Food for Thought: May the Words…

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer”.

~ Psalms 19:14

We end every Sunday service with these words: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer" right out of the book of Psalms. At one point during the closing of a Sunday service, it dawned on me that not every word that comes out of our mouths is pleasing to Him whether we be Christians, or not.

Bad language can reveal a darkness that lingers on the inside. It is so pervasive that it appears to be more and more socially acceptable to use it in mixed company, at work, and around family. In fact, it has now been ingrained in every walk of life. The once decent standards for movies, television and popular music seem to be lowering so fast that you often wonder just who is saying these things are ok. Things that were rated “R” just a few years back are now “PG-13” and even “PG” at times.

Who knows what our children are watching or listening to? There is so much bad language and prevision out there that most people don’t even realize just how deep it has infiltrated their lives. Pre-teens and younger children with iPhones and iPads have unrestricted access to all manner of filth on the internet and social media with the just the click of a mouse. No one is monitoring the content or access on the web, and if they do, they don’t seem to care who sees or hears what. Topics like nudity, bad language, and lifestyles are now acceptable content for discussion for children of all ages all the way down to Kindergarten.

Recently, I got to spend some time with my grandchildren. While playing a video game with my grandson, I got a crash course on the effects of this and the results of his watching YouTube videos that were “supposedly protected” with a “Net Nanny” set to block bad language and nudity.
When his character got killed, he muttered the words “mother trucker.” I asked him where he learned that word. He said that he watches the videos of people playing Fortnight, and they used it. I quickly explained why that kind of language was bad. As a parent, I remember dealing with my children who also used the same kind of language when they were young, I know deep down inside that his use of words like that were his way of trying out his “big boy voice” and trying to act like the other boys that he is using as role models. I and my brothers did it, his mother and her sister did it, and it is no surprise that he is doing it. It’s one of the “growing pains” in children that parents hate. They hear things and try to imitate them without understanding what they are doing.

I told him that once you have said something, you can’t take it back because we will still remember what you said even if you say you’re sorry. I used the “tube of toothpaste” analogy that I learned from my parents and explained that if we squeeze all the toothpaste out onto a plate, there is no way to put it back into the tube. Bad words are just like that. Once you have said it, it is said. You can’t put the words back in your mouth any more than you can un-squeeze toothpaste back into a tube. That is why we need to be very careful about the things we say.

The tongue, I told him, is one of the hardest parts of the body to control. It is one of the smaller organs and only weighs about two and one-half ounces. And even though it is small, it has the potential for so much evil that God saw fit to put it behind two sets of bars – the teeth and the lips. It is almost as though He knew that it was going to be a big issue in man’s life. So-much-so, that there are 85 bible verses that mention the perils of the tongue. My favorite is: “He who holds his tongue is wise.” It is my favorite because it is the one that I have the most trouble with.

For me, speaking when I should be quiet has been a life-long problem. I have struggled with it since I was a kid. My parents told me that I needed to learn to think before I spoke. After decades of praying and asking for God’s help in controlling it, I am much better than I use to be. But if you ask my wife, I still have a long way to go before I get to be like that quiet, gentle spirit that I admire in others who think first and speak second.
I’ve learned that my parents were right. The mind and the mouth do act together after all. The problem is not the tongue’s physical location, but its spiritual connection to the heart. The heart motivates and manipulates the tongue for both good and evil, sometimes, both at the same time.

It has unspeakable power. Not only is there, “Life and Death in the power of the tongue” according to Proverbs, but it is also a marvelous complex instrument with several other functions. As a sensory organs, it has about 9000 taste buds which can distinguish between an estimated million different flavors. It aids in the forming of words, the movement of food, and helps with swallowing. The Bible says that its real danger occurs when it is used to express the temperament of the heart.

Jesus understood this temperament very well. In the book of Matthew, He said: “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word man may speak, they will give an account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Adding to that, John MacArthur, noted minister and Christian author, described the tongue in his Article “Taming the Tongue ‘ as: “the most wicked, deceitful, perverse, filthy, corrupt, flattering, slanderous, gossiping, blasphemous, foolish, boasting, complaining, cursing, contentious, sensual, and vile organ in the body.” So, it is no surprise that there appears to be no shortage of descriptive words for the tongue or its function.

We have all heard the children's rhyme that says, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Although it sounds nice and we teach it to our kids to help ward off the pain from someone using spite-full words that offended our child, it just isn't true. Words do hurt. As I have heard often said, “Many things are opened by mistake, but none so frequently as the mouth.” And out of it can come words that can cut like a knife and hurt others. The Bible backs this up. In Proverbs it says, "Reckless words pierce like a sword."
It is no surprise that in the church, we also deal with the use of offensive language. Sometimes we act as though swearing is the absolute worst thing a Christian could do. Tony Campolo, outspoken Christian evangelist once said in a sermon that: "you might, feel like there are bigger problems in the world than a naughty word someone might utter a after hitting their thumb with a hammer. But In reality, there isn’t. Bad words are just wedges that open the holes bigger to let in more sin.

To illustrate this, once famously began a sermon by talking about the thousands of children that die of hunger every day. Then he used a swear word and continued to finish his sermon. At the end, he commented that the last time he did this, most of the parishioners were more upset about the word he used than the fact that thousands of children are dying or his message. He said that it offended them not because they had never heard that word before but because they believed that there shouldn’t be cursing in church. Once they heard it, it was all they focused on. Everything before or after that word was lost.

Have you ever noticed how easy it is for your mouth to "switch gears" when you walk into church on Sunday morning or when you have unexpected company? You may have just spent the entire morning yelling at the kids or fussing with your spouse, but the moment your feet touch church property or the moment you open the door to greet somebody, you flip that switch inside, smile, and say, "Good morning. God bless you." "Praise the Lord, isn't this a beautiful day?"

James comes right out and says that if a Christian cannot control their speech, their religion is useless or worthless, meaning it's for nothing. Lying, gossiping, slandering, boasting, quarreling, filthy language, foolish talking and course jesting are all sins of speech. If we want our faith to be of any use at all, either for ourselves or for others, we must learn to bridle our tongues.

But don’t think that you can clean up your mouth enough in a just a few moments to impress God so that He will let you into His family. You only get into the family of God by faith in Christ and what He did on the Cross. But once you are in that family, you need to talk and act like you belong there.
And that’s what I told my Grandson. You never know who is listening to what you say or how it could come back to haunt you. But one thing is sure, God hears very word even the ones that are not pleasing and acceptable in His sight.

Just some Food for Thought