

All the Rules of Your Mouth

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 119 and verse 13. Psalm 119 and verse 13.

With my lips, I declare all the rules of your mouth. With my lips, I declare all the rules of your mouth. The life purpose of the psalmist, that for which he wanted to be remembered, is that he was a man who spoke the words of God. He spoke the words of God because these words kept his way pure as a young man.

He had spent his life seeking God through his words. His heart was filled with the words of God because he valued above all other things in his life the blessedness of God.

His whole life was involved in the pursuit of God through his word and the proclamation of the praises of God.

[1 : 14] His heart, verse 10. His lips, verse 13. And his eyes, it's all involved. What will you make your life's pursuit?

For what will you be remembered? Will it be that with your lips you declared all the rules of God's mouth? I want to open up this verse in Psalm 119, verse 13 in two ways.

First, my lips, your mouth. And second, your rules, my words. This is to be our pursuit, surely, as Christians.

That in the good times and the bad, in the joy and in the sorrow, in our living and in our dying, our lips would declare the rules of God's mouth.

First of all, then, my lips, your mouth. My lips, your mouth. In 1 Corinthians 6, verses 19 through 20, in that memorable passage, the Apostle Paul writes, You are not your own.

[2 : 22] You were bought with a price. You are not your own. You were bought with a price. If you're a Christian tonight, then your body does not belong to you. It is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Your heart isn't yours.

It's the seat of Christ's life in you. And your lips aren't yours. They belong to God also. Our lips aren't ours to say what we want to say.

They are God's for us to say what he wants us to say. Let me say that again, because if we truly understand this, this will change our whole approach to speaking to, with, and about one another. Our lips aren't ours to say what we want to say. They are God's for us to say what he wants us to say. Because we were bought with a price. The precious blood of Christ shed on the cross for us. Our lips belong to him. They are God's mouth to speak forth the glory of his name and the love of his heart. Following Paul's argument, as Christians, our lips belong to God because he paid for them with the blood of his son.

[3 : 36] And so here in Psalm 119 verse 13, when the psalmist sings, With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. He's thinking in terms of how on the basis of God being his Lord and his saviour, his lips are God's mouth.

And again, this changes everything because it forces us, because it helps to understand that we're not unwilling slaves being forced to speak the words of God against our will.

Rather, on account of Christ's loving salvation of us and the way he has so changed our hearts and made us new, there is nothing we want more than that our lips should be consecrated to the service of Christ.

We aren't robots programmed to obey. We're not ventriloquists, dummies, lifeless and uninvolved in the process of speaking.

We'll come back to that at the end. We are Christians who, according to verse 10, seek God with all our hearts and who, in verse 14, delight in God.

[4 : 45] And so our lips are God's mouth, not just by the purchase of Christ's blood, but by our own voluntary consecration.

That to use the words of Isaac Watts' hymn, Were the whole realm of nature mine, T'would be an offering far too small, Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, My lips, My all. My lips aren't mine to say what I want to say. They are God's for me to speak his word. So think then the many ways in which we have sinned in word this week, of how we've used our lips to damage and destroy others.

Surely in the light of our recent studies in James chapter 3 on a Sunday evening, we know enough to be very cautious when we open our lips, remembering the words of James, The tongue is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

[5 : 56] The tongue is a fire, the world of unrighteousness. Or think of the many ways in which we did not use our lips to comfort, encourage and point one another to Christ.

The words we could have spoken to someone in need, but we kept silent instead. It's highly significant when confronted by the majesty of God in Isaiah 6, the prophet falls to the ground, confessing the uncleanness of his lips.

And it's also highly significant that the first part of his body to be cleansed by the angel was his lips. You know, I wonder if we take this seriously enough.

Our lips are God's mouth. Now, when I say this, I'm not saying that God is somehow dependent upon us for a hearing, that if we keep our lips tightly clenched and do not speak a word, that a sovereign God will not find some other way or use some other person to speak the truth.

But what I am saying is that God has given us, as his beloved children, the greatest of all privileges, that he will speak the message of his glorious salvation and the grace of the gospel through our lips.

[7 : 26] Can it be said of us that our lips are God's mouth, not just by the purchase of Christ's blood, but by our own voluntary consecration?

In practical terms, this calls us to earnest prayer. Earnest prayer. Calling us to prayers of repentance, acknowledging before God, both the damage we have done by our words and the encouraging words we have failed to say.

