

The Slippery Slope of Flattery

By: David Halbrook

When buying a car we look for one that will provide a smooth ride, not one that jolts and jostles on every bump in the road. When buying a car a smooth ride is fine, but smoothness of speech is not well spoken of in Scripture. When the Bible refers to someone speaking smoothly, it doesn't refer to how many words and individual stumbles over, it refers to someone who chooses and uses their words in such a way that the hearer is taken on "a ride," deceived.

If you try to climb a steep hill, there must be enough footing in order to progress toward the top, but if the hillside is slick there is little hop of climbing that hill. In the faith, we can be grounded and stable (**Col 1:23**), but flattering words are slick. In **Psalm 73:18**, the Hebrew words that is often translated "flattery" is here translated "slippery places." The idea behind this word is that if we use or believe flattering words, we are in a slippery place. Beware of those things the Bible warns of as flattery.

"I will not show partiality to any man or use flattery toward any person. For I do not know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away" (**Job 32:21-22**). God does not approve of flattering titles. By using them the hearer believes himself to be more important than he is. Each soul is important to God but flattering titles show partiality, against which Christians are warned because it is not in the character of God, whose character we are to follow (**Acts 10:34**).

The Pharisees loved to be flattered by titles, and Jesus addresses this foolishness (**Matt 23:5-10**). Today, titles which elevate men to places God did not place them abound in the religious world. Why are there "pastors" who have no wife or children (**1 Tim 3:2, 4**) and men bowing the knee to a man they call "Holy Father" (**John 17:11**)? When men believe that they are a pastor, though biblically unqualified, or that they are a "Holy Father," they have fallen into the snare of accepting flattering titles.

"Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak" (**Psalm 12:2**). The Psalmist warns of those who speak with a double heart. Here a person speaks useless, idle words to gain some advantage--maybe to gain a trust to steal from them or to commit adultery with their mate. Perhaps a preacher will lie regarding his convictions to receive support--this is using flattering words, false words which gain the confidence of others for the sake of personal gain. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he never did such a thing among them (**1 Thess 2:5**)



Spouses can be guilty of using flattering speech in order to gain something which they want. No Christian should use flattering words for personal gain, but should show wisdom and understanding in our speech (**Jas 2:13**).

"May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, those who say, 'With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?'" (**Ps 12:3-4**). The smooth speaker is often the proud speaker. In this case they are flattering themselves.

Those who announce their own strength forget God. Solomon said that these kind of people are headed for a fall (**Prov 16:18**). To remain faithful to the Lord, we must be careful to remember that we must follow His way if we will be successful in getting to heaven. When we begin to believe that we can get to heaven without faithfully attending the “assembling of ourselves,” we have a proud mind (**Heb 10:24-26**).

“And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever. For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions’” (**Is 30:8-10**). Isaiah warns the people who are asking the prophets to prophesy smooth things. In so doing, the people desire to avoid the bumpy road of hearing a message that will jolt their conscience because of their sin and demand repentance. They prefer the smooth road of a smooth message that will be positive, non-condemning, and non-controversial. Paul warns Timothy of the audience who wants their ears tickled. They will seek men who are willing to comply with that kind of preaching (**2 Tim 4:3**). This preacher will talk often of heaven yet rarely of hell and who God said will be there. When an audience, which is made of people headed on the path to hell, hear a message that does not awaken them to their compromise and sin, they are simply being flattered. Of this preacher and audience, Jeremiah says “my people love to have it so. But what will you do when the end comes?” (**Jer 5:31b**). By failing to warn and properly discipline Christians who are guilty of sin, men follow the wide and broad path to hell (**Matt 7:13**).

Surely thou didst
set them
in slippery places:
thou castedst
them down into
destruction.

Psalms 73:16

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The Bible warns of those who are willing to speak flattering speech, but it also warns of those who are willing to hear it. All flattering speakers, along with those whom they deceive, will be separated from God. Therefore, let us not be deceived (**1 Cor 6:9; Gal 6:7**).