this glorious gift in the matter of speech -- in the quality of the words which are spoken. The faculty of speech is bestowed upon us, not merely as an ornament -- but primarily as an instrument with which to do good. It is intended that we shall speak only such words as will help others, giving them pleasure, comfort, or cheer; imparting knowledge and instruction; inspiring in them noble thoughts, gentle feelings, kindly impulses. We never can understand the full measure of the good we may do with our power of speech. Single sentences have lifted lives from despair to hope. Words have saved souls. By a few minutes' talk, human destinies have been changed from death to life.

The power of speech is simply incalculable. Think of the words of Jesus, for example, spoken while he went about over the country -- and then try to estimate the blessings to the world from their influence. Someone has compared these words to a handful of sweet spices, cast into a bitter sea, to sweeten its waters. The words of Jesus have sweetened, and are still sweetening the world's bitterness, wherever they go. No other words have such power as these words, and yet there is not one of us who could not enrich the world and scatter blessings through the words which we drop from our lips, day after day.

Yet how many of us fail to make the most of our gift of speech! How many people there are whose words -- instead of giving cheer, encouragement, inspiration, and help -- only give pain, start bitter thoughts, or hurt lives! The Bible speaks of the poison of asps as being under men's tongues. With all its marvelous power to give pleasure and good -- how often is it that the gift of speech is debased into an instrument of hurt and harm!

Our speech is an index of our character. Our words approve us -- or condemn us. The wisest of all teachers said, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." So our speech reveals what is in us, whether good or bad. We sometimes see people whose appearance is attractive. We are much biased in their favor, while we only look at their features. But when they open their mouths and begin to speak -- the pleasant illusion vanishes. Perhaps the tones of the voice are enough -- they are harsh, or angry, or fretful, or denunciatory. Or the tone may be unobjectionable -- and yet the words they speak may be ungentle, bitter, censorious, defamatory. "Your speech betrays you."

We judge by one's accent, even in a brief conversation, from what part of the country he comes -- from the South, from New England, from the West, or from this or that country over the sea. So we discover in a little while in talking with a stranger, what kind of man he is -- refined or unrefined, modest or self-conceited, kindly disposed to people, or critical and harsh in judgment.

There is a large class of people whose conversation is almost entirely about their neighbors. If you overhear two of them talking together anywhere, you will find that some other human being is the subject. It is not often, either, that they are saying good and kindly things of the person. In ninety-nine cases in a hundred -- it is some fault-finding that you hear, some criticism, perhaps some unsavory gossip which involves the good name of the one who is being talked about.

There is a great deal of disloyalty in conversation. It is too rarely, that we hear earnest commendation of others. Even of their most intimate friends, people are likely to speak disparagingly when they are absent. If it is always true that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks," then what shall we say of the sincerity of the friendship which, the moment the friend's back is turned, is unequal to the task of speaking loyally of him, and is ready even to join in depreciatory words concerning him?

In many other ways is the gift of speech misused. The Master says that for every idle word, we must give account; yet how many idle, chaffy words are spoken every day! How empty is much of the staple of the conversation of the parlor! Then there are countless words which are not idle and empty only -- but are full of evil -- bitterness, unkindness, and falsehood!

Is it not time that the New Testament teaching should be applied to conversation? "Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak truth each one with his neighbor." "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth -- but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/the-misuse-of-the-gift-of-speech/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net