

Warnings About Speaking Your Piece

There is a popular adage, that says, "it is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to talk and remove all doubt." Some attribute this adage to President Lincoln, others to Mark Twain. I do not know who first coined the phrase, but I do know that Solomon said, "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. A fool also multiplieth words: yet man knoweth not what shall be after him, who can tell him? The labor of fools wearieth every one of them; for he knoweth not how to go to the city" (Eccl. 10:12-15).

The scriptures warn mankind against the pit-falls of foolish talking. As did Solomon, the apostle Paul stated, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one (Col. 4:6): A man's character will be manifested by his words.

What did Solomon say about the words of the foolish? 1) They "will swallow up himself." The words of the foolish will destroy, and bring trouble. 2) "The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness." This echoes the adage "it is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to talk and remove all doubt." The words of the fool betray him as soon as he opens his mouth. 3) The "end of his talk is mischievous madness." The term "mischievous" carries with it a connotation of being bad, or evil: naturally or morally, resulting in madness, or further into folly. 4) "A fool multiplieth words." The fool is very talkative about things and matters of which he has no knowledge: if there is a topic the fool has an answer: "yet man knoweth not what shall be after him, who can tell him?" The fool expresses a confident knowledge of what may come to be as if he has some foresight into the future, and with many words confuses the hearer. 5) The "labor of fools wearieth every one of them." The fools words and deeds will wear you out! 6) "for he knoweth no how to go to the city." Of this phrase, it has been said, "the road to which is usually broad, and plain and easy to be found, and yet cannot be found by the foolish man; showing, that he that talks of abstruse things, things too high and wonderful for him, which he affects to know, must needs be a stranger to them, since things the most easy to be understood he is ignorant of, and wearies himself to find; or he does not know how to behave himself in a city, among citizens, in a civil and polite manner" (Gill).

If there ever was a society permeated with foolish talk we are living in it!