Paone

- 2026-06-28: 3rd Sunday of Paone - “By Your Words”
- 2026-07-05: 4th Sunday of Paone - “Love your enemies”

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“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:37)

The words that we speak should not be taken lightly. By my words I will be justified and by my words I will be condemned...

- "Judge not, that you be not judged." (Matthew 7:1)
- "But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." (Matthew 5:22)
- "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." (Matthew 15:11)
- "If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body." (James 3:2)

You see the great danger of my words? This is why many of the great saints and desert fathers preferred to live in silence.

This is why St Arsenius said: "I have often repented of having spoken, but never of having been silent."

Words of Condemnation

What are some of these Words of Condemnation:

- Filthy Language
- Lying
- Blasphemy
- Mockery
- Harsh or Angry words
- Bitterness
- Gossiping
- Envy
- Talk of pride or boasting
- Exaggeration
- Words of hypocrisy or deceit
- False witness and repudiating others
- Foolish disputes and prattle
- Talk that when it is poured into the ears of others, defiles their purity or their thoughts or their faith or their knowledge
- Talk that damages relationships or causes friction

- Talk that changes someone's mind about his friends
- Making excuses
  - An excuse is a reason I try to find to cover up my sin in order not to be blamed, or to justify my failure in doing something good
  - Fault that goes back to Adam and Eve... Adam blamed Eve for giving him the fruit and God for giving him Eve! Eve blamed the serpent who tempted her! But she didn't have to obey the serpent, and Adam didn't have to obey Eve! So they are unacceptable excuses!
  - I may try to find an excuse for not completing my spiritual disciplines... "I don't have time" - but in reality I have time for various entertainment
  - I may try to find an excuse for not offering my tithes to God... "I don't have enough" or "The Church has enough" - but in reality, the widow who gave two mites and the widow who gave the last of her flour and oil to Elijah... they gave out of their need and saw the blessing of the Lord.
  - How about King David? How many excuses could he have come up with to avoid fighting Goliath?
  - How about the right hand thief? How many excuses could he have come up with to avoid believing in Christ?
  - How about Daniel and the Three Youth? How many excuses could they have come up with to eat the king's food, or to avoid the fire or the lions' den?
  - Excuses are a result of laziness
    - "The lazy *man* says, '*There is* a lion in the road! A fierce lion *is* in the streets!'" (Proverbs 26:13)
- Complaining or Grumbling
  - Many times you have someone who is a complainer... all of their talk is complaints. And they go into any situation trying to find the flaws. And sometimes it hides behind the veil of "giving feedback"
  - Complaining is very different from giving feedback
  - Complaining is emotionally-driven and comes from dissatisfaction
  - Feedback wants to arrive at a solution together
- Idle words
  - Useless Words - no benefit, no edification, nothing
  - Careless Words - lazy, thoughtless, unnecessary

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

The one who is quick to talk and rushes into speaking is bound to err. And once we have said a word, we cannot get it back.

Words of Justification

There is such a thing as useful talk!

The saints used to travel from the farthest ends of the world, just to hear a "word of benefit" from the mouth of one of the fathers.

- "It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." (Matthew 10:20)
- "O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall show forth your praise." (Psalm 51:15)

Words of Justification:

- A word of blessing
- A word of comfort
- A word of encouragement
- A word of solution
- A word of guidance
- A word of teaching
- A word of rebuke if it is said with love

Gentleness

- A spiritual person never uses harsh words, but gentle ones because gentleness is one of the Fruit of the Holy Spirit
- The Lord Jesus when He talked to the Samaritan Woman
  - Although she is very sinful, the Lord says to her: "You have well said, 'I have no husband', for you have had five husbands and the one whom you now have is not your husband.'"
  - See His gentleness even in using the word husband... none of those five were technically a "husband" but He did not choose to use a harsh word.
- Instead of hurting people, try to win them
- St Paul, when he went to Athens, he saw the city is full of idols... how did he address them?
  - "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious..."

Timing

"Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
Lest you also be like him.
Answer a fool according to his folly,
Lest he be wise in his own eyes." (Proverbs 26:4-5)

See these two verses... they seem to be exact opposites of each other! Do not answer a fool according to his folly... answer a fool according to his folly. What does it mean? It means that sometimes I will answer, and sometimes I will not!

