

## **WORDS: BAD LANGUAGE**

Exodus 20:7, James 3:6

By Raymond White

*James 1:26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue...this man's religion is in vain. 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity...it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it set on fire of hell.*

Words matter. Words can offend and injure in so many ways that that it is impossible to categorize all the ways we use words to harm each other. Words from Judas's lips got Jesus crucified. Words cause couples to divorce. Words cause people to commit suicide. Someone once said, "There are words, the point of which, pain the heart through an entire life."

Words are so powerful, and yet we are so often reckless with them.

And there are words that exist only to offend, and exist for no other purpose. Such words should never be used in any context.

I will explore here some of the errant language that we use and what the Bible has to say about such language.

For starters, a short list.

*Colossians 3:8 ...put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*

And now, a long list.

### **[1] SACRILEGE, PROFANITY**

Sacrilege and profanity, which are synonymous, is by far the most serious form of bad language, the reason being that God expressly forbade it.

*Exodus 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

Using God's name in vain is not just a matter of inserting God's name where it doesn't belong and using it in a frivolous, disrespectful way. Although it is that, it is much more. Using God's name in vain is a very non-frivolous use of God's name to justify evil. For instance, strapping on a bomb and blowing up children, and claiming, "I'm doing it for Allah." That is using God's name in vain, essentially forging his name to attach him to evil.

In general, we avoid bad language because it offends. But in the case of sacrilege, this particular bad language is worse than others because it offends God, and God does not always take offense lightly, sometimes he takes drastic action.

*Leviticus 24:10 And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish*

woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp; (he got in a fight) :**11** And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord, [he cussed the guy out and used God's name] :**13** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, :**14** Let all the congregation stone him. :**16** And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death.

God does not generally kill people for using his name. But in that era, when Jehovah worship defined the nation, blaspheming God was tantamount to treason. So it was not just a religious crime but a civil crime with major ramifications if it were tolerated.

**2 Kings 5:3** *And she [a Jewish slave girl] said unto her [Syrian] mistress, Would God my lord [Naaman] were with the prophet that is in Sameria! For he would recover him of his leprosy.*

Are the words "would God" used profanely? No. These words are used properly because she meant them. In a way, her words were a prayer, she was petitioning God to persuade her master to travel to Israel to Elisha, for there her master would be cured.

**Jeremiah 23:11** *For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.*

What is profane about what the prophets and priests are doing? They are using the right words but show by their behavior that they don't mean it.

## [2] VULGARITY

Vulgarity is language calculated to shock with offensive reference to bodily functions as discharging wastes and making love. It is, however, not really as serious an offense as we make it out to be. Did you know that God used shocking language when it suited his purpose? Read this verse aloud in a Sunday school class and you'll raise eyebrows.

**1 Kings 14:10** *Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.*

Oh my. Such language. And from God's mouth. He was angry. And don't be fooled by the word *dung*. That's the polite translation. The Hebrew really is vulgar and would have been more accurately translated to that s--- word to make the point. See? Even I'm inhibited, enough to not want to spell it out.

God also had this to say through the prophet Elijah. And Elijah was in no position to object.

*1 Kings 21:21 Behold, I will bring evil upon thee [Ahab] and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall.*

Well, God was mad. And when he was mad, he cussed. Offending your ears is the least thing to worry about when God gets mad.

*Ezekiel 23:3 And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity.*

I don't know if either of those two words (breasts and teats) are offensively vulgar in Hebrew. I think they probably were.

A few more, just so you know that vulgarity in the Bible is not an aberration.

*2 Kings 18:27 ...that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss...*

*Zephaniah 1:17 And I will bring disaster upon men...their flesh as the dung.*

*Malachi 2:3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts...*

Hey! Don't blame me. I didn't write it.

But that, of course, is Old Testament. Maybe they just had dirtier minds. Surely words like that won't pop up in the New Testament. You think? Well, let's read some Paul and get a surprise.

*Philippians 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.*

Should Paul clean up his mouth? The Greek word Paul used here, σκύβαλον (skubalon), is indeed vulgar, and could have been better translated s--- to more correctly express how he felt and what he actually said. But that would, of course, have made reading this text out loud in church a challenge.

