

churches which do not take a stand for the fundamentals (ecclesiastical separation, 2Jn 9–11); and from other Christians who refuse to obey the clear teachings of Scripture (separation from the disobedient brother, 2Th 3:6, 14–15). In all relationships the Fundamentalist will consider first his loyalty to Christ and God's infallible Word. He realizes that separation is not only *from* the world but also *to* Christ (1Th 1:9). "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Co 7:1).

Gerald Priest is professor of historical and pastoral theology at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary in Allen Park, Michigan.

Trusting God by Jerry Bridges

Book Review

Jerry Bridges' book *Trusting God* is biblically based, theologically sound and clearly written. Its chapters propagate three essential truths upon which believers must bank if they are to trust God in times of adversity – that God is completely sovereign, that God is infinite in wisdom, and that God is perfect in love. Because of these three truths, God's children can, and should, rest in Him in every life situation. Indeed, to not rest in Him is a heinous sin against our Creator. This is the thrust of *Trusting God*.

Bridges does an excellent job of expounding the relevant biblical texts in a clear and nontechnical fashion. His chapters are short, readable, very well illustrated, and extremely practical. In the opening chapter Bridges highlights why it is difficult to trust God in times of trial, and then describes in a cursory fashion those three essential truths. In the next six chapters he deals in depth with the topic of God's sovereignty over every molecule of His creation, including man and his choices. ("The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases." Pr 21:1) Throughout, Bridges avoids a fatalistic theology, and in his chapter on God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, he demonstrates that both concepts are taught in Scripture with equal force and that there is no contradiction between them. Addressing the wisdom of God in chapter eight, Bridges makes the overall point that while life's events are often shrouded in mystery and confusion, the believer can rejoice knowing that infinite wisdom guides the affairs of the world. The love of God for sinners and saints is the topic of chapters

nine and ten, and the final four chapters form a fitting conclusion to *Trusting God* by applying the teachings of the previous chapters. These final chapters deal with some huge issues.

In a day when many fundamental Baptists view God as, in Luther's words, "too human," *Trusting God* is a challenging corrective. *Trusting God* is highly recommended. It should be in every Christian's library and be read with a Bible in hand. It is perfect for Sunday school and for home Bible studies.

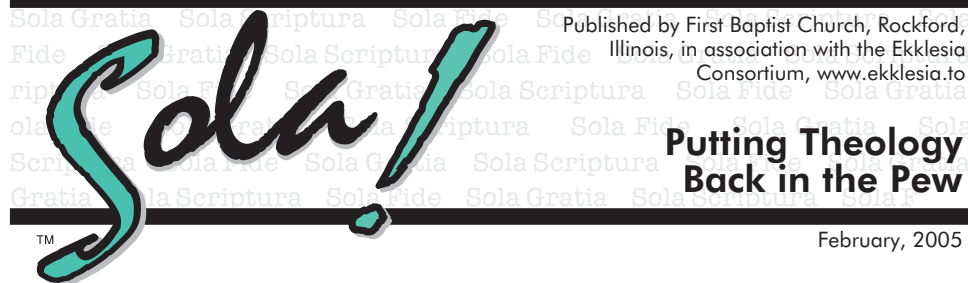
Scott Williquette is pastor of First Baptist Church in Rockford, Illinois.

In all relationships the Fundamentalist will consider first his loyalty to Christ and God's infallible Word.

Unusual Facts About the Bible

- Over 2.5 billion copies of the entire Bible have been sold, making it by far the world's best-selling book.
- Most common word: "the" (about 58,000 times), then "and" (46,000). Most common name: "Lord" (1,855). Neither "Lord" nor "God" are in Esther.
- Most well-known verse: John 3:16. Most memorized chapter: Psalm 23. Most memorized prayer: The Lord's Prayer. Longest prayer: Psalm 119. Longest prayer in the New Testament: John 17.
- Oldest manuscript: about 200 BC (from Dead Sea Scrolls). Oldest whole manuscript: about 325 AD. Largest depository of manuscripts: monastery at Mt. Athos in Greece, where only men are allowed (not even female animals).
- The longest telegram in history was the whole Revised Standard Version.
- The Bible has been to the moon.

