

Ruin of Words

He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction. —Proverbs 13:3

We may think we are speaking words of wisdom but become careless and do not think about how our words may hurt the hearer. We can cause unnecessary pain and destroy relationships. This last week I was talking to someone I care deeply about and I only meant to help but I could see by the look on their face that my words were destructive.

The damage was done in a matter of seconds. Because my words were true but presented in a hurtful way, any apology I made seemed empty. I asked forgiveness and my prayer is that of the Psalmist, "Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth, keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalm 141: 3). I uttered only six words but the power of those words was destructive. The hurt that they caused the hearer, the speaker, and the Lord was excessive.

The lesson I hope I learned was before speaking whatever is on my mind, check with the Holy Spirit to direct the words in a compassionate way. It may not even be the words I say, it may be how we say them that needs to be double checked by the Holy Spirit.

Words can slander a reputation, cause a divide in a friendship, devastate a child, bruise a spirit, and destroy a testimony. How terrible the ruin caused by a few careless words? Matthew Henry warns, "Since my lips are the door to my words, let grace keep that door, that no word may go out which in any way dishonors God or hurts others."

It is my prayer that I will take the words that I speak as seriously as James, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire by hell" (James 3: 6).