**The Profanation of Speech**

*Genesis 11:1-9*

**Introduction**

1. ***“the body is…for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13)***.
2. This includes the use of our tongue in speaking.
3. From the very beginning, speech has been abused to run contrary to God’s will.
4. Profane language is the telling sign of a degraded person, and degraded culture.
5. As people of God, we must not speak like the world speaks. We must not be guilty of the profanation of speech.
6. What is profanity?
7. Defined
   1. **Etymology** – “from late Latin ***profanitas***, from Latin ***profanus***‘not sacred’” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
   2. **Definition** – “blasphemous or obscene language” (ibid)
      1. **Profanity** – “profane language” (Merriam-Webster)
         1. **Profane (Adjective)** – “(1) not concerned with religion or religious purposes (2) not holy because unconsecrated, impure, or defiled (3) serving to debase or defile what is holy” (ibid.)
         2. **Profane (Verb)** – “(1) to treat (something sacred) with abuse, irreverence, or contempt (2) to debase by a wrong, unworthy, or vulgar use” (ibid.)
      2. ***Language that is not treated as sacred, manifesting in the use of blasphemy, irreverence, obscenity, impurity, vulgarity, and abuse.***
   3. The very concept of “profanity,” relates to the consecration of language, which people of God understand relates to its Creator 🡪
8. The Holiness of Language
   1. **Genesis 1:1, 3** – speech was used by God in the creation of the universe (**cf. John 1:1, 3**).
   2. God is the eternal, intelligent being who created all things:
      1. Words are the vehicle to convey intelligent thought – **1 Corinthians 2:11-13**
      2. **Psalm 33:8-9; 19:1-4** – inherent within God’s creation is the communication of intelligence.
      3. **Genesis 1:26** – man, created in God’s image, has been given the supreme gift of communication, language.
   3. The ability to communicate through intelligible language has a holy purpose – **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Matthew 12:36-37**
      1. Ultimately, language is a tool given to us by God for carrying out our holy purpose toward Him, and our fellow man. (**cf. Micah 6:8; Matthew 22:27-40**)
   4. **As language and speech are consecrated to the service of God’s will, profane speech is simply any unauthorized speech before God.**
9. The Profanation of Speech (**Genesis 11:1-9)**
   1. **The Unity of Language and Speech (vv. 1-2)**
      1. ***“Language”*** and ***“speech”*** are not a repetition:
         1. **Language** – *śâp̱â* – the lip; by implication, language (STRONG)
         2. **Speech** – *ḏâḇâr* – a word; by implication, a matter (as spoken of) or thing (STRONG)
      2. **They shared a common language, but also through that language shared a common matter, or word (vehicle of thought).**
         1. This has immense potential for good or evil.
         2. God meant it for good.
   2. **The Unity of Pride and Rebellion (vv. 3-4)**
      1. Through their one language they united in thought and expressed that to one another in evil planning.
      2. **Their thoughts imply a united attitude of pride and rebellion against God which found expression in their common language, allowing them to take united action against God and for themselves.**
         1. **(v. 5)** – they did indeed build it.
      3. **Tower** – *migdāl* – from *g̱âḏal* – “refers…to being great in size, importance etc.” (TWOT)
         1. **Isaiah 10:15** (*g̱âḏal,* ***“exalt”***) – “employed to show how evil man attempts to magnify himself against the Lord” (TWOT) (Assyria)
         2. *Migdāl* – ***“Tower”*** – a symbol of strength and pride – **Isaiah 2:12, 15**
      4. ***“a name for ourselves”*** – employing speech to exalt themselves.
         1. Rather than exalt God – **Psalm 100**
      5. ***“lest we be scattered…”***
         1. United in chafing at the will of God – **Genesis 1:28; 9:7**
         2. **Manifesting trust in self rather than God. (His blessing is in His will, which is spreading over the earth and multiplying.)**
   3. **The Assessment of the Damage, and Prospective Damage by the Profanation of Speech (vv. 5-6)**
      1. **(v. 5)** – the damage done – with their speech as the machine of rebellion, they had actively worked against God’s will in pride.
      2. **(v. 6)** – God saw the potential for relapse – **Genesis 6:5, 11-12** (**cf. Matthew 15:18-19**)
   4. **The Divine Judgment (vv. 7-9)**
      1. The Lord thwarted their advancing evil by confusing their language. They could no longer unite against Him in this way.
      2. God would restore the united use of speech in the holy language of His kingdom – **Romans 15:5-6; 1 Corinthians 1:10**
   5. **Profane Speech:**
      1. Uses the instrument for righteousness as an instrument for unrighteousness.
      2. Exalts self against God, whether with intent or in outcome of self-centered expression. (All unauthorized speech, which is profanity, does this directly or indirectly.)
      3. Degrades others, whether directly, or in the negative influence that leads away from God’s will.
      4. Betrays created purpose from God, which includes the use of the tongue. (Which has to do with all of life – **Proverbs 4:23**)
      5. ***“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.” (James 3:6)***
         1. It has the ability to destroy in rapid fashion.
         2. World – *kosmos* – it contains potential for evil in cosmic proportions.
10. The Tongue: A Fire, A World of Iniquity
11. Profanity
    1. “blasphemous or obscene language” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
    2. **Blasphemy**:
       1. *blasphēmia* (Greek) – “impious and reproachful speech injurious to divine majesty” (THAYER)
       2. **Exodus 20:7** – not to take the name of God in vain.
