

PROVERBS ON SPEECH AND THE TONGUE

July 2021

Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (1995).

A surprisingly large number of Proverbs' teachings about what we say come in groups. By appearing together, they reinforce one another and offer a well-rounded picture of the blessings and dangers of speaking, with guidance on how to speak wisely.

10:18 — The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and he who spreads slander is a fool.

10:19 — When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.

10:20 — The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little.

10:21 — The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of understanding.

- *What are some sins of the tongue that we should avoid?*
- *Why is the tongue of the righteous like choice silver (10:20)? How does such a tongue "feed many" (10:21)?*
- *What is the danger of talking too much (10:19)?*

10:31 — The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom, but the perverted tongue will be cut out.

10:32 — The lips of the righteous bring forth what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is perverted.

- *What are 2 benefits found in the speech of the righteous?*

12:13 — An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will escape from trouble.

12:14 — A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his words, and the deeds of a man's hands will return to him.

12:15 — The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

12:16 — A fool's anger is known at once, but a prudent man conceals dishonor.

12:17 — He who speaks truth tells what is right, but a false witness, deceit.

12:18 — There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

12:19 — Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment.

12:22 — Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are His delight.

12:23 — A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.

- *12:14 says the "fruit" of our words can satisfy us. What satisfying results of wise speech are listed in these verses?*
- *What are the results of the speech of the fool or the evil person?*

15:1 — A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
15:2 — The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly.
15:4 — A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit.
15:7 — The lips of the wise spread knowledge; but the hearts of fools are not so.

- *According to these verses, what traits mark wise speech?*

16:21 — The wise of heart will be called understanding, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.
16:22 — Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, but the discipline of fools is folly.
16:23 — The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.
16:24 — Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

- *In these verses, what makes the speech of the wise person so attractive and persuasive?*

18:6 — A fool's lips bring strife, and his mouth calls for blows.
18:7 — A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snare of his soul.
18:8 — The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body.

- *How does the fool's speech get him into trouble?*

26:18-19 — Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows and death, so is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, "Was I not joking?"
26:20 — For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.
26:21 — Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife.
26:22 — The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body.
26:23 — Like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross are burning lips and a wicked heart.
26:24-26 — He who hates disguises it with his lips, but he lays up deceit in his heart. When he speaks graciously, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart. Though his hatred covers itself with guile, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.
26:27 — He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.
26:28 — A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin.
27:1 — Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.
27:2 — Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

- *What do verses 20-22 teach about gossip ("whispering")?*

A few more important proverbs on speaking:

20:15 — There is gold and an abundance of jewels; but the lips of knowledge are a more precious thing.
13:3 — The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.
21:23 — He who guards his mouth and his tongue guards his soul from troubles.
18:20 — With the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach will be satisfied; he will be satisfied by the product of his lips.
14:3 — In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for his back, but the lips of the wise will protect them.
18:21 — Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.
17:28 — Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.