

The Wicked Art of Flattery

Series 1-15

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VerseQuest Ministries





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The Wicked Art of Flattery

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The Wicked Art of Flattery

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The Wicked Art of Flattery

Series Introduction

Flattery is one of the most underestimated sins in the Bible because it usually does not look like sin when it first appears. It comes smiling. It speaks softly. It knows how to sound kind, loyal, spiritual, supportive, humble, affectionate, and harmless. It rarely announces itself as deception. It does not walk into the room wearing a badge that says, "I am here to manipulate you." It comes as praise. It comes as encouragement. It comes as admiration. It comes as sympathy. It comes as religious language. It comes as political promise. It comes as friendship. It comes as concern. But the King James Bible tears the mask off and shows that flattery is not harmless speech. It is often lying speech, proud speech, double-hearted speech, seductive speech, covetous speech, corrupting speech, and ruin-working speech.

The purpose of this series is to examine flattery the way God defines it, not the way the flesh excuses it. The world treats flattery like a social skill. Business teaches it as persuasion. Politics uses it as strategy. False religion dresses it up as encouragement. Seducers use it as bait. Cowards use it to avoid rebuke. Climbers use it to gain position. Talebearers use it to gain access. False prophets use it to keep people asleep. But the Bible connects flattery with wicked mouths, lying tongues, strange women, double hearts, talebearers, nets, flattering titles, corrupt rulers, false visions, covetous ministry, and spiritual ruin. That tells you God does not treat flattery as a small matter. He treats it as a moral and spiritual danger.

The opening verse that sets the tone for the study is Psalm 5:9: "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue." That verse does not describe a harmless compliment. It describes a rotten inner condition coming out through polished speech. The flatterer has "no faithfulness" in his mouth. His inward part is "very wickedness." His throat is "an open sepulchre." Then he flatters with his tongue. That means flattery can be the perfume sprayed over a corpse. It can be pleasant on the surface and putrid underneath. It can sound like friendship while carrying death in the throat.

This series will make an important distinction from the beginning. The Bible is not condemning honest encouragement. It is not condemning proper honour. It is not condemning brotherly affection, kindness, gratitude, comfort, or praise that is rooted in truth. A man can encourage a brother without flattering him. A wife can praise her husband without manipulating him. A preacher can comfort the saints without stroking their flesh. A Christian can give honour where honour is due without turning a servant into an idol. The issue is not whether words are pleasant. The issue is whether they are true. The issue is not

whether speech is kind. The issue is whether the kindness is righteous. Flattery is not truthful praise. Flattery is praise used as bait, as cover, as manipulation, as self-advancement, or as a substitute for faithful correction.

One of the most searching truths in this study is that flattery does not always begin with what a man says to others. Sometimes it begins with what a man says to himself. Psalm 36:2 says, “For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.” That verse exposes self-deception. A man can become his own flatterer. He can rename his pride as confidence, his rebellion as discernment, his bitterness as conviction, his lust as weakness, his cowardice as wisdom, and his compromise as balance. Before his mouth ever deceives another person, his heart may already be deceiving him. The flatterer’s first congregation may be his own soul.

This series will also show that flattery is one of the chief tools of seduction. Proverbs repeatedly warns about the strange woman who “flattereth with her words.” She does not begin with a knife in her hand. She begins with words in her mouth. She makes sin sound special, personal, justified, and irresistible. She tells a man what his ego wants to hear before she leads him where his conscience should have feared to go. This is not only a warning about sexual temptation, though it certainly is that. It is a picture of how temptation works in general. Sin rarely introduces itself honestly. It flatters. It tells a man he deserves more, he is misunderstood, he can handle it, he will not be caught, and God will understand. The devil’s bait is often soaked in compliments.

The study will then move into the double-hearted nature of flattery. Psalm 12:2 says, “They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.” That phrase “double heart” is the key. Flattery says one thing while meaning another. It is verbal two-facedness. It is public praise with private motives. It is the mouth saying “brother” while the heart says “opportunity.” It is the smile in one room and the poison in another. A flattering mouth is not merely soft. It is split. That is why the next verse says, “The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.” God is not impressed with polished lips when the heart is divided.

Another practical warning in this series will be the connection between the flatterer and the talebearer. Proverbs 20:19 says, “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.” That verse shows that flattery is often used to gain access. The flatterer praises you so you will lower the gate, open the door, reveal your thoughts, expose your wounds, and trust him with what should have been guarded. Then the talebearer carries what he collected into another circle. That is why charm must never be confused with character. Some people do not compliment you because they love you. They compliment you because they are fishing.

The Bible also teaches that rebuke is better than flattery. Proverbs 28:23 says, “He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.” This series will press hard against the weak modern idea that love never corrects. The Bible says a rebuke may sting at first, but it produces better fruit afterward than flattery. Flattery gives a man a pillow while he sleeps near the edge of a cliff. Rebuke shakes him awake. Flattery lets him feel good while he rots. Rebuke wounds the flesh to save the soul. A man who truly loves you will tell you when you are wrong. A flatterer will watch you walk into destruction and compliment your shoes on the way down.

Proverbs 29:5 gives one of the most vivid pictures in the whole study: “A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.” Flattery is not merely noise. It is a trap. It has design, intention, placement, timing, and prey. The flatterer is not merely talking. He is setting something. This series will show how flattery appeals to pride so the victim becomes easier to catch. The net works because the victim enjoys the bait. A man who believes every compliment becomes vulnerable to manipulation. A preacher who feeds on applause becomes vulnerable to compromise. A leader who loves admiration becomes vulnerable to corruption. The flatterer does not have to push a man into the net if he can make him admire himself while stepping into it.

The series will also deal with flattering titles, because Job 32:21-22 gives a needed warning: “Let me not, I pray you, accept any man’s person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away.” This is a direct rebuke to the religious celebrity machine. Men love titles. They love being called great, revered, apostolic, prophetic, scholarly, anointed, influential, and indispensable. But Elihu feared God too much to inflate men with flattering titles. There is proper respect for age, office, labour, and authority, but flattering titles go beyond honour and begin feeding flesh. They turn servants into celebrities and preachers into untouchable personalities.

The later essays will move from personal morality into political, prophetic, and institutional corruption. Daniel 11 shows that flatteries are used by vile persons to obtain power and corrupt people. A vile person often does not rise by announcing himself as vile. He comes peaceably. He tells every group what it wants to hear. He strokes ambition, soothes fear, promises advantage, and flatters his way into authority. That is why flattery is one of the oldest tools of corrupt leadership. Tyrants, cult leaders, politicians, false prophets, and religious climbers all understand the power of telling people what feeds their flesh. Smooth speeches can carry a kingdom into bondage.

Daniel 11:32 adds another layer: “And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do

exploits.” Flattery does not merely deceive innocent people. It often corrupts those who already have a wicked bend. It finds the crack and widens it. If a man secretly wants compromise, flattery gives him permission. If he secretly wants position, flattery offers advancement. If he secretly wants rebellion, flattery tells him he is brave. If he secretly hates correction, flattery tells him he is being persecuted. But the cure is right there in the verse. The people that do know their God shall be strong. A man anchored in God does not need the devil’s compliments.

The series will also warn that flattery can attach itself to good causes. Daniel 11:34 says, “many shall cleave to them with flatteries.” That is a subtle and necessary warning. Not everyone who joins himself to a faithful work is sincere. Some cleave with flatteries. They admire the stand, praise the courage, speak highly of the doctrine, and act loyal, but their attachment is not rooted in truth. Some want association. Some want influence. Some want access. Some want to ride the wave. Some want to be seen near strength without possessing it themselves. This warning is especially needed in an age of movement-building, ministry platforms, social media followings, and public controversies. Praise is not proof of loyalty. Time, truth, pressure, correction, and doctrine reveal who is real.

Ezekiel 12:24 takes the matter into false spiritual speech, where God condemns “vain vision” and “flattering divination.” That phrase describes religious lies that tell people what they want to hear in the name of God. Flattering divination says peace when there is no peace. It tells the rebellious they are blessed, the covetous they are favored, the proud they are chosen, the compromised they are covered, and the disobedient they are entering their season. It is the language of false prophecy, prosperity preaching, destiny talk, and emotional manipulation that passes itself off as the Spirit of God. It does not pierce the conscience. It massages it. It flatters people into spiritual sleep.

The series closes with the apostle Paul, because he gives the clean alternative to all of this corruption. First Thessalonians 2:5 says, “For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness.” Paul did not build churches with flattery. He did not manipulate saints with sweet talk. He did not hide covetousness behind spiritual vocabulary. He did not preach to become popular, rich, admired, or untouchable. His statement shows that true ministry can be affectionate without being flattering, bold without being cruel, persuasive without being manipulative, and loving without becoming a salesman. The cure for the wicked art of flattery is the faithful ministry of truth.

This 15-part series is meant to expose flattery from every biblical angle: personal, moral, relational, religious, political, prophetic, and ministerial. It will show that flattery is not harmless praise. It is often the language of deceit. It is a tool of seduction, corruption, manipulation, and ruin. It is used by the self-deceived heart, the strange woman, the

talebearer, the double-hearted friend, the corrupt leader, the false prophet, and the covetous minister. But it will also show the better way: plain speech, faithful rebuke, honest encouragement, sound doctrine, pure motives, and the fear of God.

The final burden of this series is simple: love truth more than praise. Let the Bible search the heart. Let faithful wounds do their work. Let no flatterer buy your judgment, feed your pride, gain your secrets, corrupt your doctrine, or move your feet into a net. Let no false prophet soothe you when God is trying to wake you. Let no religious celebrity become too great to be judged by the Book. Let no smooth speaker carry you into bondage. The world is full of flattering lips, but the Bible believer has something better: the words of God, sharper than any twoedged sword, faithful enough to wound, clean enough to heal, and true enough to stand when every flattering mouth is finally cut off.

1 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - When Smooth Speech Comes From a Rotten Heart

Introduction

Flattery is one of those sins that walks into the room wearing perfume, smiling like a friend, and talking like a saint. It does not usually come with a fist. It does not usually announce itself as hatred, manipulation, deceit, or wickedness. It comes in soft shoes. It speaks in polished phrases. It studies the person in front of it, learns what that person wants to hear, and then feeds him a carefully seasoned lie. That is why the Bible does not treat flattery as some harmless social habit or innocent personality quirk. The King James Bible puts flattery in the company of lying tongues, wicked hearts, strange women, talebearers, corrupt rulers, false prophets, and covetous ministers. That is not an accident. God knows exactly what flattering speech is. He knows what is behind the smile. He knows what is hiding under the compliment. He knows when praise is true and when praise is bait.

Psalms 5:9 says, "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue." That verse is not describing a man who simply needs a little etiquette training. It is describing a rotten inner condition that shows up through the mouth. The flatterer has "no faithfulness" in his mouth. That means his speech cannot be trusted because his heart is not governed by truth. Then the verse goes deeper and says, "their inward part is very wickedness." There is the source. The tongue is only the outlet. The mouth is only the pipe. The words are only the smoke coming out of the chimney. The fire is burning down inside. Then God gives you the picture: "their throat is an open sepulchre." A sepulchre is a grave. It may be carved,

polished, decorated, and respected, but inside it is death. That is flattery. It is a pleasant sound coming out of a graveyard.

This study begins with that foundation because a man will never understand flattery if he only studies tone, manners, charm, compliments, and social behavior. The Bible forces you below the surface. It makes you ask what is in the heart of the speaker. It makes you ask whether the words are faithful or faithless, true or manufactured, loving or strategic, honest or manipulative. God is not against kindness. God is not against encouragement. God is not against honouring those to whom honour is due. The Bible says, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips" (Proverbs 27:2). So praise itself is not the enemy. Truthful praise has its place. Faithful encouragement has its place. Brotherly affection has its place. But flattery is praise divorced from truth. It is kindness divorced from righteousness. It is charity counterfeited by manipulation. It is the devil's compliment, and it has ruined more men than open opposition ever could.

Chapter 1: Flattery Is Not Kindness, It Is Counterfeit Kindness

One of the first mistakes people make is confusing flattery with kindness. That is exactly why it works. If flattery looked cruel, nobody would receive it. If it sounded like hatred, nobody would open the door. But it sounds friendly. It sounds helpful. It sounds warm. It knows how to imitate encouragement. It knows how to quote the language of love while operating by the motives of self-interest. Kindness tells the truth for your good. Flattery tells a lie for its own gain. Kindness is willing to bless you even if it receives nothing in return. Flattery gives praise as an investment and expects a return. Kindness can correct you when correction is needed. Flattery will let you march off a cliff as long as it can keep your favor on the way down.

The Bible never commands believers to be rude, harsh, mean-spirited, or needlessly offensive. There is a big difference between plain speech and fleshly cruelty. The Lord Jesus Christ could speak tenderly to a broken sinner and sharply to a proud hypocrite. Paul could write with tears and also rebuke with apostolic authority. The issue is not whether words are gentle or strong. The issue is whether they are true. A soft answer can turn away wrath, but soft words can also hide poison. A rebuke can be hard to hear, but Proverbs 28:23 says, "He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue." The Bible puts faithful rebuke above flattering speech because rebuke may wound the ego while saving the man, but flattery comforts the ego while destroying the man.