          1. **Vain** – *šâwe* – “to be waste, it denotes that which is waste and disorder, hence that which is empty, vain, and nugatory, for which there is no occasion.” (Keil & Delitzsch)
          2. Prior two commands – **(vv. 3-6)** – no other God’s, not worship any image.
          3. His name – **Exodus 3:14-15; 34:6-7** – manifests His nature.
       3. The name of God is to be revered – **Matthew 6:9**
       4. **His name is not to be used flippantly, or for common, or base purposes.**
    3. **Profanity**:
       1. “obscene language” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
       2. **Ephesians 5:3-5** – the language is in the midst of the sinful actions themselves – speech reflecting them.
          1. **Filthiness** – *aischrotes* – “obscenity, all that is contrary to purity” (VINE) (including that of speech)
          2. **Foolish talking** – *mōrologia* – “from *moros*, "foolish" in the sense of the lack of forethought and wisdom. impious, godless, because such a man neglects and despises what relates to salvation, and *logos*, "a word, speech." (WUEST)
             1. "Talk which is both foolish and sinful.” (VINCENT)
             2. **Cf. Matthew 15:18-20** – **employing speech for sinful topics, and expression of sinful thought**.
          3. **Coarse jesting** – *eutrapelia* – “polished and witty speech as the instrument of sin” (VINCENT)
             1. “coarse jesting, risqué wit” (BDAG)
             2. **Dirty jokes, indecent and inappropriate banter.**
       3. **What is a “bad word?”**
          1. **Hebrews 5:14** – senses exercised to discern good and evil.
          2. **Romans 12:2** – not conformed to the world.
          3. **God does not index every form of every sin, and certainly not English profane words. He wants us to discern by the renewed mind influenced by His holy word that which is unfitting for a Christian’s speech.**
          4. **Euphemisms** – a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing. (New Oxford American Dictionary)
             1. These are not fitting for Christian speech.
12. Abusive Language
    1. **Reviler** – **1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10** – *loidoros* – “as one who intentionally abuses another with speech reviler, slanderer, abusive person” (ALGNT); “one who is verbally abusive” (LSB Dictionary)
    2. Language is not to be exploited for the harm of others – **Ephesians 4:29, 31**
       1. **(v. 29)** – **Corrupt** – *sapros* – “of poor quality, bad, unfit for use, worthless” (THAYER)
          1. Contrasted with what is good for edification – building up.
          2. **Words which tear down either by direct assault, or simply through thoughtlessness** (**cf. Matthew 12:36** – idle words which cause damage).
       2. **(v. 31)** – clamor and evil speaking.
          1. **Clamor** – *kraugē* – (1) a loud cry or call, shout lit. a shout(ing), clamor of excited persons Eph 4:31. Of people shouting back and forth in a quarrel” (BDAG)
             1. **Why do people shout at each other? – intimidation, displayed anger/unhappiness, to demean others, etc.**
          2. **Evil speaking** – *blasphēmia*
    3. **James 3:9** – blessing God then cursing men.
       1. Blasphemy is not just vertical.
       2. *blasphēmia* – “slander, detraction, speech injurious, to another's good name” (THAYER)
    4. **Things of the old man to put off** – **Colossians 3:8** – ascending list from initial emotion of anger not dealt with to the abuse of others in speech.
       1. **Malice –** *Kakia* – “malignity, malice, ill-will, desire to injure” (THAYER); “the vicious nature which is bent on doing harm to others.” (J.B. Lightfoot)
       2. **Blasphemy** – injurious speech.
       3. **Filthy Language** – *Aischrologia* – “it indicates all foul-mouthed abusiveness of every kind…includes therein every license of the ungoverned tongue employing itself in the abuse of others…Paul intends to forbid the same…seeing that all other sins against which he is here warning are outbreaks of a loveless spirit toward our neighbour.” (R.C. Trench)
       4. **The abuse of others is the opposite purpose of speech.**
          1. **Slander, gossip, sowing discord, careless words, angry words, shouting words, words meant for harm.**
          2. **Sticks and stones philosophy is not scriptural!**
    5. God’s description of an abusive person who makes much use of speech in his abuse – **Proverbs 6:12-19** – a worthless, wicked person.
       1. **(v. 12)** – perverse mouth – mouth as an instrument of destruction.
          1. **(v. 14)** – such is in his heart.
       2. **(v. 13)** – activity stemming from perversity – deceitful devising of evil and taking action to carry it out – pointing at others, false accusations, misleading statements, slander. **(v. 18)**
       3. **(v. 14)** – continues to explain – seeking evil, and dividing others, causing problems.
       4. **(v. 17)** – pride which is above speaking truth (he isn’t held to that standard), shedding blood – not simply literally, but destroying lives.
       5. **(v. 18)** – further explanation of **verse 13**.
       6. **(v. 19)** – slanders others, making false testimony to pit people against each other, thus, manipulating others.
       7. **NOTE: Acting in one of these ways does not make you this whole man, but it certainly shows you are like him.**
13. Lying
    1. **Colossians 3:9-10** – lying is antithetical to the new man created in the image of Christ.
       1. **John 14:6; 18:37** – He is the truth, and those who are of the truth hear His voice.
       2. We are those “renewed in knowledge” which is the opposite of lying.
    2. **Ephesians 4:25** – we are to speak the truth because we are people of the truth.
    3. **White lies betray who God is, and who we are to be before Him in Christ.**

**Conclusion** – We must treat speaking as a sacred matter entrusted us by our Creator. It is not to be used for unholy purposes. Anything contrary to His will in the use of speech is profanity.