

THE MOUTH TELLS ON THE HEART (Matt. 12:35-37)

Out of the heart come the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). What is in the heart comes out in the life. Jesus said:

Matthew 12:35 (NKJV)

35 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.

This is consistent with the principle just laid out in verse 33. Commentators point out that “**treasure**” here could perhaps better be understood as “**treasure box**” – the place where things are collected and stored. “**The heart is the treasure box of the soul.**” (Ed Glasscock)

What you “treasure” – what you value in your heart - is valuable to you – what you want to hold on to is stored up in your heart.

A person brings out in life what is stored up in their heart. And that is true whether it be GOOD things or EVIL things. What is in your heart is eventually brought out in life.

Again, this is true in both directions – whether for good or for evil. We see this principle in conversion. Paul tells us that the mouth tells on the heart.

Romans 10:10 (NKJV)

10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The order is believing in the heart FIRST, and then the mouth confesses what the heart believes. That is consistent with Jesus saying that “**out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks**”.

The point is this: What is real in the heart comes out of the mouth. Want to know what a person’s heart looks like – listen to what they say. It reveals the heart.

“Verse 35 makes a tight connection with v. 33: what a person truly is determines what he says and does.” – **D.A. Carson**

Matthew 12:36 (NKJV)

36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

Jesus here gives another general truism. All people are facing judgment before God. Believers will be judged according to their works, with the issue being the quality of reward we will receive. Unbelievers will be judged according to their works, with the issue being the degree of eternal punishment they will receive.

Idle words are empty, careless, useless, unprofitable words. We should be very careful what we say because one day we will have to give account for every IDLE word. I don't know about you, but I regret saying a lot of "idle" unprofitable words. They just slip out sometimes – which tells me the state of my heart at that moment is not what it should be.

"Jesus is saying that every spoken word reflects the heart's overflow and is known to God. Therefore words are of critical importance (cf. Eph. 5:3-4, 12; Col. 3:17; James 1:19; 3:1-12)." – **D.A. Carson**

For James the tongue is a major barometer of our spiritual maturity.

James 3:2 (NKJV)

2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

The tongue is the hardest thing in the world to control. We all stumble over it regularly. To perfectly control the tongue speaks of perfect maturity. And none of us have reached that point yet. We all stumble in many things in regard to the tongue.

How would you like to stand before Jesus and give account of every idle word you have spoken? Now we won't do so in a penal sense because Christ has paid the penalty for our sin in total. But we will give account in terms of the evaluation of the quality of our service for Jesus. All our works will be evaluated including the use of our tongue!

1 Corinthians 4:5 (NKJV)

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

This has the believer's judgment in view in context. If He is going to reveal the secret thoughts of the heart – well it is a given that every idle word will also be examined. Praise God for forgiveness. Praise God for salvation.

But let us not glibly think then that it doesn't matter how we then live or how we speak. It will matter on judgment day as Christ evaluates the quality of our workmanship in relation to the heart (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11-15). It will matter in terms of rewards!

The New International Bible Commentary makes this thoughtful comment: "*A man's premeditated words are seldom a safe guide to character, the unpremeditated are.*" That is so true. It is the unpremeditated spouting off behind the scenes that really tells the story! Often we say things behind the scenes that are inappropriate – but in fact it is openly known to God. He takes note of every word.

"When a person is arrested, he is warned that anything he says will be used against him; similarly the Lord warns us that our words will rise up against us." – **John Phillips**

Matthew 12:37 (NKJV)

37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

The word "*justified*" means "*to declare righteous*" or "*to declare right*" but is sometimes used in the sense of being vindicated or proven right (cf. Lk. 7:35; Mt. 11:19; 12:37). We are not justified by our words in the sense of being saved by speaking.

The Bible is clear that we are justified "declared righteous" purely on the basis of faith and faith alone - the mouth then confesses what the heart believes. However, justification in the judicial/legal sense before God is by faith alone! God as the JUDGE declares us right on the basis of our faith alone.

Romans 5:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

So the sense here in Matthew 12:37 is that if faith is real in the heart it will demonstrate itself in our words as a pattern of life. In that sense our words will serve to vindicate or reveal our true character as God's children. Again, the words are the fruit, but the fruit in this case gives evidence (proves) that the tree is good.

On the other hand, a lost person's words will serve to condemn them – that is they will reveal the true nature and pattern of their evil character.

“We need to have our incriminating words blotted out. We need God to say, ‘I will remember them no more.’ If He doesn't destroy the evidence, we will stand condemned by our words.” – **John Phillips**

“Jesus' point is not that words are the basis of salvation or condemnation but that they are reliable evidence of the reality of salvation. The speech of a redeemed person will be different because it comes from his renewed heart.” – **John MacArthur**

In effect words are the mirrors of the heart – they reflect the spiritual condition of the heart whether regenerate or unregenerate.

Those who have yielded to the convicting work of the Spirit in conversion demonstrate that in changed lives of which a leading indicator is seen in their speech. Those that are in rebellion to the Spirit of truth also reflect that in their speech.

If our faith doesn't affect our tongue, it probably is not a genuine saving faith. Certainly, none of us are perfect in our speech patterns but people are known by the fruit of their lips as the mouth reliably tells on the heart.

I had a teacher in Bible College who often quoted to us: “As a person thinks in their heart so are they” (Prov. 23:7).

The essence of a person's life is what they are in their heart. We all come with an evil heart. It's part of depravity. As the Bible says, “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). The only answer to a wicked heart is FAITH in Jesus as Lord and Savior! When we put our faith in Jesus, God cleanses our heart!

Luke 8:15 (NKJV)

15 But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a **noble and good heart**, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

Acts 15:8–9 (NKJV)

8 So God, who **knows the heart**, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us,

9 and made no distinction between us and them, **purifying their hearts by faith.**

The great dividing line is found in the HEARTS of people. As Jesus 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.” (Mt. 12:35).

The heart of the matter is that it's all about the HEART, and the mouth tells on the heart! That is why Romans 10:9-10 says, “***For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***”

What a person really believes and what their mouth says go together.

Now of course, one can mouth lies, and many do! Many will say, “Lord, Lord” on judgment day only to be exposed as liars! That is why the Bible says that it is with the **HEART that one must believe**. It must be real in the heart! The KEY issue is all about the HEART!

What does your mouth reveal about the treasure box of your heart? It ever remains true: “***Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.***”

What say you?