

Seven Spirits - Replacing Bad Habits With Good

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

[Luke 11:24-26]

While the above passage in Luke (and also in Matthew 12:43-45) may be specifically addressing an unsaved person who takes up religion or tries to “turn over a new leaf” without the power and grace of God, it can be **applied** to the Christian as a warning that bad habits need to be unlearned and need to be dealt with – by aggressively **replacing them** with good habits as pointed out here by the apostle Paul:

Ephesians 4:29 “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

So Paul is saying our speech should accomplish two basic things:

1. edifying others and
2. ministering grace to them

Edifying refers to building up and promoting another’s growth in Christian wisdom, piety, happiness, and holiness.

Ministering grace can refer to many positive things: that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech, good will, loving-kindness, and favor. Ministering grace to others can also refer to telling others of God’s plan of salvation.

In Ephesians 4:29 Paul is stressing doing good INSTEAD OF bad.... REPLACE conduct and conversation that is CORRUPT (unkind, untrue, ungodly, unhelpful, discouraging, hateful, angry, resentful, etc) with that which is EDIFYING (kind, true, godly, helpful, encouraging, loving, compassionate, caring, etc.). Paul did not say be passive... do nothing and say nothing. Passivity in a relationship is not a virtue.

If we are **not** actively loving a person ... if we are **not** saying and doing things to express our love for them, then we really are AGAINST them.

Luke 11:23 “He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.”

For example, we can keep our mouth shut, hoping we will not argue or speak harshly (and perhaps just fume silently) or we can actively do things that will help us RENEW OUR MINDS. We can say words of praise, encouragement, tenderness, mercy, thankfulness and so forth. Our words should be an expression of the fruit of God’s gracious loving Spirit living and abiding in us:

Galatians 5:22 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness,

temperance: against such there is no law.”

If we are not actively working to tame our tongues and renew our minds, we will find ourselves expressing the fruits of the flesh:

Galatians 5:19 “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

So when a person with a regenerated heart and mind speaks or acts, they will not bring forth the “works of the flesh” but rather “**that which is good**”:

Luke 6:45 “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

In order to bring good treasure (loving, uplifting words) out of our mouths, we need to have good words in our hearts and minds:

Psalms 119:11 “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

Psalms 37:30 “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. 31 “The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.”

Psalms 40:8 “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

So we need to make it a daily/regular practice of reading and listening to God’s Word. Also, if we make it our habit to read God’s word, we will find ourselves more preoccupied with God and His will than us and our will:

Psalms 71:15 “My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.”

Proverbs 10:20 “The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.”

Proverbs 10:21 “The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.”

Proverbs 12:18 “There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.”

Proverbs 15:23 “A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!”

Lastly, the grave importance of what we say and how we use our speech is declared here:

Matthew 12:36 “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.