

For Every Careless Word
Topical Lesson on Sins of the Tongue
by Chuck Pike – March 2, 2025

I. Introduction and Framework for This Lesson

- a. Today I want to focus the teaching on something that is *extremely practical*. In fact, you can put it into practice this afternoon, every day this week, and thereafter for the rest of your life!
- b. I have noticed that many Christians, from all sorts of backgrounds, view theological doctrine as the most important thing to focus on as a Christian. That is what they think about, talk about, study, and that is what they think they should teach on at any opportunity.
 - i. Actually, this has been a problem in churches throughout history. Many people see being a true Christian as defined primarily by belief in a set of specific theological positions. I have seen this in Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Evangelical Protestant, conservative Anabaptist, Churches of Christ, and various ‘kingdom Christian’ churches.
 1. While groups may vary regarding what they consider to be the *most important* issues, the paramount focus on doctrine (theology) is common to them all.
 2. Unfortunately, our own church fellowship is not immune to this widespread tendency.
 3. Please don’t get me wrong here. What we believe is important.
 - a. An analogy:
 - i. For example, when making a stew, it is important to add the salt.
 - ii. **Question:** What would happen if someone were to get the idea that salt was the most important ingredient (even more important than the beef and potatoes)? What if they just dumped an entire container of salt into the pot, and neglected to add the meat and vegetables?
 1. **Answer:** It would be inedible, and might even cause you to become sick!

- iii. Likewise, while theology is an important part of the Christian faith, I believe that the 'meat and potatoes' of the Christian life should *be how we live* (following Jesus' teachings and example in our daily lives).
 - 1. A church solely focused on theology will tend to produce unhealthy, *spiritually sickly Christians* (in my opinion).
- b. Also, basic Christian theology should be rather simple, *IF*:
 - i. We simply want to stick to the original faith as handed down by the apostles, AND
 - ii. We don't try to define things in greater detail than what the apostles handed down: what was considered the basic faith at the beginning of the church.
- c. We do need to have at least some in the group who study things more deeply in order to be equipped to answer the kind of questions that come up.
 - i. However, one of the main differences between the church in the beginning and the church from the time roughly *after* the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) is that prior to that, being a Christian was seen as first and foremost as a WAY OF LIFE of following Christ and His teachings.
 - 1. For approximately the first three hundred years of Christianity, the theology was relatively simple. The greatest emphasis was on how you lived your life.
 - 2. After that time, the focus shifted more toward defining oneself as a Christian based on belief in defined theological precepts.
 - ii. I am not saying that what you believe is unimportant. We need to be careful that we are not teaching heretical things.
 - iii. However, our primary emphasis when we teach in the church and when we share our faith with

others, including others who do believe in Jesus, should be on living the Christian life.

- d. From *Of the Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas a Kempis (c. 1418-1427):
 - i. The Christian life is not about acquiring knowledge or speaking profoundly on theological doctrinal positions. (chap. 1)
 - ii. The primary focus of the life of a Christian should be to study the life of Christ, imitate Christ, and become more like Him. (chap. 1)
 - iii. Spiritual progress is made through being persistent in disentangling ourselves from the passions of the world and rooting out vices from our lives. (chap. 11)
 - iv. “If we esteem our progress in religious life to consist only in some outward observances, our devotions will quickly have an end. But let us lay the axe to the root (**Matthew 3:10**), that being freed from passions, we might possess our souls in peace. *If every year we would root out one vice, we should soon become perfect men....*” (chap. 11)
- e. The challenge for us today as religious Christians is to get back to focusing on the most important things. That starts with how we live, and how we treat others. Whether we are following the example of Christ or not. It is how we live, not just what we believe.
 - i. The church should not be striving to become an elite ‘*perfect theology*’ club. Being a Christian is not, first and foremost, an academic or intellectual exercise.
 - ii. Today’s message is about what one might describe as ‘blue collar’ or ‘lunch pail’ Christianity. In other words, it is a ‘roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-to-work’, practical approach to the Christian life.
- c. **Personal Note:** The Scriptures we will study today, and the personal applications are things I have been wrestling with in my own life, especially over the past year.