Flattery is counterfeit kindness because it cares more about response than righteousness. It wants access. It wants advantage. It wants influence. It wants to be liked, trusted, promoted, favored, excused, or protected. It does not come to serve truth. It comes to use

truth's clothing. That is why a flatterer may sound more loving than a faithful friend. The faithful friend is bound by reality. He cannot tell you what is false merely because you want to hear it. The flatterer has no such burden. He can praise what should be rebuked, affirm what should be corrected, and celebrate what should be crucified. That is not love. That is a Judas kiss with better vocabulary.

Chapter 2: Flattery Reveals a Faithless Mouth

Psalm 5:9 begins with the mouth: "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth." That is a frightening statement because the mouth is one of the clearest indicators of what rules the heart. The Lord said, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). A man's words are not random accidents floating in the air. They are connected to something inside him. A faithful mouth is governed by truth. It may not always say everything. It may use wisdom. It may choose the right time. But it will not build relationships on lies. It will not feed a man poison and call it honey. It will not say "peace" where God says danger. A faithless mouth, on the other hand, uses words as tools without moral restraint.

When God says there is "no faithfulness" in their mouth, He is exposing speech that cannot be leaned on. That is the thing about flattering lips. They may be pleasant, but they are not dependable. You cannot build with them. You cannot trust them. You cannot measure truth by them. They shift according to advantage. They adjust according to audience. They say one thing to one person and another thing to another person. The flatterer's mouth is not a fountain of truth. It is a vending machine. Push the right button, offer the right reward, create the right opportunity, and out comes whatever word will serve the moment. That is a faithless mouth.

This is why believers must stop judging speech by smoothness. The devil has smooth preachers, smooth teachers, smooth politicians, smooth seducers, smooth salesmen, smooth church members, and smooth social media personalities. Smoothness proves nothing. A serpent is smooth too. The question is not, "Did that sound nice?" The question is, "Was it faithful?" Did it match the truth? Did it honour God? Did it help the hearer walk in righteousness? Did it come from a clean motive? Did it say what needed to be said or only what would gain favor? A faithless mouth can quote Bible verses when useful. It can use spiritual phrases. It can talk about love, grace, kindness, unity, and compassion. But if it is not bound to truth, it is only religious perfume over an open sepulchre.

Chapter 3: Flattery Comes From Inward Wickedness

Psalm 5:9 does not stop with the mouth. It says, "their inward part is very wickedness." That is where modern man refuses to go. He wants to discuss communication style, trauma,

personality types, social anxiety, sales techniques, relational dynamics, and emotional intelligence, but the Bible takes a scalpel and cuts straight into the inward part. God says the issue is wickedness. Not awkwardness. Not charm. Not mere habit. Wickedness. That does not mean every compliment is wicked. It means the kind of flattery condemned in Scripture proceeds from a heart that is willing to use words falsely for a sinful purpose.

A man may flatter because he wants control. He may flatter because he wants money. He may flatter because he wants access to a woman. He may flatter because he wants a pulpit. He may flatter because he wants to avoid accountability. He may flatter because he wants a following. He may flatter because he is too cowardly to tell the truth. He may flatter because he despises correction and knows others despise it too, so he builds a little kingdom where everyone applauds everyone else while the whole thing rots. Those motives are not harmless. They are inward wickedness wearing Sunday clothes. They are fleshly ambition with a soft voice.

The Bible-believing man has to learn to judge the root, not just the flower. Flattery may blossom into compliments, but the root may be pride, lust, greed, envy, fear, or ambition. That is why so much flattery appears around power. People flatter bosses, donors, celebrities, preachers, politicians, attractive women, wealthy men, and anyone else who can offer them something. The words are not free. They are currency. They are buying position. They are purchasing access. They are bribing the ego. A man who wants truth will not require you to flatter him. A man who loves righteousness will not demand that you pet his vanity. But a wicked heart knows how to use praise like a hook, and a proud heart knows how to swallow it.

Chapter 4: Flattery Is the Perfume of the Open Sepulchre

God's image in Psalm 5:9 is brutal: "their throat is an open sepulchre." That destroys the romance of flattering speech. Men hear smooth words and think of honey. God hears them and thinks of a grave. Men hear charm. God smells death. Men see polished manners. God sees a sepulchre opened up. That is the difference between human perception and divine judgment. Man is impressed by presentation. God looks inside the tomb. The outward part may be carved marble. The inward part is corruption. That is how flattery works. It decorates death with delightful language.

The throat is where the sound comes through. It is the passageway of speech. God calls that passage an open sepulchre because what proceeds from it is connected to death, not life. A faithful word can give life. A true rebuke can turn a man from destruction. A sound doctrine can strengthen the soul. A clean word fitly spoken can help a weary saint. But flattery does the opposite. It encourages pride. It hides danger. It strengthens delusion. It

rewards compromise. It gives a man confidence where he needs conviction. It tells him he is fine when he is falling apart. It tells him he is spiritual when he is carnal. It tells him he is wise when he is a fool. No wonder God calls it a grave.

This image also explains why flattery is so spiritually dangerous in churches. A church can have flattering preaching. A preacher can flatter the crowd by avoiding sin, judgment, hell, repentance, separation, holiness, sound doctrine, and the authority of the Book. He can speak in such a way that everyone leaves feeling approved, affirmed, admired, and untouched by the knife of Scripture. That ministry may look successful. It may be polished. It may be packed. It may be admired by the city. But if the truth is absent and the flesh is being stroked, the throat is still an open sepulchre. A sermon that flatters rebels is not compassion. It is embalming fluid.

Chapter 5: Flattery Is Bait for the Proud

Flattery works because there is something in fallen man that wants to believe it. That is the ugly truth. The flatterer supplies the bait, but pride supplies the appetite. A humble man is harder to trap with flattery because he already knows what he is without God. He knows his flesh is no good. He knows his heart is deceitful. He knows his righteousness is not worth boasting in. He knows every good thing he has came from the Lord. But a proud man is always hungry for confirmation. He wants someone to tell him he is exceptional, misunderstood, brilliant, needed, special, chosen, superior, and beyond correction. Flattery becomes the spoon that feeds that hunger.

This is why Proverbs 29:5 says, “A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.” The flatterer does not need to tackle his victim. He only has to set the net where pride wants to walk. A man who loves praise will step right into it. A preacher who feeds on compliments can be steered by them. A woman who needs constant admiration can be seduced by them. A leader who loves applause can be controlled by it. A young person raised on affirmation without correction can be ruined by it. The net is not always visible because the bait feels good. That is what makes it deadly. The victim enjoys the process of being captured.

The cure is not pretending encouragement is evil. The cure is humility under the Word of God. A man ought to be thankful when someone encourages him truthfully, but he should never become addicted to being praised. The moment a man needs flattery, he becomes purchasable. The moment he cannot receive rebuke, he becomes unstable. The moment he surrounds himself only with those who admire him, he has begun building his own trap. A Bible believer must learn to say, “Search me, O God, and know my heart” (Psalm 139:23),

not, “Flatter me, O man, and feed my ego.” The Book will tell you the truth. The flatterer will tell you what your flesh ordered from the menu.

Chapter 6: Flattery Imitates Grace While Rejecting Truth

One reason flattery is so successful among religious people is that it can imitate grace. It can sound patient. It can sound merciful. It can sound understanding. It can sound compassionate. But biblical grace never rejects truth. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). The Lord Jesus Christ was full of both. He did not use grace as an excuse to lie to people. He did not use kindness as a cover for cowardice. He did not flatter sinners into feeling safe in rebellion. He could say to the woman taken in adultery, “Neither do I condemn thee,” but He also said, “go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). That is grace and truth together. Flattery wants the first part without the second.

Modern religion is loaded with this counterfeit grace. It tells people God understands while leaving out that God commands. It tells people they are loved while never warning them they are wrong. It tells people they are valuable while never telling them they are vile sinners without Christ. It tells them they have purpose while never telling them they need pardon. It tells them Jesus accepts them while never telling them Christ died for their sins according to the scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures. That is not gospel preaching. That is religious flattery. It strokes the sinner’s self-image instead of pointing him to the blood.

True grace does not flatter the flesh. True grace tells the truth about sin and then tells the truth about the Saviour. True grace does not say man is wonderful. It says God is merciful. True grace does not hide the graveyard inside Adam. It says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), and then it says we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). That is not flattery. That is salvation truth. Flattery tells man he is better than he is. Grace tells man he is worse than he thinks, but Christ is better than he ever imagined.

Chapter 7: Flattery Must Be Answered With Plain Speech

The answer to flattery is not cruelty. It is plain speech governed by Scripture. A Bible believer does not need to become rude in order to avoid being flattering. He simply needs to be honest. Let “yea” be yea and “nay” be nay. Speak the truth in love. Give honour where honour is due. Encourage what is right. Rebuke what is wrong. Refuse to sell your words for favor. Refuse to use praise as bait. Refuse to become the kind of person who tells every crowd what it wants to hear. The world already has enough speech merchants. God’s people are supposed to be witnesses.

Plain speech is hated because it cannot be easily controlled. A flatterer can be bought with approval. A plain man cannot. A flatterer adjusts his message to the room. A plain man adjusts his words to the Book. A flatterer asks, "What will this cost me?" A faithful man asks, "Is it true?" That is why Paul could say, "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness" (1 Thessalonians 2:5). Paul's ministry was not built on stroking people. He loved the saints, laboured among them, warned them, taught them, comforted them, and suffered for them, but he did not flatter them. He did not hide greed under spiritual talk. He did not use words as a cloak.

That is the pattern needed now. Homes need less flattery and more truth. Churches need less flattery and more doctrine. Social media needs less image polishing and more honest warning. Ministries need less donor stroking and more fear of God. Friendships need less ego feeding and more faithful wounds. Proverbs 27:6 says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." That verse belongs right beside the whole subject. The flatterer may kiss you while the faithful friend wounds you, but the wound may save you and the kiss may sell you. Judas had a kiss. Nathan had a rebuke. Only one of them was doing God's work.

Conclusion

The wicked art of flattery begins with a rotten heart and travels through a faithless mouth. That is the first lesson that must be nailed down before anything else in this series. Flattery is not just excessive praise. It is not merely being overly nice. It is not the same thing as encouragement, honour, affection, gratitude, or kindness. The Bible exposes flattery as deceitful speech proceeding from inward corruption. Psalm 5:9 gives the anatomy: no faithfulness in the mouth, very wickedness in the inward part, an open sepulchre in the throat, and flattery on the tongue. That is God's diagnosis. It is not flattering, but it is true.

The reason this matters is because people are trained from childhood to respond to praise. Compliments open doors. Praise lowers guards. Admiration creates trust. That can be good when the words are true and the motive is clean. But when praise is false, strategic, covetous, seductive, or self-serving, it becomes a trap. The devil understands the human ego. He knows some men can survive persecution but cannot survive applause. He knows some women can resist open hostility but fall for admiration. He knows some preachers will stand against critics but bend for flatterers. He knows the flesh would rather be praised than purified. That is why smooth speech is one of his oldest tools.

So the first answer to flattery is to love truth more than compliments. Love the Book more than applause. Love correction more than ego. Love faithful wounds more than deceitful kisses. A man who is governed by the King James Bible does not need the devil's perfume

sprayed over a corpse. He needs the clean, sharp, living words of God. If praise is true, receive it humbly and give God the glory. If rebuke is true, receive it humbly and get right. But do not be bought by smooth talk, do not be steered by flattering lips, and do not become the kind of man whose words sound sweet while his heart is rotten. God sees past the smile. God hears past the compliment. God knows when the tongue is only painting flowers on a tomb.

2 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - Flattering God With the Mouth While Lying With the Tongue

Introduction

There is a kind of flattery so rotten that it is not aimed at a man, a woman, a preacher, a leader, a boss, or a crowd. It is aimed at God. That is a fearful thing to even say, but the King James Bible says it plainly. Psalm 78:36 says, “Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.” That verse ought to knock the varnish off every religious performance in the country. Israel was not flattering a king, a judge, a prophet, or a neighbor. They were flattering God. They were using religious speech toward the Lord while their hearts were crooked, their obedience was false, and their tongues were lying. They had spiritual language without spiritual loyalty. They had words without truth. They had confession without surrender. They had a mouth full of religion and a heart full of rebellion.

This is where the study of flattery becomes more searching than most people want it to be. It is easy to talk about the flatterer who manipulates men. It is easy to expose the smooth talker, the seducer, the talebearer, the politician, the false prophet, and the religious salesman. But Psalm 78:36 turns the light inward and asks whether a man can say the right things about God while lying to God. The answer is yes. A man can sing about surrender while refusing to surrender. He can say “Amen” to holiness while keeping his pet sin. He can quote Scripture while altering Scripture. He can talk about loving the Lord while despising correction from the Lord. He can call Christ “Lord” while refusing the words of the Lord. That is not worship. That is flattery with a hymnal in its hand.