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: ... A time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7)

Advices for Talking

Here I want to give some points for effective communication... advices for talking. These advices are for a husband talking to his wife, or a wife talking to her husband, or a parent talking to their teenager, or a teenager talking to their parent, or for two friends talking to each other, or for when

you talk to Abouna...

1. I don't talk for the sake of talking (e.g. to hear myself speak), but I talk to achieve something

2. Talk when there is an ear ready to listen to you
   - My high schooler wakes up at 6am and goes to school and after school, he goes to an extracurricular, or he goes to work, and then maybe he comes to Sunday School in the evening because it's Friday... and as soon as he walks into the door, I start yelling at him because he left the light on this morning... or because his room is not clean. What kind of result am I expecting from this conversation?
   - On the other hand... my dad just came home from a long day at work. And as is usual, there was some stress at work and with the boss and things didn't really go his way, etc. And I go to him ready to deliver bad news... This is not the best time to approach with a difficult discussion! What kind of result am I expecting from that conversation?
   - Don't talk to someone exhausted or tired, physically or otherwise, someone who is under pressure, etc.
   - Don't talk to someone who is busy and has no time to listen to you, or does not have time to understand and discuss your point of view
   - Many youth say "my parents never see my point" and many parents say "my children don't listen to me" - most of the time it's because we are not choosing the right time to talk. We are trying to talk in the middle of a heated argument, after a long day at work or school, with emotions flying through the air.
   - Before you talk to someone, choose the right time - when they are feeling the best, when they are not preoccupied, when they are focused

3. Listening Ear... Don't interrupt
   - If you interrupt the one speaking to you without giving him a chance to talk, and you answer back before he is finished - so you are acting like an opponent. It makes the conversation into an argument instead of a discussion.
   - You will lose the ability to convince, no matter how logical your opinion
   - "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." (James 1:19)

4. Talk privately
   - Trying to talk in the middle of a big group, and have a discussion or a debate or an argument... if you win the argument in front of this big group, and you feel you have defeated! Then you will lose the person
   - Your goal is not to win arguments or debates, but to win someone to your side
   - Also after your private discussion... it was private. Keep it private. There is no reason to share the details or the result with anyone else
   - “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.“ (Matthew 18:15)

5. Respect the Person

- Don't mock the ideas of another
- Even if the ideas are weak or trivial or impractical or illogical... what result does mocking get? Respect the opinion of the one you are talking to.
- *“Let* your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” (Colossians 4:6)

6. Control Your Emotions
    - My high schoolers comes to me and says "I want to go hang out with my friends next week. Can you take me?" And immediately I get in a fit of rage and I start yelling and cursing and accusing: "You always go out with them" and "You never listen to me..." What kind of a result am I expecting? The result here is that my high schooler will not share with me or ask permission again. I will lose them.
    - There is someone who whenever a difficult conversation starts, they become emotional and resort to tears and yelling and being overcome by emotion... so this gives the message that I cannot be reasoned with or you cannot have a conversation with me!

Conclusion

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear." (Proverbs 25:11-12)

I hope that we can apply some of these practices when we talk to our spouses, or to our children, or to our parents, or even our friends, or even when we talk with Abouna.

“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:37)

2026-07-05: 4th Sunday of Paone - “Love your enemies”

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.” (Luke 6:27-28)