- i. I shared these things on a few occasions in our house church recently, and was encouraged to bring this before the whole church.
- ii. This subject has been very challenging for me personally; perhaps it will be so for you, as well.

II. Starting with Jesus

- a. **Question:** In the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5-7**) Jesus gives a number of very specific teachings. Which one stands out as the most challenging? Which one is the toughest to follow?

- i. I realize that the answer will likely vary from person to person.
- ii. Things that come to mind might include:
 1. Cannot lust in your heart after someone else
 2. Nonresistance – cannot retaliate against evil
 3. Permanence of marriage
 4. Must love your enemies
 5. Attitude toward possessions and materialism
 6. Cannot worry about anything (trusting God)
- iii. Note that while many Christians see Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount as an impossibly high standard, He makes it clear in His conclusion that He expects His disciples to follow these teachings. Furthermore, we will be headed for destruction if we don't follow them.
- iv. In my opinion, one of the toughest teachings in the Sermon on the Mount to follow, is the *very first* thing He taught.

- b. **Related Question:** What is the *first specific sin* that Jesus addresses in the Sermon on the Mount?

- i. Answer: The first specific sin Jesus dealt with here was related to *what comes out of your mouth*.
- ii. Read **Matthew 5:21-26**.
 1. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that *whoever is angry with his brother without a cause** shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of

the council. But *whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire*. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. *Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.*" (**Matthew 5:21-26**, NKJV)

- a. [** NOTE: In **Matthew 5:22a**. the words "without cause" are found in the KJV and NKJV, but not in many other modern versions. For further discussion on this, see the Appendix at the end of these notes.*]
- iii. The first sin Jesus addresses is regarding *how you treat your brother*. He makes three points here:
 1. Cannot *be angry* with him without cause;
 2. Cannot *lash out verbally* toward him; and
 3. Must do your best to reconcile the conflict quickly, having a forgiving heart toward your offending brother.
 - iv. This issue that Jesus addresses first is easy to overlook. It does not get the attention that other matters (such as nonresistance or permanence of marriage) do in our circles.
 1. However, if you take His words seriously, this first challenge is actually very difficult.
 2. One of the things you might be tempted to say, in your defense is that simply hating someone or venting your frustration verbally toward something is a relatively minor sin. Certainly, it is not in the same league as 'major sins' such as murder, sexual immorality, or idolatry, is it?
 3. Also, doesn't James say that you need to be a perfect person to keep your tongue from slipping up and sinning with what comes out of your mouth? Who among us has achieved perfection spiritually? Doesn't God realize that, and cut us a break, realizing that no one is perfect?

- a. “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.” (**James 3:2**, NKJV)
4. **Question:** How serious are the sins we just read about, regarding how we feel about and how we treat our brother, in the eyes of Jesus?
 - a. He indicates in what we just read that a person will go to hell over these things, if he or she does not repent.
- c. **Question:** Is this strong teaching regarding what comes out of our mouths a ‘one-off’ (not appearing anywhere else in Jesus’ teaching) or did He speak about this sin elsewhere?
- d. In the Sermon on the Plain, in **Luke 6**, Jesus again highlights the importance of what comes out of our mouths.
 - i. “For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” (**Luke 6:43–45**, NKJV)
 1. Here, Jesus teaches the importance of what we speak by using metaphors.
 2. We are like trees, and what we speak is like the fruit coming from the tree (showing the tree to be either good or bad).
 3. What comes out of the overflow of a man’s mouth reveals what is in his heart.
- e. In **Matthew 12**, Jesus again touches on the sins that proceed from our mouths.
 - i. Read **Matthew 12:33-37**.
 - ii. “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 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. But I say to you that *for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.*