The Lord does not need compliments from rebels. He does not need religious speeches from people who will not believe His words. He does not need a crowd to chant His name while trampling His Book. He does not need emotional songs from hearts that have no intention of obeying Him. He does not need public praise that covers private rebellion. He wants truth. Psalm 51:6 says, “Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.” That one

line cuts deeper than ten thousand religious performances. God is not fooled by vocabulary. God is not manipulated by tears. God is not impressed because a man knows how to say “blessed,” “anointed,” “glory,” “revival,” “worship,” “grace,” and “Jesus” at the right moments. The question is not whether the mouth can talk religiously. The question is whether the heart is true before God.

Chapter 1: Religious Flattery Is Still Flattery

Religious flattery is flattery dressed up for church. It uses the language of worship, prayer, praise, doctrine, testimony, and devotion, but the motive is not truth. It is presentation. It is image. It is self-protection. It is emotional theater. It is a man saying what he knows he ought to say while refusing to be what God commands him to be. Psalm 78:36 says, “Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth.” The word “nevertheless” matters because the chapter records the history of God’s mercy, Israel’s rebellion, God’s chastening, and Israel’s repeated dishonesty. After all the Lord had done, after all His wonders, after all His provision, after all His longsuffering, they still came back with mouths that sounded spiritual while their hearts remained unstable.

That is the danger of religious language. A man can learn the vocabulary of faith without possessing the honesty of faith. He can learn how to pray publicly. He can learn when to say amen. He can learn how to sound humble. He can learn how to talk about “seeking God” while seeking himself. He can learn how to say “the Lord told me” when the Lord did not tell him anything. He can learn how to say “I just want God’s will” when he already decided to do his own will. That is not spirituality. That is flattery. It is the tongue trying to make God a partner in a lie.

The Bible never teaches that God is hungry for empty praise. Men may crave compliments, but God does not. The Lord is not insecure. He is not sitting in heaven hoping sinners will say enough flattering things to make Him feel better. He is holy. He is true. He is the God “which cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). Therefore, any worship offered to Him must be tied to truth. John 4:24 says, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Not in spirit and showmanship. Not in spirit and emotional manipulation. Not in spirit and public image. In spirit and in truth. If truth is removed, the worship becomes noise. If obedience is removed, the praise becomes performance. If the heart is false, the mouth is flattering God.

Chapter 2: The Mouth Can Sound Spiritual While the Tongue Lies

Psalm 78:36 gives both sides of the hypocrisy: “they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.” That is a strange and terrible combination. The mouth flatters while the tongue lies. The same instrument that says religious things also

tells falsehoods. That means the issue is not merely that Israel failed to live up to a sincere confession. The issue is that their words themselves were dishonest. They told God what sounded right, but they did not mean it. They spoke as though they were returning, but their heart was not steadfast. They acted as though they were devoted, but their obedience was temporary, shallow, and self-serving.

There are plenty of people who know how to speak to God falsely. They pray when they are in trouble, but once the trouble passes, they go right back to the sin. They promise change under pressure, but the promise evaporates when the pressure lifts. They say, "Lord, I will never do it again," but they have already kept a door unlocked for the next time. They say, "Lord, I give you everything," while holding back the one thing He is dealing with. They say, "Lord, use me," but they will not be corrected, humbled, or separated. They say, "Lord, I love your Word," while refusing to believe the words He preserved. A religious tongue can lie in the language of surrender.

This is why words must be tested by truth. God is not like man. A man can be fooled by a trembling voice, wet eyes, spiritual phrases, or public emotion. God sees the heart. Hebrews 4:13 says, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight." A man can kneel at an altar and still be lying. A man can sing loudly and still be lying. A man can post Bible verses and still be lying. A man can preach loudly and still be lying. A man can say "all glory to God" while trying to steal some of that glory for himself. The tongue is a dangerous thing when it learns the dialect of heaven but keeps the motives of hell.

Chapter 3: Empty Worship Is Flattery Toward God

A great deal of what passes for worship in modern religion is nothing more than emotional flattery. It tells God how wonderful He is while refusing to receive what He said. It repeats His names while correcting His words. It raises hands while lowering doctrine. It sings about surrender while defending compromise. It talks about loving Jesus while despising the old paths, mocking holiness, excusing sin, and treating the Bible like a pile of suggestions. God is not honored by that kind of thing. He is flattered by the mouth and lied to by the tongue.

The Bible has always exposed this kind of empty worship. Isaiah 29:13 says, "this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me." The Lord Jesus Christ quoted that passage in Matthew 15:8-9 and applied it to religious hypocrites. That proves this disease did not die in the Old Testament. It ran straight into the religious world of Christ's day, and it is alive and well now. Men can honour God with lips while their hearts are miles away. They can build systems, rituals,

services, songs, schools, ministries, broadcasts, and movements around a God they do not actually obey.

Real worship is not measured by how it sounds to the crowd. It is measured by whether it is offered in truth before God. A man may sing beautifully and worship falsely. A man may pray eloquently and pray falsely. A man may preach loudly and preach falsely. A man may speak softly and still be rotten inside. God is not measuring performance. He is weighing truth. When worship becomes a stage, prayer becomes theater, testimony becomes branding, and doctrine becomes optional, religion has become flattery. It is man trying to impress God with words while withholding the heart. God does not need that. He never asked for spiritual acting. He asked for truth in the inward parts.

Chapter 4: Saying “Lord, Lord” Is Not the Same as Obedience

The Lord Jesus Christ warned about this very thing in Matthew 7:21: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” That verse should sober every religious talker on earth. The issue is not that they refused to use religious language. They used the right title. They said, “Lord, Lord.” They even claimed works, prophecy, devils cast out, and wonderful works. But the Lord says in Matthew 7:23, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” That is terrifying because it shows that a man can use the vocabulary of submission while remaining a worker of iniquity. He can call Jesus Lord while never belonging to Him.

Now in the age of grace, salvation is not obtained by works, commandment-keeping, or religious performance. A sinner is saved by grace through faith, not of works, according to Ephesians 2:8-9. The gospel is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures, as stated in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. That must be kept straight. But once that is understood, it is still true that religious words without reality are deadly. A lost man can call Jesus Lord and still be lost. A saved man can call Jesus Lord and still be lying in practice when he refuses the Lord’s correction. A man’s mouth can be orthodox while his walk is crooked. That is why the Bible will not let the tongue stand alone as proof of spiritual reality.

There is a cheap religious habit of calling Christ “Lord” while treating His words like negotiable material. That is a form of flattery. Luke 6:46 says, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” There it is, plain as daylight. The Lord does not need the title from a rebel. He does not need someone to say “Lord” as a verbal decoration while refusing His authority. If He is Lord, then His words matter. If His words matter, then they are not to be corrected, trimmed, modernized, doubted, explained away, or buried

under tradition. The mouth that says “Lord” while the heart says “no” is not worshipping. It is flattering.

Chapter 5: Modern Christianity Is Full of Spiritual Compliments Without Biblical Submission

Modern Christianity has become an expert at flattering God with religious language while lying against His words. It says it loves Jesus, but then it changes His Book. It says it believes the Bible, but then it treats the Bible like a manuscript debate, a translation preference, a cultural document, or a devotional resource instead of final authority. It says it wants revival, but it does not want repentance. It says it wants unity, but not unity around truth. It says it wants love, but not love that rejoiceth in the truth. It says it wants the Spirit, but it does not want the sword of the Spirit. It says it wants Jesus, but not the reproach that comes with standing for Him.

That is religious flattery. It tells God, “We love you,” while disagreeing with Him every time He crosses the flesh. It tells God, “Your Word is precious,” while replacing His words with footnotes, opinions, committees, scholars, and private interpretations. It tells God, “We want your presence,” while building services designed around entertainment, mood, lighting, branding, and emotion. It tells God, “We are surrendered,” while refusing to separate from the world. That kind of religion is not new. It is Psalm 78:36 in modern clothes. They flatter Him with their mouth and lie unto Him with their tongues.

The cure is not more religious excitement. The cure is submission to truth. God does not need louder songs from colder hearts. He does not need more conferences from men who will not obey the Book. He does not need more polished sermons from preachers who fear the crowd more than God. He does not need more spiritual slogans from people who cannot endure sound doctrine. The question is simple: will the mouth and the heart agree before God? Will the praise match the obedience? Will the confession match the doctrine? Will the worship match the Book? If not, then the language may be spiritual, but the act is flattery.

Chapter 6: Flattering God Is Often Connected to Temporary Repentance

Psalm 78 records a pattern that appears again and again among God’s people. Trouble comes, judgment falls, pressure rises, and suddenly the mouth gets religious. Men who ignored God begin talking about God. People who wanted their sin begin asking for mercy. Those who despised correction begin making promises. But when the pressure passes, the heart shows what it really wanted all along. That is why Psalm 78:37 says, “For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.” That verse explains

Psalms 78:36. They flattered Him because their heart was not right. They lied because they were not steadfast.

Temporary repentance is one of the commonest forms of religious flattery. A man gets caught, and now he is sorry. A family is in trouble, and now everyone wants prayer. A nation is afraid, and now politicians quote Scripture. A sinner is scared, and now he wants God. But when the danger passes, he goes back to the same vomit. That kind of sorrow may be emotional, but it is not necessarily godly. Second Corinthians 7:10 says, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Worldly sorrow is sorry about consequences. Godly sorrow gets honest before God.

This is a necessary warning because the flesh knows how to use God in emergencies. It wants God as a fire escape, not as Lord. It wants mercy without truth, forgiveness without confession, peace without cleansing, help without surrender, and blessing without obedience. It will flatter God when it needs relief. It will talk sweetly to heaven when hell gets hot. But the Lord sees whether the heart is right. He knows when the prayer is only panic. He knows when the promise is only fear. He knows when the confession is only damage control. God is merciful beyond what any man deserves, but He is not mocked. Religious words under pressure do not fool the One who searches the reins and hearts.

Chapter 7: God Wants Truth in the Inward Parts

The answer to flattering God is not silence. It is honest speech from an honest heart. God is not against praise. The Psalms are full of praise. God is not against prayer. The Bible commands prayer. God is not against confession. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." The problem is not talking to God. The problem is lying to God. The problem is using religious words as a mask. Psalm 51:6 gives the remedy: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts." David did not need to flatter God after his sin. He needed to get honest. He did not need to impress God with speeches. He needed to confess what God already knew.

Truth in the inward parts means the man stops playing games. He stops explaining away the sin. He stops blaming everyone else. He stops turning confession into a performance. He stops treating doctrine as something to negotiate. He stops using spiritual language to protect his pride. He comes clean. He says what God says about the matter. If it is sin, call it sin. If it is rebellion, call it rebellion. If it is unbelief, call it unbelief. If it is pride, call it pride. If it is covetousness, call it covetousness. If it is lust, call it lust. If it is fear of man, call it fear of man. God does not need flattering descriptions. He wants truth.

That kind of honesty is rare because it crucifies the image a man has been trying to preserve. Flattery keeps the image alive. Truth puts it in the grave. Flattery says, "Lord, you

know my heart,” while refusing to let the Book judge the heart. Truth says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). Flattery says, “Lord, I am trying,” while hiding disobedience. Truth says, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned” (Psalm 51:4). Flattery says, “Lord, bless what I am doing.” Truth says, “Lord, show me what is wrong and make me right.” That is the difference between religious performance and real dealing with God.

Conclusion

Psalm 78:36 is a cannon blast against empty religion: “Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.” That verse proves that flattery is not only something men do to other men. It is something religious people can attempt toward God. They can use the right words, the right phrases, the right songs, the right testimonies, and the right public posture, while the heart remains false. That is a fearful thing. It means a man can be religious and still be dishonest. He can be vocal and still be vain. He can be emotional and still be empty. He can be orthodox in sound and still crooked in spirit.

The Lord is not fooled by religious polish. He sees past the hymn. He sees past the post. He sees past the sermon. He sees past the altar call. He sees past the public prayer. He sees past the lifted hand. He sees past the spiritual phrase. He sees whether the heart is true. If the mouth says “Lord” while the heart says “no,” the mouth is flattering. If the tongue praises the Bible while the mind corrects it, the tongue is lying. If the lips sing surrender while the life protects rebellion, the lips are performing. If the church says it wants God while building itself around flesh, image, numbers, entertainment, and compromise, that church is not worshipping in truth. It is flattering God with its mouth.

The cure is simple, but it is not easy on the flesh. Get honest before God. Let the mouth and heart agree. Let praise be tied to truth. Let confession be real. Let worship be governed by the Book. Let the sinner come to Christ by faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, not by religious acting. Let the saved man walk in the light instead of hiding behind spiritual vocabulary. The Lord does not need compliments from rebels. He does not need flattery from church people. He does not need men to tell Him how wonderful He is while refusing what He wrote. He wants truth in the inward parts, faith in His Son, submission to His words, and a tongue that no longer lies in the language of worship.