So, Paul and Elisha and others occasionally let a saucy word slip. Does that let us off the hook and free to say whatever? Not really. Vulgarity is to be concerned about. Here's how one of the Bible's greatest prophets felt about his own foul mouth —

*Isaiah 6:5 Then I said, Woe is me! For I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

Isaiah was scared to death. Having an unbridled tongue, he now found himself facing the holy God. This was embarrassing, and it was life-threatening.

How did God react? Did God kill or threaten to kill Isaiah? No. But here's what happened:

*Isaiah 6:6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar :7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged :8 Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. :9 And he said, Go, and tell this people...*

So, whatever Isaiah was saying, his mouth did have to be cleaned up.

Do you want to serve God? Then maybe you'd better clean up your mouth.

Isaiah's bad language was sin enough so that an angel needed to purge such talk from Isaiah's mouth before Isaiah could use his mouth to speak God's words. If you imagine yourself to be God's representative, then watch your language.

I guess my point is this: don't use vulgar shocking language. Vulgar language does offend *because* it shocks, that's the point of it, it stabs because it offends. But if that s--- word or that p--- word accidentally slips out of your mouth, it's not the end of the world. Just don't make a habit of it.

Now, before I leave the subject, a word about that f--- word, which *doesn't* appear in the Bible. That is one word that should never escape the lips of a Christian. Why? Not because it offends the hearer, but because offends all females, and there are many females in our lives who we love and respect. To refer to the reproductive process so glibly and insultingly is at the very least ungentlemanly. Two hundred years ago, a man using such language in public might be called to the field of honor and shot, perhaps rightly so.

### [3] CURSING

Cursing (affectionately called "cussing") is assaulting language, targeted at some hated person intending, or at least wishing, harm. The common expression "Go to hell!" is certainly a curse, which we (if we really thought about it) would not wish on anyone. Well, maybe on a murderer, and then it might be well intended. Likewise the common curse "Damn you!" which becomes doubly offensive when it is prefixed with God's name so that it becomes not just a curse but also a sacrilegious abuse of God's name which is expressly forbidden by the second commandment. If your anger really does cause you to curse someone, at least leave God out of it.

Those two are the most common curses, but there are other curses. Some are whimsical as, "May the flees of the thousand camels infest your armpits." But all curses have one thing in common: they wish ill towards someone.

The really nasty thing about curses is that they sometimes work.

*2 Kings 2:23 And [Elisha] went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. :24 And [Elisha] turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.*

Elisha learned the hard way to watch his words. His were deadly. I can imagine that he cursed the day that he cursed those children. You don't mess with God, especially if you are a prophet.

And then there was Balaam's curse, or attempted curse. Balaam knew that curses worked, and so he tried to curse Israel, precisely because a prophet's curse *would* work. And that's also why God took control of Balaam's tongue and made it impossible for him to curse Israel, but forced him instead to bless Israel.

*Numbers 22:2 And Balak... :5 ...sent messengers therefore unto Balaam... saying... :6 Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse this people [Israel] for me...*

*Numbers 23:20 Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. :21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. :24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lie up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain. :25 And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all. [Shut up! You're just making things worse.]*

Since curses might actually work, how would you feel if you cursed someone, maybe a parent during an argument, and the next day that person died in an accident? That's not extreme. It happens. Would you then spend the rest of your life cursing yourself for your final, foolish words to that person? Think again before you let a curse slip from your mouth. You may actually get what you ask for and regret it forever.

#### [4] NAME CALLING

Name calling is a close cousin to cursing. It is nearly as offensive and for the same reason: it injures. Jesus said this about insults in the Sermon on the Mount:

*Matthew 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment :22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Stern warning for yelling "You idiot!" at someone.

But what if they deserve it? But what if they don't?

A child who spills her milk does *not* deserve a hateful accusation. But suppose a child in anger throws a toy at a window and breaks the window, that child certainly deserves some reproachful language. To not react with some verbal hostility when it's appropriate might actually cause another kind of damage. No response can be seen as approval or submission and can cause a child to believe she can get away with any such behavior, and that may make her incorrigible and without conscience — in short, a sociopath. Acting passively at such moments of uncontrolled temper tantrums we now call "enabling," and passive responses sometimes raise criminals. Children must learn

cause and effect, that behavior has consequences, and that they cause those consequences by their behavior.

What we are seeking then is a common sense balance.

Let's look at the Sermon on the Mount again. Notice the words, *without a cause*. It's the *without a cause* that's the sin, not the aggressive language itself.

