



Challenging Christians to Pray

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Speech Reveals Character

"A good character is the best tombstone."

Peter shivered before the fire not so much from cold as from fear. He had tried to mingle among the High Priest's palace crowd. Three times he denied vehemently, "I do not know the man." But they insisted that he was a disciple of Christ for which he had no alibi: "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrays thee" (Matthew 26:73). Peter cursed, but his Galilean accent had already revealed his identity. (Mark 14:70) Peter's speech betrayed him, that is, revealed his real nature.

What Peter said was more revealing than the accent with which he said it. The same is true of many of us today. The testimony of a Christian can be negated by betrayal. Blaise Pascal, the French philosopher, was so profound when he said, "The serene beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world next to the power of God." As believers, we should be careful not to give an occasion to the non-Christian world to dishonor our Savior's name. There is a tendency among some people to introduce popular phrases merely for appeasing a changing culture. Suggestive slang and secondhand cursing and funny jokes about certain nationalities may seem harmless and humorous, but they can certainly hinder our Christian witness.

I am sure Peter had said many things as he sat in the palace but his only memorable words as he waited by the fire in the high priest's hall were words of fear and denial. But before we cast our indignation on Peter for his denial of our Lord, let us examine our own hearts and see how often we rail against the Lord for not being fair and sympathetic to our plight. Peter did not stick up for Jesus and showed no loyalty to his master like many of us. We betray our Lord for all kinds of reasons, and we lash out on Him when there is a shift in our natural circumstances. Christians are demonstrators of God's glory wherever they go and whatever they do. Do we declare God's goodness and mercy while we are in the company of our unsaved friends and peers? Do we keep quiet when Christ's holy name is being traduced for fear of losing worldly friendship and business contacts?

The words we use tell us a great deal about us. Let us use words to encourage, uplift, inspire rather than to insult, criticize, or belittle others. It is easy to gossip under the pretense of Christian concern. A believer may ask fellow Christians to pray for a situation, but there is no need for them to telegraph the assorted details to others. Our primary concern ought to be the restoration of the people involved, not spreading malicious rumors. God's Word gives us potent counsel about wholesome speech. **First**, we should ask God to guard our speech. Pray with the Psalmist, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3). Meditate on what we attempt to say, if it is questionable in nature, say nothing. With a little

perceptive thinking, we can avoid many widely practiced language blunders and pitfalls. The loving Lord shapes and refines our speech in a way that glorifies His name. Let us develop the ability to clothe our ideas in language that grips the mind, touches the heart, and invigorates the soul.

Second, remember that “...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34b). Keep the heart pure and allow the Holy Spirit to control our speech. Use language carefully. **Finally**, let us keep our mouth busy praising the Lord for all His goodness and mercy. Make this prayer as your own: “I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psalms 34:1). The way one uses language is an indication of one’s true character. “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (James 1:26).

Compounding America’s language pollution, there is also a growing sense that the country is quickly slipping into a moral and spiritual abyss. In studies conducted by his firm, social analyst **Daniel Yankelevich** found that “almost nine out of 10 Americans believe the nation’s social morality to be in a state of decline and decay.” According to a poll conducted by U.S. News & World Report, “A vast majority of Americans feel their country has reached an ill-mannered watershed. Nine out of 10 Americans think that incivility is a severe problem, and one-half think it is extremely serious.” One writer has pointed out in a 1995 edition of Ethics Magazine, “We rely on manners and civility for the upkeep of a decent society.” One could also argue that we depend on ‘wholesome speech’ and ‘good manners’ to maintain a courteous society. Look at our TV shows and how they glorify programs that are not conducive to a wholesome lifestyle. One may not agree, Biblical morals are necessary for the preservation of God’s people. Tell me, what is the point of creating a great civilization if we do not have the moral and spiritual wisdom to preserve it!

May I remind you that those who hold pure biblical standards are not antiquated or archaic! He that has no control of his tongue is like a fire that is out of control destroying everything in its path. If we are concerned about the current language pollution, then we should practice wholesome language that represents true Christian virtue and identity. Every Christian should have a profound sense of another realm, one that is much higher than the present cultural and moral debacle. Having highlighted the problem of our current language pollution, what can a lone Christian do to bring about a sense of decency and respect! Pray and seek God for His divine help. Let Christ be lucid in our conversation! The very use of pure language honors God and gives glory to Him, for it reveals who we are.

Our leaders tell us that morality is a private thing, and therefore, keep it out of the public arena. Public morality and private morality are inextricably interlaced. The undeniable quality of a man lies in his ability to use language to make himself a better person. “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Peter 3:10). Let us be wise and careful as we reflect on the life of our Savior! Our speech reveals our character. The world is listening and watching.

Let us give adherence to the following words from people who knew what it meant to walk with God by maintaining their character before men of all persuasion. Let me begin with the words of **Oswald Chambers**, the prolific devotional writer, “Our vision of God depends upon the state of our character and character determines revelation.” An unknown author was right when he said, “Character is made by many acts; it may be lost by a single act.” **D.L. Moody** was right when he said, “If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of me”. The profound words of **Charles Spurgeon**, “Carve your name on hearts, not on marbles.” Here is the heart-cry of an unknown person, “God is more concerned about our character than our comfort. His goal is

not to pamper us physically but to perfect us spiritually.” Beloved, the above words were spoken by men who exhibited character and how they remained faithful to Jesus from start to finish in their Christian journey. We speak about the founding Fathers and how they used the Scriptures to shape their character and behavior, and relied heavily upon a moral compass which helped them to give birth to this nation. Believe me, no nation can survive without a ‘moral and spiritual compass.’ The captain of the ship relies on the compass for safe navigation, so as Christians we rely on the Word of God as our spiritual compass. If America is to remain as a great nation, she must always rely on a strong foundation “whose builder and keeper is God.” No man is born with character, he must acquire it!