Introduction

Before a man ever learns how to flatter another man with his lips, he often begins by flattering himself in his own eyes. That is where the poison starts. The first victim of the flatterer may not be his neighbor, his wife, his preacher, his friend, his church, or his audience. The first victim may be the man staring back at him in the mirror. Psalm 36:2 says, “For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.” That verse is one of the most searching descriptions of self-deception in the Bible. It does not merely say the man lies to others. It says he lies to himself. It does not merely say he hides sin from men. It says he beautifies sin in his own sight. It does not merely say he fools the crowd. It says he becomes his own audience, his own preacher, his own defense attorney, his own public relations department, and his own false prophet.

Self-flattery is dangerous because the liar and the deceived live in the same skin. When another man flatters you, there is at least a chance you might detect the trap. You may notice the bait. You may sense the exaggeration. You may wonder why he is laying it on so thick. But when a man flatters himself, the deception comes from the inside. He trusts the voice because it sounds like his own thoughts. He excuses it because it feels reasonable. He protects it because it preserves his image. Self-flattery is when a man renames pride as confidence, rebellion as discernment, bitterness as conviction, cowardice as wisdom, compromise as balance, lust as weakness, greed as provision, and unbelief as carefulness. He does not need a devil on his shoulder when his own heart has already become a pulpit of lies.

That is why this essay must be plain. The man who flatters himself is one of the hardest men on earth to help because he has already hired himself as his own lawyer. You can bring him Scripture, and he will explain it away. You can show him fruit, and he will blame the soil. You can warn him, and he will call it an attack. You can rebuke him, and he will call it jealousy. You can plead with him, and he will call it control. You can point to the damage he has caused, and he will tell you he was misunderstood. A man who flatters himself can justify almost anything. He can leave his family and call it peace. He can betray a friend and call it boundaries. He can corrupt doctrine and call it growth. He can chase money and call it stewardship. He can hide lust and call it struggle. He can walk away from truth and call it liberty. Psalm 36:2 says he keeps doing this “until his iniquity be found to be hateful.” That is the end of self-flattery. It does not end in wisdom. It ends with sin finally showing its ugly face.

Chapter 1: Self-Flattery Begins in the Eyes

Psalms 36:2 says, "For he flattereth himself in his own eyes." That phrase is not filler. The Holy Ghost did not waste words. The problem begins with how the man sees himself. He has a corrupted view of himself, and because his sight is wrong, his judgment is wrong. He does not see himself under the searching light of the Word of God. He sees himself through a polished mirror. He has adjusted the lighting, softened the edges, removed the blemishes, and learned to admire the picture. That is the nature of self-flattery. It does not necessarily deny every fact. It edits the facts until the sinner can live with himself.

The Bible has much to say about the eyes. Proverbs 30:12 says, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." That is self-flattery. They are not pure, but they are pure in their own eyes. They are not clean, but they have learned to admire themselves while still filthy. Proverbs 21:2 says, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts." There it is again. A man can see his way as right while God sees the heart as crooked. Judges 21:25 says, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." When the eyes become the final authority, the man becomes his own god, his own judge, his own priest, and his own excuse-maker.

That is why the Word of God must correct a man's eyes before it corrects his steps. If a man sees wrongly, he will walk wrongly. If he looks at sin through the lens of self-love, he will make it attractive. If he looks at rebellion through the lens of wounded pride, he will make it noble. If he looks at correction through the lens of ego, he will make the reprovener the villain. The issue is not merely conduct. It is perception. The self-flatterer looks into his own heart and sees a reasonable man, a misunderstood man, a justified man, maybe even a spiritual man. God looks at the same heart and sees deceit. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" The man who trusts his own eyes over God's words is already halfway into the ditch.

Chapter 2: Self-Flattery Turns Sin Into Something Respectable

One of the surest marks of self-flattery is the ability to rename sin. The flesh is a master of vocabulary. It knows how to change labels without changing substance. A man does not say, "I am proud." He says, "I know my worth." He does not say, "I am bitter." He says, "I just remember what people did." He does not say, "I am rebellious." He says, "I think for myself." He does not say, "I am worldly." He says, "I am relatable." He does not say, "I am covetous." He says, "I am ambitious." He does not say, "I fear man." He says, "I am being wise." That is self-flattery. It is sin going through a public relations department.

Isaiah 5:20 says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil." That verse applies broadly to a society that reverses moral categories, but it also applies personally to the man who does it inside his own heart. Before a culture calls evil good, individuals do.

Before a church excuses compromise, church members do. Before a preacher softens doctrine publicly, he usually softens it privately. The man first learns to lie to himself. He decides the sin is not so bad. Then he decides there are reasons for it. Then he decides other people are worse. Then he decides nobody understands. Then he decides God surely sees his heart. By the time he is finished, he has put a new label on the old sin and walked away feeling clean while still carrying filth.

This is why repentance begins by agreeing with God's labels. If God calls it sin, it is sin. If God calls it pride, it is pride. If God calls it fornication, it is fornication. If God calls it lying, it is lying. If God calls it covetousness, it is covetousness. If God calls it unbelief, it is unbelief. A man cannot repent honestly while still protecting his favorite terms. He has to let the Book name the thing. Self-flattery wants softer language because softer language delays conviction. The flesh does not want the knife. It wants a pillow. It does not want surgery. It wants cosmetics. But God is not interested in putting makeup on leprosy. He names the disease so the man can finally seek the cure.

Chapter 3: Self-Flattery Delays Repentance

Psalm 36:2 says the man flatters himself "until his iniquity be found to be hateful." That means self-flattery has a delaying effect. It buys time for sin. It postpones judgment in the man's own mind. It keeps conviction at arm's length. It tells him, "Not yet. You are fine. This is not as bad as they say. You have reasons. You have been through a lot. God understands. Others are worse. You can handle it." So the man keeps walking. He keeps explaining. He keeps justifying. He keeps promising himself that one day he will deal with it. But he does not deal with it because flattery has made him comfortable in the danger zone.

This is one of the reasons sin becomes harder over time. The first time a man violates conscience, he feels the sting. The second time, he has an explanation ready. The third time, he has a system. By the tenth time, he may have a doctrine built around his disobedience. That is how self-flattery works. It does not merely excuse an act. It builds a shelter for a habit. It gives the sinner somewhere to live. A man can dwell for years in a house built out of excuses. Every room has a justification. Every window has a view that avoids the truth. Every door is locked against rebuke. But the foundation is rotten, and sooner or later the house comes down.

The tragedy is that repentance could have come much earlier if the man had stopped flattering himself. He could have confessed it when the Spirit of God first dealt with him. He could have made it right when the first warning came. He could have humbled himself when the first faithful friend spoke plainly. But self-flattery kept saying, "You are not the problem." That sentence has destroyed marriages, churches, friendships, ministries,

businesses, families, and souls. A man does not have to deny God openly to destroy himself. He only has to keep convincing himself that he is the exception.

Chapter 4: Self-Flattery Makes a Man Hate Correction

A man who flatters himself cannot tolerate correction for very long because correction attacks the image he has built. If he has convinced himself that he is right, then anyone who says otherwise becomes a threat. If he has told himself he is noble, the rebuke sounds cruel. If he has told himself he is balanced, the warning sounds extreme. If he has told himself he is spiritual, the correction sounds carnal. That is why self-flatterers often react so strongly to plain truth. The rebuke is not merely hitting an action. It is hitting the false self-portrait hanging on the wall of the heart.

Proverbs 9:8 says, “Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.” That verse shows the difference between a scorner and a wise man. The wise man can receive correction because he loves truth more than image. The scorner hates correction because his pride is his sanctuary. Self-flattery turns a man into a scorner by making him allergic to reproof. He no longer hears correction as mercy. He hears it as insult. He no longer sees the reprover as a faithful friend. He sees him as an enemy. Galatians 4:16 says, “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” That question has to be asked in every generation.

This is why the self-flatterer often surrounds himself with people who will not confront him. He wants agreement, not accountability. He wants sympathy, not Scripture. He wants people who will validate the story he has been telling himself. If anyone interrupts the performance with truth, he calls them harsh, unloving, negative, jealous, judgmental, or divisive. That is convenient. Once he has labeled the reprover, he does not have to answer the reproof. That is how self-flattery protects itself. It attacks the messenger so it can avoid the message. But truth does not become false because the sinner dislikes the voice that delivered it.

Chapter 5: Self-Flattery Turns the Heart Into a Courtroom

The man who flatters himself usually lives with an internal courtroom running all day long. He is the accused, the defense attorney, the judge, and sometimes even the jury. The evidence is brought in, but he explains it away. The witness speaks, but he discredits the witness. The Scripture is read, but he argues context. The conscience speaks, but he overrules it. By the end of the trial, he always finds himself not guilty. That is self-flattery in legal form. The man has no intention of submitting to judgment. He only wants enough procedure to feel justified.

This is why some people can never be wrong in their own minds. Every failure has an explanation. Every outburst has a cause outside themselves. Every betrayal was necessary. Every compromise was wisdom. Every broken relationship was someone else's fault. Every doctrinal shift was growth. Every warning was persecution. Every consequence was unfair. That kind of man may talk about grace, but he has never learned honest confession. He does not say, "I have sinned." He says, "Mistakes were made." He does not say, "I lied." He says, "I communicated poorly." He does not say, "I hurt people." He says, "People got offended." He does not confess. He litigates.

The Bible gives you the opposite spirit in David after Nathan pointed the finger and said, "Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12:7). David did not call a committee. He did not write a thread explaining his trauma. He did not attack Nathan's tone. He did not say, "You do not know my heart." He said, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Samuel 12:13). That is the language self-flattery hates. It is too short. It leaves no room for decoration. It does not protect the image. It falls on the sword of truth. That is what a man must do if he wants out of the courtroom of excuses. He must stop defending himself against God.

Chapter 6: Self-Flattery Can Justify Almost Anything

The terrifying thing about self-flattery is that there is almost no limit to what it can justify once the heart is given over to it. A man can leave his wife and children and convince himself he needed peace. A woman can destroy her home and convince herself she deserved happiness. A preacher can corrupt doctrine and convince himself he is reaching more people. A businessman can cheat and convince himself he is surviving. A church member can gossip and convince himself he is protecting others. A rebel can attack authority and convince himself he is standing for truth. A coward can stay silent and convince himself he is being prudent. The heart is not merely deceitful. It is creative.

That is why self-flattery is so dangerous in doctrinal matters. A man does not usually wake up one morning and say, "I would like to abandon truth." He begins by flattering himself. He tells himself he is more studied now. He tells himself he is less narrow. He tells himself he has outgrown old convictions. He tells himself he is being intellectually honest. He tells himself those who hold the old line are ignorant, angry, outdated, or afraid. Then he starts shaving edges off the Book. Then he starts correcting verses. Then he starts admiring men who do not believe the Bible. Then he calls compromise scholarship. He has not become more honest. He has become more impressed with himself.

This also happens morally. A man hiding lust flatters himself by saying he is only struggling. A man feeding pride flatters himself by saying he is bold. A man chasing attention flatters himself by saying he is building influence for God. A man consumed with money flatters

himself by saying he is providing. A man losing his temper flatters himself by saying he is passionate. A man refusing reconciliation flatters himself by saying he has boundaries. Now, some of those terms can be used rightly in proper places, but self-flattery abuses them to protect sin. The question is not what term makes the flesh feel comfortable. The question is what God calls the thing.

Chapter 7: The Word of God Is the Mirror That Breaks Self-Flattery

The only safe mirror is the Word of God. James 1:23-24 compares a hearer of the word who does not do it to “a man beholding his natural face in a glass,” who then goes away and forgets what manner of man he was. That is the danger. The Bible shows the man what he really is, but self-flattery tries to make him forget the sight. He reads the verse, feels the prick, sees the stain, senses the correction, and then walks away to find a softer mirror. He wants something that will show him in better lighting. But the Book is not there to flatter him. It is there to reveal him.

Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword.” That Book does not negotiate with self-flattery. It cuts. It discerns “the thoughts and intents of the heart.” That is what the self-flatterer fears most, not merely that his actions will be judged, but that his motives will be exposed. He wants to talk about what he did. God wants to talk about why he did it. He wants to talk about circumstances. God wants to talk about intent. He wants to talk about how others contributed. God wants to talk about the inward part. The Bible reaches where excuses cannot protect him.

A man who wants freedom from self-flattery must let the Bible contradict him. That is a hard sentence for the flesh, but it is necessary. Let the Book tell you that you are wrong. Let the Book call your sin by its proper name. Let the Book expose your motives. Let the Book correct your doctrine. Let the Book rebuke your attitude. Let the Book tear down the self-portrait your pride has painted. That is not cruelty. That is mercy. A mirror that lies to you is not your friend. A mirror that shows the dirt may be unpleasant, but it gives you a chance to wash. The Bible does not flatter man because God loves him too much to let him die admiring himself.