Published by First Baptist Church, Rockford, Illinois, in association with the Ekklesia Consortium. For free subscriptions: sa@fbcrockford.com. For archives of past *Sola!* articles, visit the web site of the Ekklesia Consortium, www.ekklesia.io.



Published by First Baptist Church, Rockford, Illinois, in association with the Ekklesia Consortium, www.ekklesia.io

Putting Theology Back in the Pew

February, 2005

Changing the Garments of Sin: Abusive Speech

Steve Owen

Our Sovereign God has promised to order every single particle of every single atom throughout time to work in concert for our blessing (Ro. 8:28). In the next verse the Holy Spirit defines what the highest good is: "for whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son . . ." (Ro. 8:29). The highest good in the universe is to become like Jesus Christ. It is not health, wealth, pleasure, power, or fame that will bless us. The best thing that could happen to anyone is to be like Jesus Christ. The Father has predetermined to bless the elect (that's the meaning of 'foreknew') by conforming them to the image of His dear Son. But you can help this blessed transformation along. In fact, you are commanded to work to this very end: Christlikeness (Co. 3:1-4). We must set our minds upon this goal and labor for it (Co. 3:2). The first steps to Christlikeness is to put off the garments of sin (Co. 3:5-11). One of the filthy garments that must be removed is the abusive speech that comes out of our mouths. Colossians 3:8 ". . . put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth." Let's consider what it means to put off *abusive speech* from out of our mouths.

The word translated "abusive speech," *aischrologian*, occurs only here in the NT. It is a compound word comprised of *aischros*, meaning "shameful," and *logia*, meaning "speech." It has reference to words that are spoken to shame another. A good definition would be "obscene and derogatory speech meant to harm, hurt or wound another."

Why Abusive Speech Is Wrong Abusive speech is wrong because it does not glorify God. It is "ungodly" (a word which simply

means "not like God"). Furthermore, it is wrong because it is not speech directed by love. The greatest command is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. The second greatest command is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mt. 22:35-40). We do not want others to hurt, harm, wound or shame us. Therefore we must not do it to others (Mt. 7:12). Furthermore, abusive speech is serious sin. Jesus told us that "every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the Day of Judgment" (Matt. 12:36). This sin alone is enough to damn a person to the fires of Hell (Mt. 5:22). God hates the perverted mouth (Pr. 8:13). James says this is one of the most important evil practices to avoid because it brings believers into judgment (Ja. 5:12).

Abusive speech is wrong because it does not glorify God. Furthermore, it is wrong because it is not directed by love.

Biblical Categories Of Abusive Speech

Although the word translated "abusive speech" occurs just once in the Bible, the Bible has so much to say about abusive speech that this article cannot cover the subject exhaustively. Let's examine various Biblical examples of abusive speech.

1. Cursing/cussing/swearing/blasphemy.

Cursing is the appeal to God for evil or injury to befall someone or something. Cussing is to curse loudly. Swearing, when not used in the legal sense, is another term for cursing. To blaspheme is to speak of God or sacred things in an irreverent manner. The Bible forbids the believer to curse. We are forbidden to use God's name in vain or a casual manner (Ex. 20:7; Mt. 5:33-37). Cursing is one of the reasons God condemns every man as unrighteous (Ro. 3:14). James laments that out of the Christian's mouth can be found blessings upon God,

and cursing upon others: "My brethren, these things ought not to be this way" (Ja. 3:10). Believers are not to curse their persecutors, but are directed to pray for them (Ro. 12:14). Believers must love even their enemies (Mt. 5:44) and seek to do them good (Lu. 6:27) and meet their needs (Ro. 12:20). No believer should ever wish ill of another person (Pr. 24:16). Our duty is to overcome evil, not with more evil and cursing, but with blessings and goodness (Ro. 12:21).