For by your words you will be justified, and *by your words you will be condemned.*" (**Matthew 12:33–37**, NKJV)

- iii. This is very strong language that Jesus is using. He uses a parable about a good tree vs. a bad tree to make his point.
 1. In this case, the fruit (good or bad) is what comes out of a person's mouth. That reveals the nature of his or her heart,
- iv. Jesus teaches that we can *lose our salvation* because of what comes out of our mouths.
 1. "But I say to you that for every idle [*or careless, reckless*] word men may speak, they [*men*] will give account of it in the day of judgment." (**Matthew 12:36**, NKJV)
 - a. He then goes on to say that we will *justified or condemned* by the words that come out of our mouths! (**Matthew 12:37**)
 2. Therefore, according to Jesus, what comes out of our mouths is very important. It can lead to us being condemned on the Day of Judgment (and not just for denying the faith or denying Jesus during our lives here).
 - a. While many teach that we will be saved merely by saying the right words (for example, saying "the sinner's prayer"). Some believers try to draw on **Romans 10:9** to support this idea.
 - i. "...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (**Romans 10:9**, NKJV)
 3. **Question:** Does Jesus mean this literally, or is He exaggerating here to make a point? Will we *really* be subject to judgment based on *careless things that come out of our mouths*?
 - a. **Answer:** Yes; Jesus already answered that question, in the first sin He addressed in the Sermon on the Mount, in **Matthew 5**.
 - b. From Theophylact, a very practical Biblical commentator writing on this passage, about 900 years ago:

- i. “Here He strikes fear into our hearts, that we will give an account for even a careless word, that is, any lying, slanderous, indecent or mocking word. Then He brings forth testimony from Scripture, lest He appear to be speaking His own words. ‘By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned’ (perhaps loosely based on **Job 15:6** or **Ecclesiastes 10:12**).”
 1. (Source: Theophylact, *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Matthew*, Chrysostom Press, 2020, pp. 106-107)
- f. Jesus touches on this again in **Matthew 15** / **Mark 7**, when he gets into a conflict with the scribes and Pharisees over ritual hand washing and man-made traditions.
 - i. “[*Jesus said*] Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But *those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man*. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.” (**Matthew 15:17–20**, NKJV)
 1. It is what *comes out of* our mouths (not what *goes into* our mouths) that defiles us!
- g. In **Matthew 24** and **25**, Jesus explains what He will be looking for in His disciples (His servants who He has left behind) when He returns.
 - i. “But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (**Matthew 24:48–51**, NKJV)
 - ii. He identifies *two problems* with the wicked servants:
 1. They became morally lax (eating and drinking with drunkards), giving in to their flesh.
 2. They were abusive toward their fellow servants, rather than taking care of them.

- a. We can be physically abusive to our brothers and sisters, or verbally abusive.
- b. When Jesus returns, He will not be pleased with us if He finds we have not treated our brothers with love!

III. From the Apostles: Peter, James and Paul also Addressed this Topic

- a. Peter calls us to follow the example of Jesus.
- b. Peter calls us to live here as sojourners and pilgrims, living in submission to those having authority over us, even if they are harsh. He speaks about honoring the king, servants being submissive to their masters, wives submitting to their husbands, and husbands living in a considerate way with their wives. He points to the example of Jesus:
 - i. Read **1 Peter 2:21-25**.
 - ii. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth” (Isaiah 53:9); who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:21–25, NKJV)*
 - 1. We are called to *follow the example of Jesus*. In **Isaiah 53** it prophesied about Him on the cross, that even when rejected and suffering, *He did not revile or threaten others*.
 - iii. Read **1 Peter 3:8-12**.
 - 1. Peter here quotes from **Psalms 33/34**.
 - a. In that psalm, David explains that the man who fears God is protected by the angel of the Lord, and God hears his prayers.
 - b. David proceeds to teach *what it means to fear the Lord*. He explains what it involves.
 - i. The first characteristic: to refrain from speaking evil and from speaking deceit with one’s lips (avoid sins of speech).