Conclusion

Psalms 36:2 is one of the clearest warnings in Scripture about the danger of internal deception: “For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.” The man in that verse is not merely fooled by others. He is fooled by himself. His own eyes have become corrupted. His own heart has become persuasive. His own thoughts have become flattering speeches. He has learned how to view himself in a way

that protects sin, delays repentance, resists correction, and preserves pride. That is a terrible condition because it means the enemy has a voice inside the gate.

This kind of self-flattery is everywhere. It is in lost men who think they are good enough without Christ. It is in religious men who think their works can save them. It is in saved men who excuse carnality because they know they are eternally secure. It is in preachers who call ambition ministry. It is in churches that call compromise outreach. It is in families where selfishness is called self-care. It is in doctrinal drift that calls unbelief scholarship. It is in bitterness that calls itself discernment. It is in pride that calls itself courage. It is in fear that calls itself wisdom. The vocabulary changes, but the sin is the same. Man flatters himself in his own eyes.

The cure is to stop trusting the mirror of self and start submitting to the mirror of Scripture. Let God be true and every man a liar. Let the Book tell the truth about the heart. Let the Holy Ghost put His finger on the thing that pride has renamed. Let correction be received before iniquity becomes publicly hateful. Let confession replace litigation. Let repentance replace excuse-making. A man does not become free by admiring himself more carefully. He becomes free when truth breaks the spell. The flatterer's first audience may be his own heart, but the Bible believer's final authority must be the words of the living God.

4 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - The Strange Woman and the Gospel of Smooth Words

Introduction

The devil does not usually put a skull and crossbones on the bottle before he hands a man the poison. He does not usually send sin into the room with horns, a pitchfork, and a warning label. He dresses it up. He perfumes it. He teaches it manners. He gives it a soft voice, a flattering tongue, and enough religious or emotional vocabulary to make a fool think he is being understood instead of hunted. That is why Proverbs spends so much time warning about the strange woman and her words. She is not introduced as some cartoon villain standing in the alley with blood on her hands. She comes with speech. She comes with appeal. She comes with timing. She comes with emotional intelligence, charm, sympathy, and a tongue that knows how to turn a man's weakness into an invitation. Proverbs 2:16 says wisdom delivers a man "from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words." Proverbs 7:5 repeats the warning about the stranger "which flattereth with her words." Proverbs 6:24 warns about "the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman." Proverbs 7:21 says, "With her much fair speech she caused

him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.” The Bible is not guessing. It is showing you how seduction talks before it kills.

This is not merely a warning about sexual sin, though it certainly is that. A man would be a fool to read Proverbs and pretend the warning is only symbolic. The strange woman destroys men with words before she destroys them with her body. She does not need to start with adultery in the bed if she can first commit adultery in the imagination. She does not need to drag a man physically if she can first flatter him emotionally. She tells him what he wants to hear. She makes him feel seen, special, strong, desired, misunderstood, appreciated, and justified. She does not begin with, “Come ruin your life.” She begins with, “Nobody understands you like I do.” She does not begin with, “Come destroy your marriage, your testimony, your family, your conscience, and your walk with God.” She begins with, “You deserve better.” That is how sin talks. It flatters first and collects payment later.

But the principle goes far beyond one woman in Proverbs. The strange woman becomes a window into the whole method of temptation. Sin rarely introduces itself honestly. It flatters. False doctrine flatters the intellect. Lust flatters the flesh. Pride flatters the ego. Covetousness flatters ambition. Bitterness flatters a wounded spirit. Rebellion flatters independence. Worldliness flatters the desire to fit in. Compromise flatters the need to appear balanced. The devil’s gospel is always a gospel of smooth words. It tells a man he can have pleasure without consequence, liberty without obedience, grace without truth, confidence without humility, and sin without wages. But Romans 6:23 still says, “For the wages of sin is death.” The strange woman may have fair speech, but her road still runs downhill to the chambers of death.

Chapter 1: The Strange Woman Begins With Words

The first thing to notice in Proverbs is that the strange woman is identified by her speech. Proverbs 2:16 says wisdom delivers from “the stranger which flattereth with her words.” Proverbs 7:5 says the same thing. Proverbs 6:24 warns against “the flattery of the tongue.” Proverbs 7:21 says her “much fair speech” causes the young man to yield. The Holy Ghost does not begin by describing her appearance, her clothing, her perfume, her house, or her physical beauty. Those things may be involved later, but the first weapon emphasized is her mouth. That is not accidental. The battle begins in the ear before it moves to the eye, the imagination, the will, and the body.

Words are powerful because words frame reality. A temptation becomes stronger when it is explained in a way that makes it seem reasonable. The strange woman is not merely offering sin. She is interpreting sin. She is presenting sin under a different name. She makes it sound like comfort, connection, sympathy, affection, excitement, healing, or freedom.

She takes what God calls wicked and wraps it in language that appeals to the heart. That is why the man who listens too long is already in danger. He may think he is just having a conversation. He may think he is being polite. He may think he is strong enough to handle it. But the words are doing work. They are lowering walls, stirring appetite, feeding ego, and preparing surrender.

This is one reason the Bible repeatedly warns about the company a man keeps and the voices he allows near his heart. A fool thinks he can listen to anything and remain unchanged. A wise man knows better. Words can plant seeds. Words can weaken conviction. Words can make sin seem less sinful. Words can make disobedience seem justified. Words can make a person feel like the exception. The strange woman's tongue does not need to win the whole battle in one sentence. It only needs to keep the man listening. The longer he listens, the more reasonable the sin becomes. That is how smooth words work. They do not always smash the gate. They oil the hinges.

Chapter 2: Flattery Makes Sin Feel Personal and Special

The strange woman's flattery works because it makes sin feel personal. General temptation says, "Do wrong." Flattery says, "This is for you." General temptation says, "Take pleasure." Flattery says, "You deserve this pleasure because you have been overlooked, misunderstood, neglected, unappreciated, and burdened." That is a more dangerous voice because it turns sin into a custom-made argument. It studies the man's wounds, disappointments, ego, loneliness, resentment, and desires, then builds a speech around them. It does not merely tempt the body. It flatters the story the man already wants to believe about himself.

A man in danger often wants someone to tell him that his case is unique. He wants to hear that ordinary rules do not apply because his circumstances are different. He wants someone to say that his wife does not understand him, his church does not appreciate him, his friends do not value him, his burdens are too heavy, and his needs are too deep. The strange woman knows how to say that. Sin is a skilled counselor when the flesh is in the chair. It listens just long enough to learn where to press. Then it offers a lie that sounds like compassion. It says, "You are not wrong. You are wounded. You are not rebelling. You are finally choosing yourself. You are not falling. You are being honest about what you need."

That is the gospel of smooth words. It preaches salvation by self-indulgence. It says the answer to pain is permission, the answer to loneliness is lust, the answer to disappointment is rebellion, and the answer to conviction is self-justification. But the Bible does not flatter the sinner's story. It tells the truth. James 1:14-15 says, "But every man is

tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Notice the issue is not merely what is outside the man. It is also “his own lust.” The strange woman’s words work because they find something inside the man willing to answer.

Chapter 3: Fair Speech Can Force a Fool

Proverbs 7:21 says, “With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.” That is a remarkable verse. It says fair speech caused him to yield, and the flattering of her lips forced him. Now she did not force him like a soldier with a sword. She forced him by persuasion, by pressure, by seduction, by emotional manipulation, by repeating the words until his resistance collapsed. He still bears responsibility. He still chose the path. He still followed. But the verse shows how powerful flattering speech can be when a fool gives it access.

The word “forced” is especially striking because it shows that temptation can create momentum. The fool may begin by thinking he is in control. He may say, “I can stop anytime.” He may say, “I am just talking.” He may say, “Nothing has happened.” He may say, “I know where the line is.” But smooth words keep pushing him toward that line, then over it. Once his imagination is inflamed and his pride is fed, he is no longer as strong as he thought he was. He thought he was managing temptation, but temptation was managing him. He thought he was observing the bait, but the hook was already in his mouth.

This is why the safest answer to certain temptations is not debate, discussion, curiosity, or emotional exploration. It is distance. Proverbs does not tell the young man to prove his strength by sitting down with the strange woman and explaining his boundaries. Proverbs 5:8 says, “Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.” That is Bible wisdom. Do not go near the door. Do not test the lock. Do not admire the architecture. Do not ask for a tour. Do not tell yourself you are mature enough to handle what God told you to avoid. The fool wants to negotiate with fair speech. The wise man crosses the street.

Chapter 4: The Strange Woman Flatters the Ego Before She Captures the Body

The body may fall last, but the ego often falls first. The strange woman understands that a man’s pride is often the easiest entrance to his lust. If she can make him feel important, desired, admired, pitied, or powerful, she has already weakened him. Many a man has fallen not simply because he wanted pleasure, but because he wanted to feel like somebody. He wanted to be admired. He wanted to be pursued. He wanted to be told that he was different from other men. He wanted a mirror that made him look taller than he really was. Flattery provided that mirror, and lust stepped in afterward.

This is why men who crave admiration are in danger. A man may think lust is his only problem when pride is holding the door open. The strange woman does not merely say, "Come to me." She says, "You are special to me." She does not merely appeal to appetite. She appeals to identity. She makes the fool feel chosen. She makes him think he is not merely committing sin, but entering some rare and meaningful connection. The flesh loves that kind of lie. It wants sin to feel deeper than sin. It wants adultery to feel like destiny. It wants fornication to feel like love. It wants rebellion to feel like authenticity. Flattery supplies the poetry for the crime.

A Bible believer must learn that any voice feeding his ego against the commandments of God is not his friend. It does not matter how sweet it sounds. It does not matter how much it seems to understand him. It does not matter how emotionally intelligent it appears. If it leads away from obedience, it is not wisdom. It is seduction. The devil is perfectly willing to make a man feel valuable while leading him into filth. He is perfectly willing to tell a man he is special while dragging him toward ruin. The strange woman may admire the fool, but Proverbs 7:23 says he goes "as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." Admiration can be bait.

Chapter 5: The Strange Woman's Gospel Always Promises Life While Hiding Death

Every false gospel promises life on its own terms. The strange woman's gospel is no different. She preaches pleasure without payment, intimacy without covenant, secrecy without exposure, and sin without judgment. She tells the fool what he wants to hear because she knows his flesh is already looking for a sermon that will excuse him. Her words are not random. They are doctrine. They teach him how to think about the sin. They reinterpret danger as opportunity. They reinterpret restraint as deprivation. They reinterpret wisdom as fear. They reinterpret lust as love. They reinterpret rebellion as courage. That is why her gospel is so deadly. It gives the fool a theology for his fall.

Proverbs 7 shows the young man going after her "straightway." That means once the inner resistance breaks, the speed increases. A man can stand at the edge for a while, pretending he is cautious, but when the flattering words have done their work, he moves quickly. The strange woman does not have to drag him every inch. She only has to break the truth barrier. Once he believes the lie, his own lust carries him forward. That is why words matter. A false explanation can become the doorway to open sin. Before a man commits the act, he often accepts a sentence. "This is different." "I deserve this." "Nobody will know." "God understands." "I can stop." "This is not really sin." Those are not harmless thoughts. Those are the hymns of the strange woman's gospel.

But the Bible pulls back the curtain and shows the end. Proverbs 7:27 says, “Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.” That is the part flattery leaves out. It shows the doorway but not the destination. It shows the embrace but not the aftermath. It shows the excitement but not the ashes. It shows the thrill but not the chains. It shows the pleasure but not the grave. Sin never tells the whole story in the advertisement. The Bible does. The Bible gives you the end before you enter the beginning. That is mercy. The strange woman flatters. God warns.

Chapter 6: The Strange Woman Is Also a Picture of Every Seducing Voice

While Proverbs gives a literal warning about the strange woman, the principle reaches into every seducing voice that pulls a soul away from God’s truth. False doctrine has a strange woman’s tongue. It flatters the mind and tells a man he is too smart to believe the Book simply. It tells him he has outgrown plain Bible faith. It tells him scholars know better, tradition knows better, science knows better, culture knows better, and the serpent’s question still stands: “Yea, hath God said?” Once the mind is flattered, unbelief becomes respectable. The man does not think he is doubting God. He thinks he is becoming sophisticated.

Worldliness also has a strange woman’s tongue. It flatters the desire to be accepted. It tells the Christian he does not have to be so separate, so narrow, so peculiar, so serious, or so old-fashioned. It says, “You can reach more people if you look more like them.” It says, “You can keep your faith and still fit in.” It says, “You do not have to make everything about doctrine.” That is smooth speech. It makes compromise sound like wisdom and separation sound like foolishness. But Romans 12:2 still says, “And be not conformed to this world.” The world may flatter, but the Book still commands.