Closely related to this prohibition is the use of *minced oaths*. Minced oaths are oaths that have been moderated for the sake of politeness and decorum. For instance, "Golly" may be really just a "polite" way to say "God." "Gee" might be actually saying "Jesus." "Dad-burn" could be really calling upon God the Father to damn something to the lake of fire. There are countless other minced oaths that the Christian must avoid. The believer should forsake all of these for Christ's sake (Ja. 5:12).

Neither should we speak of sacred things in an irreverent manner. The very heart's desire of every Christian's prayer is supposed to be "hallowed be Thy Name" (Mt. 6:9). Our prayer and goal in all that we say and do is supposed to cause others to things more highly and reverently of God. But all such casual and irreverent speech detracts from other's perception of the holiness of God. The Sovereign Lord of the Universe should not be addressed as "the Man upstairs." Neither should we speak of Heaven, hell, judgment, righteousness and eternal things in a light manner. There are countless examples one could reference. Jesus forbids such speech in Matthew 5:34-37. "Let your 'yes; be 'yes,' and your 'no' be 'no.' Anything beyond this is of evil." The Holy Spirit considered it important enough to have James echo this command (Ja. 5:12).

Neither should the Christian swear by false gods (Je. 5:7; 12:16; Mt. 5:37). "By Jove" is to call upon the Roman god Jupiter. The believer should recognize that the source of cursing "is of evil" (Mt. 5:37).

2. *Name-calling/mocking/scorning*. Name calling is calling others derogatory names. Scorning is to make fun of another. Mocking is ridiculing another. As believers we need to give up name-calling. Matthew 5:22 "... whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca' shall be guilty before the Supreme Court; and whoever shall say 'You fool!' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell." The word 'raca' is the Hebrew word "block head." The Peanuts character Lucy is sinning as she utters "Charlie Brown, you blockhead!" Believers need to understand that all name-calling should be put off forever. Christian parents should teach their

children that name-calling is wrong. They should not tolerate it in their children. And of course they themselves must set the example.

Furthermore, we should not limit the prohibition against name calling to the mental capacity of another. Name calling has to do with any facet of another's life. Attacks against one's physical abilities in sports or one's physical appearance are also wrong. Love does not mock others. Proverbs warns us against making jokes about others (Pr. 26:18; Ep. 5:4). Such a practice can be very dangerous. Hatred and pride, not love, is behind such remarks. If one is going to make fun of someone, the best practice is to make fun of yourself, or no one at all.

Christians should not speak of sacred things in an irreverent manner.

3. *Angry outbursts, remarks and retorts*. We have already learned that all anger should be put aside (Co. 3:8). Perhaps a few comments should be directed toward angry outbursts and remarks. Sometimes we excuse ourselves because of our personal circumstances ("I've been under a lot of pressure at work") or another's irritating habit ("she knows that when she does that it provokes me!"). However, God does not prescribe any exceptions, least of all in our homes. Angry abusive speech directed toward a husband (1 Pe. 3:1-7) or a wife (1 Pe. 3:8) or a child (Co. 3:21) or a parent (Co. 3:21) must be put off. Neither does such speech have a place at work (Ep. 6:9). In fact, all angry abusive words must be put off.

4. *Provocative remarks*. This has to do with *abusive words meant to stir up trouble*. Proverbs 16:27 warns us that some remarks can provoke "like a scorching fire." Some sinners can provoke others with great power (Pr. 27:3). These abusive words have no place in the Christian's life.

5. *Obscenities and dirty jokes* (Ep. 5:4). American entertainment revolves around immorality. Virtually every program features obscenities and dirty jokes. No Christian should use this kind of speech.

Why One Uses Abusive Speech The Bible notes several different reasons for this behavior. First, abusive speech is part of the rebellious nature of the unsaved man (Co. 3:8). The unsaved man naturally hates others, and expresses that hatred through the mouth (Mt. 15:18-20). The underlying cause is our foolish and sinful pride (Pr. 28:25). Proverbs

tells us that the fool enjoys provoking people (27:3). Sometimes people stir up strife because they are arrogant (Pr. 28:25). Sometimes abusive words are spoken because one simply fails to think before he speaks (Pr. 29:20). This is one of the worst of all habits (Pr. 29:20).