I'll prove it to you.

In the same sermon we read this —

**Matthew 6:5** *thou shalt not be as the hypocrites.*

Hypocrites? Is Jesus name calling?

**Matthew 6:7** *when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do.*

Heathens? More name-calling.

**Matthew 7:6** *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you.*

Dogs? Oh, my. And swine? Jesus here gives us permission to be a little circumspect and to *not* force his gospel into the ears of people who really don't want to hear it and will use your words to cause you harm. This is why Jesus so often said, "tell no one." He was avoiding trouble. He was not a glutton for punishment, and he faced persecution only when he had to and there was no escape.

My point is that name-calling is *sometimes* inappropriate and hurtful, but at other times is absolutely appropriate because it is the truth — but not just truth but a *needful* truth that needs to be spoken and heard.

Truth does not necessarily demand hurtful words. "You're ugly" may be true, but saying so would, in most cases, be hurtful and harmful and therefore inappropriate. Would those words "you're ugly" ever be appropriate? Well, if someone went to a cosmetic surgeon for help, for a professional opinion, and for surgical treatment, such words, or similar words, though hurtful, might be more helpful rather than harmful.

There's a difference between hurtful and harmful. Harmful is always bad. Hurtful may be good and necessary for healing. "You have cancer" is hurtful but hardly harmful. Those words are actually beneficial and begin the road to healing. But if the words, "you have cancer," are an intentional lie, calculated to frighten and injure someone who does not have cancer (for instance a sick practical joke), then those words are harmful as well as hurtful.

Finally, the words "you are a sinner" are always hurtful but never harmful because they are always true. They are, in fact, beneficial, words that every human needs to hear and come to grips with.

I suppose there are situations where even harmful is the right thing to do. For instance, the judge says to the serial killer, "You are guilty! You shall hang." Those words certainly are harmful to the killer, and the killer deserves it. Saying and doing harm is sometimes the right thing to do.

**Jeremiah 23:12** ...I will bring evil upon them.

So, name-calling, we see, is good or bad depending on the truth and the context. It depends on the “cause,” as Jesus said.

**Acts 24:3** Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou white wall: **:5** Then said Paul, I wist not, bretheren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of they people.

Paul calls the high priest a *whited wall*, probably tantamount to an s.o.b. Paul repents of calling the high priest a name, but only because he is the high priest, indicating that calling him a name would have been no big deal had he been anyone else other than the high priest.

### [5] GOSSIP

Gossip is the cousin of name-calling. But whereas name-calling is said *to* your enemy, gossip is said *about* your enemy. Always an enemy? Sometimes we gossip about a friend, not realizing that when we gossip about a friend, we are treating that person as an enemy, and we are making ourselves that person’s enemy.

**Proverbs 25:9** Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself, and discover not a secret to another. **:10** Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

If you must have a dispute with a neighbor, a friend, keep it between yourselves, between you and your friend. Don’t expose it to the world by sharing it with others. Not only because it is unkind but also because gossip often backfires and the gossiper gets saddled with an unwanted but deserved reputation.

**Proverbs 26:20** Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.

**Proverbs 26:22** The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

When you are falsely accused and you learn what others are saying about you, the unfairness hurts deeply, right down to your core. It is gut-wrenching

### [6] LYING

There are so many kinds of lies that they defy categorizing. And not all of them are bad.

There are courteous lies or white lies that we say to avoid hurt feelings, like saying “That’s a nice dress” to your daughter when you really mean, “Well, it’ll do, I suppose.” That white lie is justified, I think.

And then there are good lies intended to save lives, as a German family might lie to the Gestapo, “No, there are no Jews hiding in my attic.” Can anyone seriously fault that family for telling such a lie?

And of course there is the lie we tell a fish when we bait a hook: “Come eat this. It’s good . Yumm.” The whole point of fishing is to convince the fish of what’s not true.

Now that we have those out of the way, we can get to the real issue. When the Bible talks about lying, it means lying to injure. And the most forbidden lying, according to the ninth commandment, is lying in court. We call that perjury.

*Exodus 20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*

The commandment isn’t don’t lie (although lying is generally a bad thing), but specifically don’t perjure.