Bitterness has the same tongue. It flatters a wounded spirit and tells a man he is justified in staying angry. Pride flatters a man and tells him he is too important to apologize. Covetousness flatters him and tells him he is only seeking security. Fear flatters him and tells him he is only being careful. Rebellion flatters him and tells him he is finally free. These are all strange women in principle. They speak smoothly. They appeal to something inside. They promise relief. They hide ruin. Therefore, the warning is not only, “Stay away from immoral women,” though that warning stands. The broader warning is this: beware every voice that flatters you away from the Word of God.

Chapter 7: Wisdom Must Keep the Door Before Flattery Gets In

Proverbs 7:5 says wisdom and understanding are meant to “keep thee from the strange woman.” That is the key. A man must be kept before he is captured. He must have wisdom before the flattering words begin. He must have doctrine before the seduction. He must

have conviction before the invitation. Waiting until the temptation is already speaking in his ear is a fool's strategy. The time to build the wall is before the enemy arrives. The time to settle the matter is before the lips begin flattering. The time to decide what is right is before the flesh is warmed up and the imagination is already painting pictures.

Wisdom keeps a man by giving him God's view of the thing ahead of time. It tells him where the road ends. It tells him what the bait is hiding. It tells him what the flattering words are doing. It tells him what kind of man listens, what kind of man yields, and what kind of ruin follows. Wisdom is not merely information. It is protection. It stands at the door and says, "Do not open that." It says, "Do not answer that message." It says, "Do not entertain that thought." It says, "Do not go near that place." It says, "Do not keep talking to that person." It says, "Do not let your ego make decisions your conscience will have to bleed over later."

A wise man does not wait until he is halfway down the road to ask whether the road is dangerous. He believes God at the signpost. The strange woman has words, but wisdom has words too. The question is which words a man will let govern him. Will he listen to the smooth speech of sin or the sharp speech of Scripture? Will he let flattery define his desires, or will he let the fear of the Lord define his steps? Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." A man who fears God does not need to sample the strange woman's sermon. He already knows the preacher is a liar.

Conclusion

The strange woman in Proverbs teaches one of the most practical and terrifying lessons in the Bible: seduction begins with words. She flattereth with her words. She uses the flattery of her tongue. With much fair speech she causes the fool to yield. With the flattering of her lips she forces him. That is not ancient poetry for ancient fools only. That is present truth for any man or woman living in a world where temptation has learned how to speak sweetly. Sin does not always roar. Sometimes it whispers. Sometimes it compliments. Sometimes it sympathizes. Sometimes it tells a person everything the flesh has been dying to hear.

The devil's bait is often soaked in admiration. He knows how to make sin feel like healing, rebellion feel like courage, lust feel like love, pride feel like strength, compromise feel like balance, and unbelief feel like intelligence. That is why the Bible believer must be suspicious of any voice that makes disobedience feel noble. The issue is not whether the words are smooth. The issue is where they lead. If they lead away from God's words, away from purity, away from covenant faithfulness, away from wisdom, away from humility, away from truth, then they are not harmless. They are the strange woman's gospel, and her house still goes down to the chambers of death.

The answer is wisdom, distance, humility, and obedience. Do not stand around admiring the bait. Do not negotiate with the voice God told you to avoid. Do not let your ego be fed by someone who is pulling you from righteousness. Do not mistake being understood for being safe. The Lord gave the warning before the trap because He is merciful. The strange woman flatters before she destroys. The Bible warns before you fall. The fool listens to the flatterer and calls it comfort. The wise man listens to the Book and calls it life.

5 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - Flattering Lips and a Double Heart

Introduction

Psalm 12:2-3 says, “They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.” There is the anatomy of the flatterer laid open by the Holy Ghost. The problem is not merely that the lips are smooth. The problem is that the heart is split. The flatterer is not just a man who speaks too nicely, compliments too freely, or knows how to be socially charming. He is a man whose mouth and heart do not match. He says one thing while meaning another. He gives the impression of loyalty while calculating advantage. He talks like a friend while thinking like a user. He praises with the lips while the heart is off somewhere else, measuring, scheming, comparing, envying, manipulating, or preparing the next move.

That phrase “double heart” is the key to the whole passage. A double heart is a divided inner man. It is not truthfully aligned with God, truthfully aligned with neighbor, or truthfully aligned with the words coming out of the mouth. The man has an outside voice and an inside motive. He has public language and private intention. He has what he says and what he is after. That is why flattering lips are so dangerous. They are not merely soft lips. They are split lips. They carry a contradiction. The words say, “I admire you,” but the heart says, “I can use you.” The words say, “Brother,” but the heart says, “Opportunity.” The words say, “I am with you,” but the heart says, “As long as this benefits me.” The words say, “I love the truth,” but the heart says, “I love the influence that comes from standing near it.”

This essay must go straight after that kind of religious two-facedness because it is everywhere. It shows up in church life. It shows up in ministry platforms. It shows up in family disputes. It shows up in doctrinal debates. It shows up on social media, where a man can praise you publicly, undermine you privately, borrow your work quietly, and smile like a deacon while thinking like a politician. It shows up in people who say “amen” to sound doctrine until the doctrine corrects them. It shows up in men who praise a preacher

while hoping to use his platform. It shows up in people who flatter a brother in one room and poison him in the next. God does not admire that. Psalm 12 does not say the Lord will reward flattering lips. It says, “The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips.” That is God’s answer to the religious salesman with velvet lips and a serpent heart.

Chapter 1: Flattering Lips Are Connected to Vanity

Psalm 12:2 begins, “They speak vanity every one with his neighbour.” Before the verse even mentions flattering lips, it mentions vanity. That matters. Flattery is vain speech because it is empty speech. It may be full of words, full of emotion, full of charm, full of compliment, full of religious vocabulary, but it is empty of truth. Vanity in the Bible is not merely something silly or light. It is emptiness, worthlessness, breath, smoke, noise without substance. A flattering man can talk for ten minutes and still say nothing that has weight before God. The mouth is moving, the tone is warm, the phrases are polished, but there is no faithful truth underneath it.

Vanity is also speech detached from eternal reality. A man speaking vanity is talking as though words can be used without God weighing them. He speaks as though the mouth is his own instrument and not something for which he will answer. But Matthew 12:36 says, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” Every idle word. Every empty word. Every manipulative word. Every religiously polished word that had no truth under it. That ought to put fear into any man who uses language carelessly. The flatterer thinks words are tools. God treats them as evidence.

This is one reason flattery fills shallow religious environments. When truth is not the governing standard, vanity rushes in to fill the room. People start speaking in slogans, compliments, hype, spiritual branding, emotional catchphrases, and polished nonsense. They praise what should be tested. They affirm what should be corrected. They celebrate what should be questioned. They call everything “powerful,” “anointed,” “amazing,” “deep,” “humble,” and “God-led,” whether it is or not. That is vanity. It is speech with shine but no steel. The Bible believer has to learn to ask, “Is this true?” not merely, “Did it sound good?” Vanity loves applause. Truth can stand alone.

Chapter 2: A Double Heart Produces a Double Tongue

Psalm 12:2 says, “with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.” That is the root and the fruit. The lips flatter because the heart is double. A divided heart produces divided speech. A crooked inward part produces crooked words. The man’s mouth is not the original problem. The mouth is the outlet. The double heart is the fountain. When the heart is divided between truth and advantage, the lips will eventually betray that division.

They will say whatever helps the moment, whatever protects the image, whatever gains favor, whatever avoids rebuke, and whatever gets the desired result.

A double-hearted man is not merely confused. He is unstable in truth because he has competing loyalties. Part of him wants to sound righteous. Part of him wants to keep his hidden motive. Part of him wants to be admired as spiritual. Part of him wants to use spiritual people. Part of him wants the reputation of loyalty. Part of him is willing to abandon loyalty if the price is right. James 1:8 says, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” The same principle applies to the double heart. Instability inside eventually shows up outside. The man may hold the mask for a while, but pressure reveals the split.

This is why flattering lips often become contradictory lips. The flatterer tells one person one thing and another person something else. He adapts. He reshapes. He recasts. He can sound like your closest friend when standing beside you and like your concerned critic when standing among your enemies. He can say he loves the truth when truth is popular and then soften that truth when he needs favor from those who hate it. That is not prudence. That is duplicity. A faithful man may choose his timing wisely, but he does not have two hearts. The double-hearted man speaks out of both sides because he is trying to serve two masters.

Chapter 3: The Flatterer Has a Public Tongue and a Private Motive

The flatterer’s public tongue can be impressive. It can say all the right things. It can speak warmly, humbly, respectfully, and religiously. It can call you brother. It can praise your stand. It can admire your courage. It can thank God for your ministry. It can talk about unity, fellowship, loyalty, and love. But behind the public tongue may be a private motive that is not nearly as noble as the words. That is the danger. Flattery is not always detected by what is said. It is exposed by what the speaker is after.

A man may praise you because he wants access. He may compliment you because he wants information. He may publicly support you because he wants your audience. He may act loyal because he wants proximity to influence. He may speak kindly because he wants to avoid being corrected. He may flatter because he wants to be thought humble while secretly feeding pride. The words are the wrapping paper. The motive is the package. God does not stop at the wrapping paper. First Samuel 16:7 says, “for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” Men hear the compliment. God sees the calculation.

This is why discernment must go beyond tone. A smooth tone is not proof of a clean heart. A man can speak gently and still be manipulating. A man can be polite and still be dangerous. A man can call you “dear brother” while measuring where to place the knife.

That does not mean Christians should become paranoid, suspicious of every kind word, or unable to receive encouragement. That would be another ditch. But it does mean a Bible believer should not hand over trust merely because someone knows how to talk sweetly. Trust is proven by truth, consistency, humility, faithfulness under pressure, and willingness to be corrected. The flatterer can imitate warmth. He cannot imitate long-term faithfulness under the judgment of the Book.

Chapter 4: The Flatterer Can Praise in One Room and Poison in Another

One of the ugliest marks of a double heart is room-changing speech. In one room, the flatterer praises. In another room, he poisons. In one setting, he speaks admiration. In another setting, he speaks suspicion. In public, he is supportive. In private, he is suggestive. He does not always come out swinging. He often works with little injections. A question here. A concern there. A “Have you noticed?” A “I’m just wondering.” A “I love him, but...” That is how the poison gets administered. It does not always come in a bucket. Sometimes it comes in drops.

This is especially common in churches and doctrinal circles. A man may praise a teacher when he benefits from the teacher’s work, but then undermine him when pride is pricked. He may say he appreciates a ministry until that ministry corrects his favorite error. He may flatter a brother as long as the brother is useful, then become “concerned” when he cannot control him. He may speak of unity while quietly sowing distrust. That is double-hearted conduct. It uses flattery as the first face and talebearing as the second. The two often travel together because a man who is false in praise will often be false in criticism too.

The Bible believer has to learn that the man who praises you falsely is not safer than the man who criticizes you falsely. Both are dishonest. In some cases, false praise is more dangerous because it gets closer. Open enemies usually stay outside the gate. Flatterers ask for a seat at the table. They learn the layout. They study the people. They watch the weaknesses. Then, if the heart is double, the same tongue that praised can begin poisoning. Proverbs 26:28 says, “A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.” Ruin is the end of that kind of speech.

Chapter 5: Flattering Lips Often Speak Proud Things

Psalms 12:3 says, “The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.” Notice how flattering lips and proud speech are placed together. That may surprise some people because flattery often sounds humble. It can sound submissive, admiring, deferential, and soft. But God connects it with pride. Why? Because flattery is often a tool of self-exaltation. The flatterer lowers himself with words in order to raise

himself in position. He may sound like he is praising another, but he is actually serving his own ambition. He gives admiration as bait because he wants something back.

Pride is not always loud. Sometimes pride whispers. Sometimes pride compliments. Sometimes pride says, “I am nobody,” while desperately hoping someone will answer, “No, you are amazing.” Sometimes pride talks about how much it loves your work because it wants to be seen near your work. Sometimes pride flatters authority because it wants future authority. Sometimes pride flatters crowds because it wants their applause. That is why a flattering tongue can be a proud tongue. It is not truthfully honoring another. It is using another as a ladder.

This is why God hates it. The flatterer is not just lying horizontally. He is exalting himself vertically. He is trying to climb by speech. He is trying to manipulate the order of things by verbal craft. He is trying to obtain favor without faithfulness, influence without integrity, position without purity, and trust without truth. That is proud. It may wear a humble face, but it is proud. The Lord knows the difference between true humility and strategic self-lowering. He knows when a man bows because he fears God and when a man bows because he is measuring how high he can jump from that crouched position.

Chapter 6: Double-Hearted Speech Destroys Fellowship

Real fellowship requires truth. It does not require everyone to have the same personality, the same background, the same level of knowledge, or the same gifts, but it does require honesty. First John 1:7 says, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” Fellowship is in the light, not in the fog of flattery. When people speak with flattering lips and double hearts, the light is replaced with performance. Nobody knows what is real. Compliments become suspicious. Corrections become political. Friendships become transactional. Ministry becomes networking. The family of God starts acting like a court full of diplomats.