How To Stop Using Abusive Speech First, we must confess our abusive speech as sin (1 Jo. 1:9). We need to appeal to our Lord to give us grace to speak in a Christlike manner, full of kindness and truth (Pr. 3:3). We must teach our mouth how to speak in a Christlike manner (Pr. 16:23): words that are gentle (Ga. 5:23), gracious (Co. 4:6), kind (Ga. 5:22), persuasive (Pr. 16:23), sweet (Pr. 16:21), pleasant (Pr. 16:24), pure (Ja. 3:17) and peaceable, bringing healing to wounded spirits (Ja. 3:17; Pr. 12:18). But we must recognize that such words only flow consistently from a pure heart (1 Ti. 1:5). Which brings us right back to the beginning: is the goal of our life Christlikeness?

Steve Owen is pastor of Liberty Baptist Church in Monroeville, Wisconsin.

What is a Fundamentalist?

Gerald Priest

The term *Fundamentalist* has undergone many changes of meaning since it was first coined by Baptist editor Curtis Lee Laws in 1920. He identified a Fundamentalist as one who held to the great fundamental doctrines of the Bible and was willing to do "battle royal" to defend them. He was writing in the context of the historic Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy when conservatives were battling liberals for Northern (now American) Baptist denominational control. The complaint of the

Separation from all forms of ungodliness is really the hallmark of Fundamentalism.

Fundamentalists was that liberals were interlopers against whom Paul warned in Acts 20: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (v 28). These were apostates, who knew the truth but rejected it (2Ti 3:5, 13); false prophets and teachers who had brought in damnable heresies (2Pe 2:2). Faithful Christians were to reject them and their teachings (2Ti 3:5; Ro 16:17; 2Co 6:17). Fundamentalists denounced the liberals as not only being unbelievers but also having a reli-

gion vastly different from the revelation of an inspired Bible – a rationalistic man-centered religion in place of a supernaturalistic God-centered faith. If Fundamentalist leaders appeared blunt, one must realize the reason: they were uncompromisingly defending eternal verities (Jude 3) and the integrity of the God who had declared them. Divine truth which requires firm belief for everlasting life also demands a bold, plain expression of its content.

Unfortunately, the popular media use the term *Fundamentalist* either in a pejorative sense to reflect on someone who is outspoken against ungodliness; or to mark a political extremist advocating a strict but unpopular, even radical, behavior. Some use it in an inclusive sense, to identify nearly all televangelists, charismatics, and even New Evangelicals, with whom historic Fundamentalists would never affiliate. While biblical Fundamentalists may appear extreme to the world because their beliefs are at odds with its humanistic philosophy and secular lifestyle, in reality Fundamentalists are quite simply obedient Christians trying to please a holy God while defending orthodoxy.

Although the term is of recent origin, it reflects a resolute mentality and a set of irreducible beliefs as old as the Bible. A Fundamentalist is one who earnestly believes in an inspired, inerrant Scripture, including biblical miracles; an actual Trinity; the deity, virgin birth, vicarious atonement, bodily resurrection and second coming of Christ; the utter sinfulness of man; creation by God; and a literal heaven and hell. What is distinctive about all these beliefs is a hermeneutic of literalness: accept what the Bible says at face value in its particular context. In addition to these beliefs are certain marks or characteristics of the historic Fundamentalist. (1) He not only believes these doctrines, but he also militantly affirms them in the face of opposition. (2) He is fervently evangelistic in light of the biblical reality of sin, the saving grace of God through the blood of Christ, and the imminent premillennial return of the Savior. (3) And he practices the doctrine of separation as a part of sanctification.

Separation from all forms of ungodliness is really the hallmark of Fundamentalism. It is what distinguishes the Fundamentalist from other conservatives who may believe in the fundamentals of Scripture but who are disobedient in their relationships. Separation should be motivated by a desire to please God by keeping one's self from whatever would tarnish his testimony and diminish God's glory (Jas 1:27). This means separation from worldly activity (personal separation, 1Jo 2:15-17); from