Love your Enemies

- The Lord recognizes that we will have enemies... but enemies are those who hate us, not those who we hate. We respond to them in love, trusting that God will protect our cause.
- Many times we are concerned lest when we show love, people will take advantage of us... but if we trust in God, He will protect our cause
- Love your enemies
  - This is a radical new teaching
  - In the Old Testament it was said "love your neighbor and hate your enemy" - we never heard before the Lord Jesus Christ that anyone said "love your enemies"
  - It is a very simple command to understand, but very difficult to obey - unless you receive grace from the Holy Spirit
  - Love is not emotion (warm fuzzy feeling) but a **decision**
    - If we wait for our emotions or feelings, we may never love them
    - I need to make the **decision** that I will love my enemy and do good for them
    - The Lord is speaking about acts of love.
      - "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink" (Romans 12:20)
    - When God sees me doing this, then this love will be processed by the Holy Spirit from the mind and will and intellect to the heart and emotions
- How to love enemies:
  - Do good to those who hate you
    - If someone hates me, what is my gut feeling? Maybe my gut feeling is to hate him back.
    - Maybe by self-control, I am able to ignore and avoid him and do nothing - be neutral.
    - But the commandment of God is even one level higher... to actively go out of my way to do good for him
  - Bless those who curse you
    - If I am cursed at, what is my gut feeling? Maybe my gut feeling is to curse back.
    - Maybe by self-control, I am able not to respond and to ignore and to walk away.
    - But the commandment of God is even one level higher... to bless him.
  - Pray for those who spitefully use you

- The Lord gives some examples

How?

To him who strikes you on the *one* cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold *your* tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask *them* back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

- For us, this commandment is so foreign - how can I just let someone strike me? How can I just take it or accept it? I will appear weak! I will be enabling him! I will be taken advantage. Actually, if I just let him abuse me, then he won't learn and maybe he'll do it again to someone else… no, I need to teach him a lesson! It is good for him, God would want someone to teach him a lesson. Actually, God sent me to teach him a lesson…
- This is the conversation I'd probably have in my head within a moment of being struck…
- But the commandment of God is clear. Offer the other also.
- There was a man who was demon possessed and they took him to see an elder hermit that God had graced with the power to cast out demons. The demon caused the man to slap the hermit... the hermit turned the other cheek and the demon immediately left the man. The demon cried out "I must leave - I cannot stay any longer. The commandment of Christ is casting me out." Nothing puts down the pride of the devil as humility and obedience to the commandment of God.
- Practical Examples:
  - Someone cuts you off in traffic - so I start honking and getting mad and tailgating him, etc. That's retaliation… turning the other cheek is that I tap my brakes, and let him go. And maybe later on when he wants to come in, I let him come in the lane.
  - Someone posts about you on social media in a sarcastic or mean way - so I start posting about them and making fun of them, etc. That's retaliation… turning the other cheek is ignoring it, and speaking about that person graciously.
  - Your spouse comes home from a long day, irritated… so you start bringing up what he did 5 years ago and how he doesn't contribute around the house, etc. That's retaliation… turning the other cheek is pausing, giving him some space, and going to serve him.
  - Someone at work takes credit for your work… so I start publicly embarrassing them, sabotaging their work, etc. That's retaliation… turning the other cheek is that I clarify my contribution if needed and I am calm and without bitterness.
  - Someone gossips about me… so I gossip about them. That's retaliation! Turning the other cheek is that I speak the truth about myself, speak generously of the person, and go about my day
- Let me always consider whether or not my response is for retaliation, or given out of anger… or if it is graciousness and to be a peacemaker.
- This commandment doesn't mean I should allow myself to be abused or taken advantage of, but it means that I am a peacemaker. It means that I let the small things go. It means that I am gracious. It means that I don't allow my spirit to be disturbed.
- Christianity demands a standard that surpasses what is normally expected

- We have the grace of the Holy Spirit - so we are expected to behave in a behavior which surpasses the normal
- The Lord urges us to pursue a lifestyle that demonstrates God's mercy to everyone
- If we are grounded in God's love, trusting fully in the Holy Spirit, it will be easy for us to live in this way

No Credit Otherwise

"But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

- I was talking to someone once who had gotten upset from one of his brothers. And he said to me "I am very humble usually, but when someone goes against me I can't hold myself."
  - So I told him, Okay… that means you are not humble! Humility is not proven until it has been tested… Unless I can be humble in the face of a decision I disagree with, and in the face of tribulation, then I am not humble!
  - The same with love!
- If I only love those who love me, it doesn't count! It's not love! "What credit is that to you?"
- If I only do good to those who do good to me, it doesn't count! It's not doing good! "What credit is that to you?"

The Reward

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

- Measure of grain so pressed and shaken that it could hold no more and has started to run over
- With the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you
- It is a powerful motivation for us - if we want more from the Love of God and forgiveness and goodness, then give more to the others and you will receive