Double-hearted speech destroys trust because it makes words unreliable. If a man learns that someone praised him in one room and poisoned him in another, trust is broken. If a church learns that people are smiling publicly and scheming privately, fellowship weakens. If doctrinal debate becomes a place where men use flattering language to appear charitable while hiding cowardice or compromise, truth suffers. If social media becomes a place where men speak “brother” while hunting for advantage, Christian speech becomes cheap. The result is not edification. It is suspicion, weariness, and confusion.

The answer is not to become cold, hard, and cynical. The answer is to walk in the light. Speak truthfully. If praise is deserved, give it honestly. If correction is needed, give it faithfully. If you disagree, do not pretend agreement for advantage. If you support someone,

support him in truth, not for what he can give you. If you have a concern, handle it scripturally, not with whispers and insinuations. If you say “brother,” then do not use the word as a costume. A true brother does not need flattering lips. He needs a single heart, a clean tongue, and a walk in the light.

Chapter 7: The Lord Will Cut Off Flattering Lips

Psalms 12:3 says, “The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips.” That is not a suggestion. That is not a mild preference. That is divine judgment. Men may reward flattering lips. Churches may promote flattering lips. Platforms may amplify flattering lips. Crowds may love flattering lips. But the Lord says He will cut them off. That ought to put a tremble in the bones. God does not look at flattery as a harmless social lubricant. He treats it as corrupt speech from a corrupt heart. The lips that men applaud may be the lips God marks for judgment.

To be “cut off” is a severe phrase. It means God will not forever tolerate the mouth that speaks vanity, flattery, and pride. The flatterer may get by for a while. He may gain friends. He may gain position. He may gain influence. He may gain a reputation for being gracious, diplomatic, charming, and wise. But God is not mocked. What is hidden in the double heart will eventually be exposed. Luke 12:2 says, “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.” The private motive behind the public tongue is not private to God.

This warning should make every man examine his speech. Not just the obvious liar. Not just the gossip. Not just the false teacher. Every man. Do my words match my heart? Am I praising what I do not truly believe? Am I using compliments to gain favor? Am I speaking kindly in public while harboring poison in private? Am I saying “brother” while treating a man like a tool? Am I using spiritual language to cover ambition? Am I more concerned with sounding charitable than being truthful? The Lord shall cut off flattering lips. The only safe response is confession, cleansing, and a return to single-hearted speech before God.

Conclusion

Psalms 12:2-3 gives one of the clearest pictures in Scripture of the relationship between flattering lips and a double heart. The flattering mouth is not merely soft. It is split. It speaks vanity because it is not anchored in truth. It speaks with a double heart because the outward words and inward motives are not the same. It speaks proud things because flattery is often a ladder for self-exaltation. That is why God’s response is so severe. The Lord does not say He will polish flattering lips. He says He will cut them off. Heaven is not impressed with velvet wrapped around a serpent’s tongue.

This kind of speech is especially deadly among religious people because it can wear Bible vocabulary. It can say “brother,” “ministry,” “burden,” “concern,” “unity,” “love,” “grace,” and “truth” while hiding motives that have nothing to do with God. It can praise a man in one room and poison him in another. It can attach itself to movements, churches, platforms, and doctrinal debates. It can sound humble while operating in pride. It can appear charitable while avoiding the cost of honesty. It can make a man look gracious while he is really being cowardly, ambitious, or manipulative. But the Book cuts through the performance. With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

The cure is a single heart before God and truthful speech before men. Let the mouth be governed by the Book. Let praise be honest. Let correction be faithful. Let disagreement be clean. Let brotherhood be real. Let the tongue stop serving image, advantage, and ambition. The Lord does not need polished talk from divided hearts. The church does not need more smooth operators. The saints do not need velvet speech with hidden hooks in it. What is needed is plain truth, clean motives, faithful wounds, honest praise, and a heart that does not split itself between God and advantage. Flattering lips may win favor for a season, but a single heart will stand when the Lord starts cutting.

6 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - The Talebearer Who Flatters With His Lips

Introduction

Proverbs 20:19 says, “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.” That verse is one of the most practical warnings in the whole Bible about people, speech, trust, and access. Notice the connection the Holy Ghost makes. He puts the talebearer who reveals secrets right beside the man who flatters with his lips. That is not a random pairing. God is showing you that the same kind of person who collects private information through charm may later distribute it through gossip. The flatterer and the talebearer are often the same creature wearing two masks. One mask smiles when collecting secrets. The other mask smirks when spreading them. One mouth says, “You can trust me.” The same mouth later says, “Let me tell you what I heard.”

That is why the Bible says, “meddle not with him.” It does not say, “Study him for entertainment.” It does not say, “Open your heart to him and hope for the best.” It does not say, “Keep feeding him information because he talks nicely.” It says, “meddle not.” In plain English, leave that kind of person alone. Do not tangle yourself up with him. Do not make him your confidant. Do not give him keys to rooms he has no business entering. Do not

hand him your secrets because he warmed you up with a compliment. Do not confuse interest with love, curiosity with concern, or charm with character. A talebearer does not need to break into your house if you invite him in and hand him the valuables.

This essay is needed because many people are far too easily disarmed by flattering speech. Someone praises them, and they lower the gate. Someone says, "I really respect you," and they start talking. Someone says, "I have always admired your stand," and suddenly private wounds, family details, ministry concerns, screenshots, disputes, weaknesses, and confidences begin spilling out. That is foolish. Some people do not compliment you because they love you. They compliment you because they are fishing. They want information. They want access. They want proximity. They want leverage. They want something they can carry into another circle. The Bible is not telling you to be paranoid. It is telling you to be wise. A flattering lip can be a fishing hook, and a talebearer knows how to bait the line.

Chapter 1: The Talebearer Goes About

Proverbs 20:19 says, "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets." The phrase "goeth about" matters. The talebearer is mobile. He travels from person to person, room to room, thread to thread, inbox to inbox, church to church, circle to circle. He is not stationary. He is a carrier. He does not merely possess information; he transports it. That is why he is dangerous. A private matter in his possession does not remain private for long because his nature is movement. He goes about. He is not content until what was spoken in one place is repeated in another.

The talebearer may not always look like a malicious villain. Sometimes he looks friendly. Sometimes he looks concerned. Sometimes he appears to be gathering prayer requests. Sometimes he dresses gossip in spiritual clothing. He says, "I am just burdened." He says, "We need to pray." He says, "I probably should not say this, but..." He says, "I only mention this because I care." That kind of talk is old as dirt and twice as filthy. If the matter is not yours to tell, then pious language does not cleanse the sin. A snake does not become a dove because it crawls through a prayer meeting.

This is where discernment has to become practical. A person who constantly carries other people's private business to you will eventually carry your private business to someone else. If he reveals secrets from others, why would you assume he will guard yours? If he opens sealed envelopes in front of you, why would you trust him with your mail? If he tells you what he should not tell you, he has already shown you what he is. The flesh loves to feel included in secret knowledge, but the Bible says the talebearer reveals secrets. Do not admire the access. Fear the character.

Chapter 2: Flattery Is Often Used to Gain Access

The second half of Proverbs 20:19 says, “therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.” The “therefore” links the two ideas together. Because the talebearer reveals secrets, do not meddle with the flatterer. Why? Because flattery is often the method by which the talebearer gets close enough to collect the secrets. He praises first, then probes. He compliments first, then questions. He admires first, then extracts. He makes you feel safe, important, understood, and valued, and once the door is open, he begins looking around for something worth carrying off.

This is why charm cannot be the test of character. A man may have a warm personality and a cold conscience. A woman may have sweet words and a loose tongue. A church member may sound supportive while gathering ammunition. A social media acquaintance may praise your posts while fishing for private details. A religious man may flatter your doctrine while trying to find out where you are vulnerable. Flattery is effective because it relaxes the guard. It tells the gatekeeper, “I am friendly.” Then curiosity walks in behind it.

A wise man learns to separate kindness from access. You can be courteous without being careless. You can be friendly without being foolish. You can appreciate encouragement without handing over private information. Every compliment does not deserve a confession. Every friendly voice does not deserve a key. Every person who says, “I love what you are doing,” does not need to know what is happening behind the scenes. Flattery often says, “Trust me.” Wisdom answers, “Prove it over time.”

Chapter 3: Secrets Are Not Toys for Talkers

The Bible says the talebearer “revealeth secrets.” That means there are things that ought to remain covered. There are confidences that should be guarded. There are wounds that should not be displayed for public inspection. There are family matters, church matters, ministry matters, business matters, and personal burdens that do not belong in the mouth of every talker who happens to come by. A secret is not a toy for the curious. It is a trust. When a man reveals it without cause, he is not being open. He is being treacherous.

Proverbs 11:13 says, “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.” There is the contrast. A talebearer reveals. A faithful spirit conceals. That does not mean covering sin that must be judged, hiding crime, protecting wolves, or enabling wickedness. The Bible is not defending corruption. It is talking about the faithful handling of matters that do not belong to loose lips. A faithful spirit knows when to speak, when to be silent, when to confront, when to report, when to cover, and when to carry a burden without turning it into entertainment.

The talebearer lacks that faithful spirit. He treats information as social currency. He spends secrets to buy attention. He uses private things to purchase importance. He loves the feeling of being the one who knows. He enjoys leaning in and saying, “Did you hear?” That is a rotten appetite. A man who feeds on secrets eventually becomes a vulture. He circles trouble, waits for weakness, and then descends with his beak open. Do not feed that bird. Do not hand him your wounds and hope he develops a conscience on the way to the next conversation.

Chapter 4: Flattery Lowers the Gate

A guarded person is not easily useful to a talebearer. That is why flattery is so effective. It lowers the gate. It tells the hearer, “I am on your side.” It makes a person feel safe enough to talk. It strokes the ego just enough to silence caution. A compliment can become a key when a person is hungry to be admired. The flatterer knows this. He understands that many people will reveal more after being praised than after being questioned. So he does not begin with interrogation. He begins with admiration.

This happens constantly in religious circles. A man says, “Brother, I really appreciate your stand,” and then begins asking about someone else. A woman says, “I know you are wise, so I wanted your take,” and then begins fishing for private details. Someone says, “I trust your discernment,” and suddenly the conversation becomes a trap. The praise creates a feeling of importance, and the feeling of importance makes the person talk more than he should. That is how flattery lowers the gate. It does not kick the door down. It convinces pride to open it.

A Bible believer has to learn to distrust the part of himself that responds too quickly to praise. The danger is not only in the flatterer. It is also in the appetite of the one being flattered. If a compliment makes you reckless, then the issue is not only their lips but your pride. If admiration makes you disclose what wisdom told you to keep guarded, then your ego has become a security breach. A man who cannot handle praise will eventually be handled by people who know how to give it.

Chapter 5: Do Not Feed the Gossip Machine

The command in Proverbs 20:19 is plain: “meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.” That means do not get involved with him. Do not entangle yourself with him. Do not become part of his circuit. The gossip machine needs fuel, and the fuel is information. If you feed it, do not act surprised when it keeps running. A talebearer cannot reveal what he does not know. A flatterer cannot misuse access he was never given. Wisdom does not merely condemn gossip after it spreads. Wisdom refuses to supply the material.

Some people think they are innocent because they only listened. But listening can be participation. Proverbs 17:4 says, “A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.” There is guilt not only in speaking wickedly but also in giving a welcome ear to wicked speech. The talebearer needs an audience. Without ears, his mouth has nowhere to go. A person who keeps making room for gossip becomes part of the marketplace where secrets are sold.

The wise response is to shut the thing down early. You do not have to be theatrical. You do not have to make a speech every time. But you can refuse the traffic. You can say, “That is not mine to hear.” You can say, “Have you gone to them?” You can say, “I do not want to be part of this.” You can change the subject. You can leave the conversation. You can stop giving access to someone who has proven unfaithful with words. The Bible says, “meddle not.” Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is not answer the bait.

Chapter 6: The Talebearer Wears Two Masks

The talebearer who flatters with his lips often wears two masks. The first mask is the collector’s mask. That mask is smiling, sympathetic, admiring, and interested. It says, “Tell me more.” It says, “You can trust me.” It says, “I understand.” It says, “I have always respected you.” It creates comfort. It invites disclosure. It gives the impression of care. But the second mask is the distributor’s mask. That mask appears later in another room, where the same person reveals what he collected. He may add concern. He may add interpretation. He may add exaggeration. He may add a few spiritual phrases. But the secret is now moving.

This is why the flatterer and the talebearer are such a deadly pair. One gets in. The other gets out. Flattery gains entrance. Talebearing carries the goods away. The victim may not realize what happened until later, when private matters surface where they never belonged. Then comes the shock: “How did they know that?” The answer is often simple. Someone with flattering lips was allowed too close. Someone who seemed safe was only gathering material. Someone who sounded like a friend had the habits of a carrier.