- ii. The second characteristic: to seek peace and pursue it.
- iv. Read **1 Peter 4:7-11**.
 1. Love others, offer hospitality *without grumbling*, speak as the words of God.
- c. From the Epistle of James.
 - i. Recall that Martin Luther denigrated the letter of James. Following in that pattern, many who have been influenced by Luther, particularly Protestants, have tended to minimize the importance of what James teaches. However, it contains very practical lessons for us related to our own salvation.
 - ii. Read **James 1:19-20**.
 1. “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” (**James 1:19–20**, NKJV)
 - a. We must be swift to listen, slow to speak, and slow to wrath.
 - b. This calls for great self-control and respect for the other person.
 - c. We must listen to the other person fully, before responding!
 2. This is another place where we are called to imitate the character of God. Recall that *God Himself* is described as patient, longsuffering and slow to anger. (**Exodus 34:6**)
 - iii. Read **James 1:26**.
 1. “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.” (**James 1:26**, NKJV)
 - a. Think about what James says here. Regardless of all the religious things a Christian may be doing (attending church, giving financially, making all the outward observances, leaving behind many extreme sins of one’s past life), if someone does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, *his religion is WORTHLESS!*
 - b. All their religious activity is *for nothing!*

iv. Read **James 3:1-12**.

1. Examples of the tongue being like a ship's rudder, the bit on a horse, or a small kindled fire that spreads.
2. Every kind of land and sea animal has been tamed... *but not the tongue of man!*
 - a. Self-control in this area (what comes out of our mouths) is very hard.
 - b. Also, have to deal with the hatred and selfishness in our own hearts (that eventually overflows from our mouths).

v. Read **James 4:11-12**.

1. "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?" (**James 4:11-12**, NKJV)

vi. Read **James 5:9**.

1. "Do not *grumble against one another*, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!" (**James 5:9**, NKJV)

vii. Read **James 5:12**.

1. "But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,' lest you fall into judgment." (**James 5:12**, NKJV)
2. Here James is recalling what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:33-37**, in Sermon on the Mount. We sin when we swear, as well as when we make a commitment with our mouth and don't keep it.
 - a. If we can't keep a prior commitment, need to go back to the person and explain that.
 - b. This is an extremely hard teaching to follow. It will result in you making fewer commitments and promises.

V. From Paul's Letters

- a. From **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**, Paul explains that there are important lessons for us Christians that are contained in the 'map' of the Exodus journey of the Israelites, found in the books of **Exodus** and Numbers.
 - i. "Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.' Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; *nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.* Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." (**1 Corinthians 10:6-11**, NKJV)
 - ii. Note that one of the four or five sins that led to the death of the Israelites in the Wilderness was *complaining* (=murmuring or *grumbling* in some other translations).
 - iii. **Question:** What did the Israelites complain about?
 1. They complained about lack of food;
 2. Lack of variety in the food (bored with manna every day for 40 years; looked back longingly on the leeks, garlic, onions, etc, that they had while slaves back in Egypt);
 3. Lack of water;
 4. Didn't like their leadership (Moses and Aaron);
 5. Didn't like Moses' wife, that he had married a foreigner; and
 6. Didn't like the mission, God's plan for them to enter and conquer the land of the Canaanites. Their enemies seemed too large and powerful; after spies returned from Canaan, the people wanted to return to Egypt.
 - iv. Note that in the eyes of the Lord, complaining (venting, even in the case of authentically expressing their feelings in the face of real challenges) had similar consequences to sins we would take much more seriously, such as putting the Lord to the test, idolatry or sexual immorality!

