

Sins of the mouth: Blasphemy
12-17-17 AM

James 3 teaches us that our mouth can easily condemn us. Specifically, there are sins we can commit with our mouth, and there are righteous things we can do with our mouth:

- Boasting.....Boasting in the Lord
- Lying.....Speaking the Truth
- Blasphemy.....Praising
- Vulgarity.....Speaking with Grace
- Evil Speaking.....Edification

Let us consider now the Evil of Blasphemy. Blasphemy is actually a more complex idea than many may think. There are several ideas that relate to blasphemy. They include taking the Lord's name in vain (as described in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20) and the idea of cursing. In Leviticus 24:10-16 there is an example of a man committing blasphemy. In the same passage he is also accused of cursing. The penalty was death. We should understand that even now, blasphemy is a serious sin against God Himself.

In Hebrew, "Bless" and "Blaspheme" are the same, while in Greek, blaspheme means to speak hurtfully. We might say that it is anything that lowers God's stature. An example of this is the Golden Calf (Nehemiah 9:18); it was blasphemy because it lowered God to the level of a mere idol. Blasphemy is related to cursing. Cursing in James 3 speaks about condemning something; cursing invokes the authority of God, and is a type of blasphemy.

The evil of blasphemy is making God common. It is using terms that can be used to praise God, but using them in a way that turns them into a mere exclamation of emotion. This is the idea of taking something holy and making it common. In Leviticus 10:8-10 God addresses this with His priests, two of whom died just verses before for this error. In Ezekiel 22:26 God condemns Israel for not understanding that what is holy, including His name, cannot be made into something common.

Examples of Blasphemy: "Oh my God" OMG "Jesus Christ"
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The evil of cursing is similar to that of blasphemy. In one sense, it makes God common by invoking the curses that only God can call upon men. Cursing includes any invocation of damnation or condemnation on a person or thing frivolously, or with ill intent. It is evil for asking God to curse others, as seen in James 3:9-10 and James 4:11-12.

Examples of Cursing: "Damn it" "Go to hell"

We are warned in the Old Testament that calling out to God without being thoughtful is dangerous. In Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 we are told that calling on God without intent is the sacrifice of a fool. It is a dangerous thing to treat God as though His name is not holy.

In contrast to the evil of blasphemy is the righteousness of offering blessings with our mouths. We are told "let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Col 4:6). We can speak to others with words that reflect the grace of God within us. Too, our mouths can be praising God in various ways, such as songs or prayer. These are the priestly offerings of Christians according to Hebrews 13:15 and 1 Peter 2:9.