The gentle and the meek spirit of a Christian inspires us all—it is so refreshing, so steadfast and so inviting. The purity of the heart promotes purity in speech. Someone has said, “A good character is the best tombstone.”

--- **Matthew Skariah**

PAGAN CULTURE

What is a pagan? A pagan is an irreligious person, one who practices the art of hedonism or pleasure. It is no exaggeration to say that Christians who practice their faith in God are an annoyance to those who are involved in the worship of paganism and various cults. During our current social and political upheaval, a destructive force is advancing its march with a level of ferocity like we have not seen in recent years, and it is infecting and degrading our cherished institutions. So, it is apparently clear that we are in the middle of a spiritual battle that can be won only through a divine intervention as God’s people seek His face in prayer.

It is puzzling to me why Christians are always on the defensive. The world is relentless in its pursuit to force Christians to adopt its perverted and pernicious lifestyle. If we do not go along with it, we are prudish and Biblicist. **Bishop Leslie Newbegin** has this to say, “Today’s society is not secular but pagan.” Pagans do not have any morals; and they do not understand why Christians even bother to follow certain moral principals when at a time morals are not immensely popular. The most blessed aspect of the Christian faith is not only to preach it or teach it but live it because examples are better than precepts. There will always be people who attempt to eradicate morality from the public square. A person who is outside of Christ does not see His Holiness or His power, but His children see it and honor it. We are losing our identity as a nation; we are evolving into European socialism which promotes secularism and post-modernism that says, “Man not only is independent from God, but man is God.” Sad to say that Biblical morality, Christian ethics and faith are being negated and pushed aside. Christians will be forced to go along with the present-day culture of absurdity, or else!

As followers of Christ, how do we influence a culture that is toxic in many ways. One way to influence the culture is by our lifestyle, living the Christian life in the shadow of the Cross. Our faith should be fortified by our lifestyle which is a manifestation of the life of Christ in us. A sermon lasts an hour or so, but the life we live is a constant reminder of whose we are and whom we serve. Inward character is the outward reality of the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. Christianity alone has the power to change the condition of the human heart and by doing so, it changes lives and influence human behavior. It’s no exaggeration to say that we live in a culture of absurdity which is the result of our inability to HEAR AND OBEY GOD. When people become conscious of God, they become aware of their surroundings and how they influence the culture with wholesome principles. Why are we giving the enemy the power to beat us down? Are we wrecking the foundation of civilization with our twisted morals and warped social ideology? The Word of God tells us, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalms 11:3). C.S. Lewis in his assertion, “We are cutting off the branch on which we are sitting.”

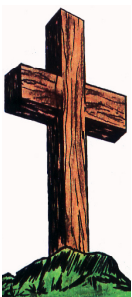
America's founding fathers were visionaries, and they were able to sense God's guiding hand upon this nation. It is no exaggeration to say that America is unique in her Christian principles and way of life ever since the Mayflower landed in 1620. But these early principles and noble traditions have been on the chopping block for a long time. Now we have reached the decisive moment we either practice them boldly or discard them altogether. So, what will it be? The worst thing we could do is to remain silent and let the enemy ravage and ransack and cancel everything we value so dearly. Edmund Burke, the British historian said, "The way for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." May I impress upon your mind **the timely words of General Omar Bradley, a humble man and one of America's five-star generals**, "We have become a nation of nuclear giants and moral infants. We have grasped the mystery of atoms and rejected the sermon on the Mount. We know more about killing than living." Beloved, these are shells from the seashore, and put your ear to them and you shall hear the heartbeat of such men of faith and character. We have lost a great deal by not looking back with wisdom and foresight. In today's culture we pretend to be experts on many subjects and say a lot without saying anything meaningful. Someone has wisely said, "an expert is the one who knows more and more about less and less."

Finally, if America ever falters or decline from its original purpose which was designed by our founding fathers, it would not be due to enemy missiles or nuclear threats from the outside, but because of the spread of paganism and moral disintegration. America must and should reject the latest spread of what **Dr. Thomas Wang** calls it, "**Neo-Pagan Drift!**" We reject the righteousness of God because we try to establish our own righteousness. The Word of God tells us, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD ponders the heart" (Proverbs 21:2). Beloved, morality and Biblical principles are never meant to please intellectual critics; they are meant to please God, our heavenly Father. To be perfectly clear, nothing can or ever will destroy Christianity if we Christians live like Christ would have us live. Remember, Christians are followers of a Savior who came out of the grave with His resurrection power. No wonder the apostle Paul said, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cori. 15:55) That is the only power in life, and it is worth embracing and celebrating. **Let us celebrate the life of Jesus in us!**

--- **Matthew Skariah**

REVIVAL with Matthew Skariah **September 1-6**

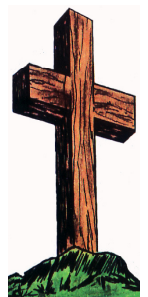
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