- v. Paul said that what happened to thousands of Israelites who fell in the Wilderness and never made it to the Promised Land is a lesson for us.
 1. If we fall into those same sins, we will not make it to our goal (heaven), either...even though we have been “baptized”, have been “drinking from Christ, the Rock”, and have been eating and drinking the spiritual food and drink (taking the Lord’s Supper regularly).
- b. Read **Ephesians 4:25-5:7**.
 - i. Put away lying, anger, wrath and evil speaking.
 - ii. Let no corrupt word proceed from your mouth.
 - iii. In this passage, many of the sins Paul calls us to leave behind are directly related to what comes out of our mouths.
 - iv. It seems to me that there are two categories of *self-justifiers* when it comes to sins of the tongue.
 1. **Type 1: Those who justify what comes out of their mouths** (complaining, angry outbursts, defaming others, slander, gossip, etc.) **by insisting that they are simply being ‘authentic’ and ‘real’** in expressing exactly how they feel.
 - a. They may see themselves as being smarter than most people, in that they are able to recognize and articulate real problems that they see in others.
 - b. They tend to compliment themselves for being more authentic, bold and sincere than others in speaking about what is on their hearts.
 2. **Type 2: Those who tend to be *quiet* about their attitudes, *mostly holding in the negative things in their hearts*.**
 - a. They tend to look down on their more talkative bothers, and see themselves as better in that while they might feel all the same things, they are keeping a tighter rein on their tongues than the first group.
 - b. However, they are still full of anger, bitterness and complaining in their hearts. Their attitudes do leak out even in the few words they do share, which can come out with great destructive force.
 - i. Theophylact shared some insights into this passage in his commentary on **Ephesians**. From his remarks on **Ephesians 4:32**:

3. **“Ephesians 4:32(a) ‘And be kind to one another, be compassionate, forgiving one another.’**
4. “Simply avoiding evil is not sufficient to attain the kingdom of heaven; we must also do good deeds, as the psalmist says: ‘Decline from evil and do good’ (**Psalm 33/34:15** and **Psalm 36/37:27**). Simply by failing to do good deeds, we will be thrown into gehenna, even if we have not done evil. This is clear from many passages in the gospels: from the parable of the five foolish virgins, *and the parable of the sinners standing on the left, who were condemned, not because they did evil, but because they did not give alms. Therefore, Paul, who first forbade us to commit foul deeds, now beseeches us to practice good deeds. Be kind, he tells us, instead of displaying anger; be compassionate, instead of showing bitterness; and be... forgiving of one another, instead of giving vent to blasphemy and malice.*
 - a. (Source: Theophylact, *The Explanation of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians*; Chrysostom Press, 2013; chapter 4, p. 71)
 - b. We are called to do much more than simply to stop doing evil. We must replace former wicked practices with *good things*: love, kindness, and tenderness in our hearts.
 - c. It is not just a matter of keeping quiet and “stuffing” our anger toward our brothers. We must change our hearts into fountains that pour forth good things from our mouths.
- c. More from Paul on the same subject: Read **Colossians 3:5-17** and **4:5-6**
 - i. “But now you yourselves are to *put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth*. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him....” (**Colossians 3:8-10**, NKJV)
 - ii. “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, *put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another*, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things *put on love, which is the bond of perfection*. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.” (**Colossians 3:12-15**, NKJV)

- iii. *“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” (Colossians 4:6, NKJV)*
- d. Again from Paul. Read **Philippians 2:14-15**.
 - i. *“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,” (Philippians 2:14-15, NKJV)*
 - ii. Unlike the church in Corinth, note that the Philippian church was doing rather well. Yet even when writing to such an exemplary church, Paul challenges them regarding what comes out of their mouths (specifically: complaining and disputing).