And why is that? Because this ninth commandment wants to make sure that those first eight commandments (which are hazardous to lawbreakers) target only guilty people and never innocent people, because convicting innocent people defeats the whole point of law. So perjury, then, attacks not only innocent victims but the justice system as well. Thus the court gets tricked into being an instrument of tyranny rather than an instrument of justice. Since that cannot be tolerated, the criminal justice system and its crime detection units such as CSI, try to get better and better at their jobs with the help of newer and newer technology.

That’s a good thing. Improving forensics is one way we can be obedient to that ninth commandment. We are showing God our determination to convict the guilty and acquit the innocent.

## [7] THREATS

Threats are direct and violent. “I’ll kill you, I’ll kick your, I’ll whatever.” Scary stuff if such words really are the feelings of the heart. To want to injure someone, much less saying so, is not what Christ wants from us.

Often it was Christians who were on the receiving end of nasty threats.

*Acts 4:17 ...let us straitly threaten them, that they ...*

*Acts 4:21 ...when they had further threatened them...*

Christians, on the other hand, were not threatening to anyone.

*1 Peter 2:23 when he suffered, he threatened not.*

*Ephesians 6:9 do the same things...forbearing threatening.*

Oh, there were lots of Christians who threatened each other and burned each other at the stake, but that was a later time, a dark time, when Christians had forgotten that Christ never threatened anyone. For Christ and his disciples, threatening people never crossed their minds. Now we try harder to keep that in mind.

## [8] SWEARING

This word swearing is too often used to refer to all of the above — sacrilege, vulgarity, cursing, all of that foul talk — when in fact swearing is none of that.

Swearing is taking an oath, and in the context of foul talk, swearing means to take an oath with no intention of keeping it.

A felon in a police interrogation room, in order to be more believed might say, “I swear to G-- that I didn’t do it.” And by such an oath the felon commits a triple sin: he did the crime, he broke an oath, and he took God’s name in vain thus making God an accessory to the broken oath and the crime.

*Leviticus 19:12* And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

So, what’s the big deal with an oath? Why is breaking an oath worse than any other kind of lying? Firstly, other kinds of lying may not always be lying, a statement you will do a thing is not necessarily binding.

For instance, a man says to his wife, “After work, I’ll pick you up at 7:00 and we’ll go out to dinner.” But he doesn’t arrive home until 8:00 because he got delayed in an office meeting.

Did he lie? Well, literally yes, if you want to hold him to that absurd standard. But in practice, “I’ll pick you up at 7:00” was a declaration of intent and a one hour delay was not that big a deal, nothing to have a hissy-fit over, and she understands that. Unless she’s diabetic and *has* to eat on time. Then he’d better really mean what he says. And if he’s delayed, call.

Another example: If they have an appointment to meet a notary public for a loan document signing, and they have to be there *at 7:30 sharp* or the office will be closed, and the documents *have* to be signed tonight, then the wife might well say, “Are you sure? You know how important this is.” And her husband might say, “I swear, I’ll be here *at 7:00.*” Then she *knows* she can count on him, on that promise, that no matter what, even a flat tire, he will be there on time.

This is why oaths are so very important — because an oath crosses us over that line from mere intent to unbreakable commitment. It is a binding so rigid that the other person could, if necessary, bet his or her life on it.

Here is what the Bible has to say.

*Deuteronomy 6:13* Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

In other words, when it is necessary for you to take an oath, as in a court of law for example, you are to swear by the true God and not by some false deity.

But Jesus had something else to say about that.

*Matthew 5:33* Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old times, Thou shalt not foreswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. :34 But I

*say unto you, Swear not at all...:37 Let your conversations be, Yea, yea; Nea, nea: for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil.*

His point is that an oath is *so* binding, that aren't you better off to not go to that extreme, risking your soul on an oath? Better is to live such a life of integrity that simply your word, "yes, I will," is good enough to be believed. That your declaration of intent is so often kept that that's good enough in most cases.

We should be very reluctant to take an oath, because when we do, we are in a sense signing God's name to our promise, making him an accomplice if things go wrong. And do you really want to do that? God reacts negatively to broken promises, especially promises that have his name attached to them.

*Jeremiah 23:10 ...because of swearing the land mourneth...*

James confirms Jesus' with this simple admonition —

*James 5:12 ...swear not...*

In Robert Bolt's play, "Man For All Seasons," Sir Thomas Moore is in prison awaiting trial. His life hangs on the balance in that he will not take an oath because an oath means more to him than his life.