And it calls us to prayers of consecration, dedicating the words of our mouths to Christ our Savior. It might even mean that we begin every day with a prayer.

Lord, give me the opportunity today to do good to another human soul, to use my lips to build them up and encourage them in the gospel.

Lord, let my lips be your mouth. My lips, God's mouth. Secondly, in this verse, your rules, my words.

[8 : 45] Your rules, my words. The writer of Psalm 119 is sometimes accused of being coldly clinical, someone obsessed with laws and rules.

Christians say, well, give us New Testament freedom and not more Old Testament rules. Well, such an accusation really is beneath us, given that the psalmist is obsessed first and foremost with God himself.

You can see that from how littered this section of Psalm 119 is with the personal pronouns you and your. The reason the psalmist speaks about the laws and the rules of God is because he is obsessed with the God whose rules and laws they are.

In other words, the personal relationship comes first. Or to put it in New Testament terms, grace comes first for us because it's only by grace that we have a personal relationship with a holy God, that we can speak of him and to him using words such as you and yours.

I'm not sure there's a whole lot of value in pointing out the minute differences between the words for rules and statutes and laws and testimonies and judgments in this psalm. I rather think they all point to the one thing, the words of the mouth of God, the expression of his heart and his will.

[10 : 18] The unfortunate picture, I guess, we have from Psalm 119.13 is that of a better than thou, rather legalistic preacher looking down his nose and banging his pulpit and saying, listen to the rules and do every one that I'm going to tell you.

I say unfortunate picture because it's a picture. It's not reality. The apostle Paul once said, join in imitating me.

But he also said, I am the chief of sinners. Gospel preachers look down on nobody. Rather, they look up to everybody. And so the rules the psalmist is declaring are the words of the mouth of God. They are the expressions of his heart and his will. And what are these words? And what are these expressions of his heart? They are the proclamation of the glory of the love of Christ for us.

Psalm 45 is well recognized as being messianic in focus, pointing forward to the glory of the Christ. And the psalm begins with these words.

[11 : 34] My heart overflows with a pleasing theme. I address my verses to the king. My tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

The psalm goes on to praise, exult and rejoice in the kingship of the Messiah and his great love for his people. For my words to be God's rules is for me to declare the supreme worthiness of Christ and to proclaim his love for a world lost in sin, darkness and rebellion.

Let me say that again so that we've got this down in black and white. The rules in which the psalmist delights are the proclamations of the glory and the love of Christ for us.

They are the story of our salvation. They are the narrative of our forgiveness. They are the testimony of our cleansing. Our tongues are to be the pens of a ready scribe.

Here's a person who guards the word, verse 9, who seeks God through his word, verse 10, who stores up God's word in her heart, verse 11, and counts the word as the path to true blessedness.

[12 : 55] In other words, here's a person with a deep familiarity and acquaintance with the word of God. So little wonder then that what comes out of his mouth aren't his own words, but God's.

But as we close, I want to go back to a point I hinted at a little while ago. Namely, God has not made us dictation machines, nor are we ventriloquists' dummies.

I don't expect a 10-year-old Christian girl to express herself with the same words as a 100-year-old Christian lady. Nor do I expect that a Christian from Scotland should express himself in the same way as a Christian from the Philippines.

What I'm saying is that God speaks through us and our personalities. The individual us, with all our personal experiences, with all our personal backgrounds.

The words we speak are distinctively ours, but they're also God's words. I'm me. You're you.

[14 : 07] And the way we express the story of salvation shall sound different. That's what makes the testimony of the church to the grace of Christ so much deeper and so much richer and resonant than any individual Christians.

There are so many voices saying the same thing in their own distinctive and particular ways. And that's why I've referred all the way through this study to the psalmist's personal relationship with God.

But I also believe it is better to view this verse from the perspective of the whole church's praise.

As united together, as the family of believers on planet Earth, we proclaim, with my lips, I will declare the rules of your mouth.

Because that is, after all, not just the purpose of the individual Christian, but also of the church. Our lips have been purchased for God's praise.

[15 : 16] We've been won by Christ to the worship of God. And so as we narrow this down, we want to renew our prayers that the church's words would be the expressions of his heart and will, the glory of the love of Christ.

And this being our prayer meeting, perhaps there's no better time for us to renew our prayer for these things here and now. That on the basis of Christ's blood shed for us on the cross, God would accept our voluntary reconsecration to him.

My lips, God's mouth. My words, God's rules. With my lips, I will declare all the rules of your mouth. Amen. Amen. Thank you.