VI. Conclusion

- a. What we say; and how we treat others with what comes out of our mouths is extremely important.
 - i. Jesus said we would be judged by every careless word. He meant it, and as Theophylact said, that should scare us!
 - ii. This was the FIRST point He made in the Sermon on the Mount.
 - iii. James confirmed the importance of this in practical challenges for each of us as Christians. If we don't keep a tight rein on our tongues, our religion is WORTHLESS.
- b. Sins of the tongue come in many forms, including:
 - i. Speaking harshly or demeaningly toward others.
 - ii. Swearing or using crude language.
 - iii. Gossip
 - iv. Grumbling and complaining
 - v. Interrupting and not respectfully listening to others.
 - vi. Not keeping our commitments; let our 'yes' be 'yes'.
 - vii. Not encouraging and exhorting one another.
- c. What comes out of our mouths is from the overflow of our hearts. It reveals a heart filled with selfishness, hatred, bitterness, etc.
- d. If you want to take up the Thomas a Kempis challenge to root one sin out of your life every year, this is a great one to start with!

VII. Appendix – Can We Be Angry Without Sinning? (Considering of Matt. 5:22a)

a. **Question:** Is it *ever* acceptable to God for us to be angry with someone else?

i. Note that in the KJV and NKJV (and Byzantine/ Majority Text of the New Testament, in Greek) it says “*without cause*”. However, in N-A/UBS text upon which most modern New Testament translations are based, the phrase “without cause” is absent.

ii. From Theophylact:

1. “He who ‘*is angry with his brother without good cause*’ (**Matthew 5:22a**) is condemned; but if anyone is angry for good reason either by way of chastisement or out of spiritual zeal, he is not condemned. For even Paul spoke words of anger to Elymas the Magician and to the high priest, not ‘without good cause’ but out of zeal. But when we get angry over money or opinions, then it is ‘without good cause’.”
2. “‘*And whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be liable to the council.*’ (**Matthew 5:22b**) ‘The council means the court of the Hebrews. ‘Raca’ means something like ‘Hey, you!’ as when we say to someone whom we scorn, ‘Hey, you, get out of here!’
3. “The Lord exhorts us in these matters because He desires to teach us to be strict even in small things and to give honor to one another. Some say that ‘Raca’ is a Syriac word for ‘despicable’ or ‘scum’. Therefore, whoever insults his brother as ‘despicable’ will be liable to the council of the holy apostles when they sit to judge the twelve tribes.
4. “‘*But whoever says, You fool, shall be liable to the gehenna of fire*’ (**Matthew 5:22c**).
5. “There are many who say and believe that this is too grievous and severe a judgement. But it is not. For is he who would deny the existence of his brother’s faculties of reason and thought, those characteristics by which we differ from the beasts, is such a man not deserving of gehenna?
6. “For he who reviles and insults, dissolves love; and when love is dissolved, all the virtues are destroyed along with it, just as when love is present it unites to itself all the virtues. Therefore, he who hurls insults, destroys all the virtues by tearing love to shreds, and rightly does he deserve the fire of hell.”

a. (Source: Theophylact, *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Matthew*, Chrysostom Press, 2020, p. 50)

- b. Clearly, the Bible's Theophylact was reading from about 900 years ago included the phrase, "without good cause."
 - c. He explains that Paul was angry at times, but with good reason, and gives examples.
 - i. Recall that Jesus also, on occasion, expressed righteous anger. (Jesus driving out the money changers from the temple in **John 2**; Jesus rebuking the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and wickedness in **Matthew 23**.) Likewise, Peter (for example, with Ananias and Sapphira).
 - d. Taking **Matthew 5:22** literally regarding the severe punishment for speaking badly about a brother may seem extreme to us. However, Theophylact defends what Jesus says. This is a serious sin!
 - i. Recall also that our brother, like any man, has been made "in the image of God". (**Genesis 1:27**)
- b. Back to the question about whether a Christian can be angry with someone else under certain circumstances.
- i. Read **Ephesians 4:25-32**.
 - ii. "Be angry and do not sin." (This statement by Paul in **Ephesians 4** was taken from **Psalms 4:4-5**).
 - iii. From this passage, it seems to me that there *are* circumstances in which someone can be angry and yet *not sin*.