His wife Margaret visits him in prison and tries to persuade him to take the oath. Here is the conversation.

**Thomas:** You want me to swear to the act of succession?

**Margaret:** "God more regards the thoughts of the heart than the words of the mouth." Or so you've always told me.

**Thomas:** Yes.

**Margaret:** Then say the words of the oath and in your heart think otherwise.

**Thomas:** What is an oath but the words we say to God?

**Margaret:** That's very neat.

**Thomas:** Do you mean it isn't true?

**Margaret:** No, it's true.

**Thomas:** Then it's a poor argument to call it "neat," Meg. When a man takes an oath, Meg, he is holding his own self in his own hands. Like water. And if he opens his fingers then — he needn't hope to find himself again.

Anyone who understands that — that his oath is his soul on the line — would be terrified to ever take an oath.

But Thomas Moore did finally take an oath, not a lying oath, but one was willing to bet his soul on. In the trial, he lost. And he lost because of the perjury of one man, Richard Rich. Here is that conversation.

**Thomas:** In good faith, Rich, I am sorrier for your perjury than my peril.

**Norfolk:** Do you deny this?

**Thomas:** Yes! My lords, if I were a man who heeded not the taking of an oath, you know well I need not to be here. Now I will take an oath! If what Master Rich has said is true, then I pray I may never see God in the face! Which I would not say were it otherwise for anything on earth.

Now *that* is an oath! The power of this oath is that it is impossible not to believe it. This man, Thomas Moore, who is terrified to take an oath, who would rather die than take an oath to a lie, now he takes an oath offering up his soul as proof of its truth. You simply cannot not believe that oath.

But of course they convicted him anyway, because, you see, they're not interested in truth, they're only interested in pleasing the king.

To round this out, let me point out to you that God sometimes takes oath.

*Exodus 6:8* And I will bring you into the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.

Now this promise that God made to Abraham, which we call the Abrahamic covenant, happened a little differently than we often think. Oh, it was a covenant all right, but not a covenant between God and Abraham, but between God and God.

Back then, a means of ratifying a covenant was to kill an animal, cut the animal in half, then the two men walk together between the two pieces. That ratified the covenant. Here's how the Abrahamic covenant was ratified.

*Genesis 15:5* And he [God] brought him [Abraham] forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. *:8* And he [Abraham] said, LORD God, whereby shall I know, that I shall inherit it? *:9* And he [God] said unto him [Abraham] Take me an heifer of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove and a pigeon. *:10* And he [Abraham] took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another... *:17* And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. *:18* In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abraham...

This smoking furnace and burning lamp were both symbols of God, so it was God and God that walked between those pieces, not God and Abraham. Abraham just watched. So, in modern legal vernacular, this was a unilateral covenant and not a bilateral covenant. In other words, the Abrahamic covenant was not a contract between two people, it was more like a will that a parent makes with himself which guarantees *without condition* that the child will inherit.

To firm it up —

*Hebrews 6:13* For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself. *:14* Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee,

*and multiplying I will multiply thee. :15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. :16 For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them and end of all strife. :17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of a promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: :18 Than by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. :19 Which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast...*

God's promise to Abraham was not merely a statement of intent, a mere "yea, yea," it was an oath that God took, a promise that he bound himself with and therefore cannot break.

What does that mean for us? It means that we — who are children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and therefore heirs of the covenant — cannot *not* gain the promised blessings, that God *will* fulfill because he has *promised* to fulfill, *with an oath*. And that is why Christians are so confident in heaven.

So how should we view oath taking? If an oath can bind God, the creator of heaven and earth, then an oath will bind you inescapably. That should scare you to death.

Remember that the next time you serve jury duty and are asked to raise your right hand to swear an oath. You had better pay attention, and listen to what you are agreeing to because you will be bound to it by an oath. And if you have bound yourself, and then later realize that you have bound yourself to something you find morally objectionable, like perhaps the so-called "rules of the court," then you're stuck.

Taking an oath is serious business. You should treat it with the utmost respect.

## [9] FINAL THOUGHTS

*Psalms 12:4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?*

The speaker is saying, "What right has God to tell us what we will say and will not say? I own my own mouth." Actually, you don't. God owns your mouth and he has the right to tell you how to use it.

*Psalms 141:3 Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.*

Now there's a right attitude. God, I'm giving you charge over my mouth. Keep it safe from words that I should not be speaking.