A man of faithful spirit is different. He does not need to flatter to get close. He does not fish for what is not his. He does not use private information to gain status. He does not turn another person’s wound into conversational currency. He understands that trust is sacred. He knows that words can wound. He fears God enough to keep his tongue under government. That is the kind of person worth trusting. Not the loudest admirer. Not the smoothest talker. Not the one who flatters most warmly. The faithful one.

Chapter 7: Guard Your Heart Without Hardening It

There is a balance here that must be kept. The Bible warns against talebearers and flatterers, but it does not command believers to become suspicious, bitter, cold, isolated, or cynical. The answer to loose tongues is not a locked-up heart that never loves anybody. The answer is wisdom. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Keeping the heart means guarding it, not freezing it. It means using discernment, not living in paranoia. It means understanding that access should be earned, not handed out because someone knows how to talk nicely.

A guarded heart still loves. It still encourages. It still fellowships. It still receives true friendship. It still bears burdens. But it does not confuse every warm voice with a faithful spirit. It does not confuse curiosity with care. It does not confuse flattery with loyalty. It tests fruit over time. It watches whether a person can keep confidences. It notices how they speak about others when others are absent. It pays attention to whether they reveal secrets, stir trouble, collect screenshots, and carry tales. Wisdom observes patterns. Foolishness ignores patterns because it enjoys the praise.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself did not commit Himself to every man. John 2:24-25 says, “But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.” That is not bitterness. That is perfect discernment. He loved men, died for sinners, showed mercy, spoke truth, and yet did not naively entrust Himself to everyone. There is the pattern. Love people. Speak truth. Show grace. But do not hand sacred things to every flatterer who walks by with a smile and a bucket.

Conclusion

Proverbs 20:19 gives a warning that is as current as this morning’s inbox: “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.” The verse connects two things that many people foolishly separate. The talebearer reveals secrets, and the flatterer gains access. The one who spreads private information often collects it through charm. He smiles first. He praises first. He appears concerned first. Then, when the gate is open and the confidence is given, the secret begins its journey into another circle.

This is why believers must not confuse charm with character. A compliment is not proof of faithfulness. Admiration is not proof of loyalty. Interest is not proof of love. Some people flatter because they are fishing. They want information, influence, proximity, weakness, leverage, private details, or material for later use. That does not mean every encourager is false or every kind word is suspicious. God forbid. True encouragement is a blessing.

Faithful friendship is a gift. But the Bible says a faithful spirit conceals a matter, while a talebearer reveals secrets. The difference must be discerned.

The command is not complicated: “meddle not with him.” Do not feed the gossip machine because it came wrapped in praise. Do not hand your secrets to a man who has already shown he cannot guard anyone else’s. Do not let flattery pick the lock on your discernment. Do not let your hunger for admiration make you careless with things that ought to be kept. The flatterer and the talebearer often walk together, and both of them are enemies of faithful speech. A wise man keeps his heart, guards his tongue, tests character over time, and remembers that the sweetest lips may be carrying the sharpest knife.

7 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - Rebuke Is Better Than Flattery

Introduction

Proverbs 28:23 says, “He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.” That verse cuts straight across the grain of a soft, sentimental, jelly-spined generation that has confused love with affirmation, charity with silence, grace with cowardice, and kindness with letting people rot undisturbed. The Bible does not say the man who flatters will find more favour. It says the man who rebukes will find more favour “afterwards.” That word matters. At first, rebuke may not feel like favour. At first, it may sting. At first, the flesh may rise up and say, “Who does he think he is?” At first, pride may call it harsh, unloving, judgmental, mean, negative, or divisive. But afterwards, when the smoke clears, when the conscience settles down, when the soul realizes it was being pulled back from a cliff, the faithful rebuker is seen for what he was: a friend who cared enough to tell the truth.

Flattery gives a man a pillow while he sleeps near the edge of a cliff. Rebuke shakes him awake. Flattery tells him, “You are fine,” while his feet are already sliding. Rebuke says, “Stop.” Flattery lets him feel good while he rots. Rebuke wounds the flesh to spare the soul. Flattery is easy because it asks nothing of the speaker except enough cowardice to avoid conflict. Rebuke is costly because it risks rejection, misunderstanding, anger, slander, and loss of favor in the moment. That is why flatterers are common and faithful reprovers are rare. Any coward can tell a sinner what he wants to hear. It takes charity, courage, and fear of God to tell him what he needs to hear.

This essay is badly needed because modern religion is packed full of flattering tongues and terrified of rebuke. Preachers flatter crowds to keep the seats full. Parents flatter children

because discipline is hard. Friends flatter friends because they do not want tension. Online ministries flatter audiences because rebuke hurts engagement. Churches flatter visitors because truth might offend them. Husbands and wives flatter each other's sins because honest confrontation might disturb the peace. But that kind of peace is a swamp, not a sanctuary. The Bible puts the faithful rebuker above the smooth-tongued coward. A man who loves you will tell you when you are wrong. A flatterer will watch you walk into destruction and compliment your shoes on the way down.

Chapter 1: Rebuke Is Hated at First Because It Strikes the Flesh

The reason rebuke is so unwelcome at first is simple: it hits the flesh where the flesh wants to be left alone. A man may say he loves truth, but the test comes when truth stops being a doctrine he can shout at others and becomes a sword pointed at his own chest. Everybody likes correction in theory when it is aimed across the room. The trouble starts when the finger turns and says, "Thou art the man." Then the flesh begins its performance. It feels insulted. It feels exposed. It feels attacked. It starts reaching for excuses, countercharges, emotional stories, and anything else that will allow it to escape the judgment of the words being spoken.

This is why the first reaction to rebuke is often not the best reaction. A man under rebuke may feel anger before gratitude. He may feel embarrassment before conviction. He may feel defensive before he feels honest. He may hear the tone before he hears the truth. That is why Proverbs says "afterwards." Afterwards means time has to do some work.

Afterwards means the initial sting is not the final verdict. Afterwards means a rebuke may look like an enemy when it arrives and reveal itself as mercy when it has done its work. The flesh judges by immediate comfort. Wisdom judges by final fruit.

A faithful rebuke is not cruelty. It is truth applied to danger. It is the alarm bell in a burning house. Nobody wakes up at three in the morning loving the sound of the alarm. It is sharp, loud, interrupting, and unpleasant. But a man would be a fool to curse the alarm while the flames are climbing the curtains. Rebuke is like that. It disturbs because destruction is already moving. Flattery, on the other hand, is the soft music playing while the smoke fills the room. The flesh prefers the music, but the soul needs the alarm.

Chapter 2: Flattery Feels Better Because It Leaves Pride Untouched

Flattery feels better than rebuke because it does not require humility. It lets a man keep his self-image. It tells him he is right, justified, misunderstood, special, wise, strong, balanced, compassionate, spiritual, or brave, depending on which lie he needs at the moment.

Flattery gives the flesh a warm bath. Rebuke throws cold water in its face. Flattery lets pride

remain enthroned. Rebuke walks in like Nathan and points at the king. That is why carnal people prefer flatterers. A flatterer never asks the flesh to die.

The flatterer understands human appetite. He knows men want to be praised more than purified. He knows women want to be affirmed more than corrected. He knows preachers want applause more than examination. He knows church members want comfort more than conviction. He knows sinners want sympathy that excuses them rather than grace that changes them. So he gives them what they already crave. He does not have to create the appetite. He only has to feed it. That is what makes flattery so deadly. It works with the grain of fallen man.

But anything that leaves pride untouched is not helping the soul. Pride is not a harmless personality feature. It is rebellion dressed in self-admiration. Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” If a man is proud, the loving thing is not to flatter him. The loving thing is to warn him. If a man is running toward destruction, the loving thing is not to praise his confidence. It is to rebuke his blindness. Flattery feels like love because it protects pride. Rebuke feels like hostility because it pierces pride. But pride is the disease, not the patient.

Chapter 3: The Faithful Friend Wounds to Heal

Proverbs 27:6 says, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” That verse belongs beside Proverbs 28:23 like two witnesses in the same courtroom. A friend may wound you, and an enemy may kiss you. A friend may make you hurt, and an enemy may make you feel valued. A friend may risk your anger, and an enemy may preserve your smile. The issue is not the immediate sensation. The issue is the motive and the result. A faithful wound is better than a deceitful kiss because the wound is given for healing, while the kiss is given for betrayal, manipulation, or self-interest.

This destroys the modern idea that love must always sound gentle, approving, and validating. A faithful friend does not love your ego more than your soul. He does not love your comfort more than your character. He does not love your temporary mood more than your final condition. If he sees you drifting, he says so. If he sees you compromising, he says so. If he sees you feeding a sin, he says so. If he sees you deceiving yourself, he says so. He may speak with tears. He may speak with trembling. He may choose his words carefully. But if he is faithful, he will not let you confuse his silence with agreement.

The enemy’s kiss is easier to receive because it does not demand repentance. Judas kissed the Lord Jesus Christ. That kiss was not love. It was treachery with soft lips. Many people are still fooled by kisses. They judge loyalty by pleasantness. They judge love by affirmation. They judge friendship by whether the other person makes them feel good. But the Bible

tells you plainly that a wound can be faithful and a kiss can be deceitful. That means a Bible believer must grow up enough to ask, “Is this person helping me obey God, or merely helping me feel good about disobeying Him?”

Chapter 4: Faithful Preaching Cannot Be Built on Constant Affirmation

A ministry built on constant affirmation is not a New Testament ministry. Paul did not flatter. He preached, warned, reproved, rebuked, exhorted, comforted, instructed, and charged. Second Timothy 4:2 says, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” There is the preacher’s marching order. Reprove. Rebuke. Exhort. Not entertain, flatter, soften, market, brand, and stroke egos. A preacher who cannot rebuke is not a faithful shepherd. He is a hireling with a microphone.

The modern pulpit has been trained to fear the congregation more than God. It has been taught to avoid anything that might offend donors, visitors, families, committees, platforms, or followers. So the message becomes smoother and smoother until nobody is cut, nobody is convicted, nobody is corrected, and nobody is changed. The preacher becomes a religious host. The sermon becomes a motivational talk. The altar becomes a stage. The Bible becomes a prop. The people leave saying, “That was encouraging,” while their sins leave untouched beside them. That is not preaching. That is spiritual cosmetology.

Faithful preaching must have enough love to wound. It must say what the passage says. It must name sin. It must divide truth from error. It must warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, and be patient toward all men. It must not mistake harshness for holiness, but neither can it mistake cowardice for compassion. A preacher who always affirms and never rebukes is not feeding sheep; he is fattening them for wolves. The sheep need green pastures, but they also need a rod and staff. The rod is not hatred. It is shepherd work.

Chapter 5: Faithful Friendship Cannot Survive on Flattery

Friendship built on flattery is not friendship. It is a mutual admiration contract. Each person agrees not to disturb the other person’s pride, and in return both get to call it loyalty. That kind of relationship may feel pleasant for a while, but it cannot produce spiritual growth. It cannot survive truth. It cannot bear correction. It cannot endure honest confrontation. It is not iron sharpening iron. It is velvet rubbing velvet until both pieces collect dust.

Real friendship has truth in it. A faithful friend will not constantly nitpick, criticize, belittle, or police every flaw. That is not friendship either. But when something matters, when sin is present, when danger is near, when pride is blinding, when doctrine is slipping, when a

family is being harmed, when a soul is being damaged, a faithful friend must speak. Silence in those moments is not humility. It may be fear. It may be laziness. It may be self-protection. It may be a desire to keep the relationship comfortable at the expense of righteousness.

The flatterer is easier to have around because he asks nothing. He will agree, nod, smile, and support the story you tell yourself. But a friend may challenge that story. He may say, "That is not what happened." He may say, "You are wrong." He may say, "You need to apologize." He may say, "You are playing with sin." He may say, "You are not being honest." That kind of friend is worth more than a crowd of flatterers. The crowd may clap while you fall. The friend may grab your arm hard enough to leave a bruise, but if he keeps you from going over the edge, thank God for the bruise.

Chapter 6: Faithful Parenting Cannot Be Built on Fear of Correction

This principle also applies in the home. A parent who only affirms and never corrects is not loving the child biblically. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." That verse is despised by a generation that thinks discipline is damage and correction is trauma. But God says the opposite. Refusing correction is not love. It can actually be hatred in practice because it leaves the child to be governed by foolishness. Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

Children do not need parents who flatter their rebellion. They need parents who love them enough to form them, correct them, teach them, restrain them, and tell them no. A child does not become wise by being constantly told how amazing he is. He becomes proud, fragile, self-centered, and unprepared for a world that will not worship him. Encouragement has its place. Affection has its place. Praise for good conduct has its place. But a home without correction becomes a nursery for foolishness. A parent who is afraid to rebuke will eventually raise a child who cannot handle rebuke from anyone.

God's love includes chastisement. Hebrews 12:6 says, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." That settles the matter. If chastening were hatred, God would not do it to those He loves. Correction is not the opposite of love. It is often the proof of it. The modern mind says, "If you love me, you will affirm me." The Bible says, "If I love you, I may have to chasten you." A parent who understands that will not flatter a child into ruin. He will correct, instruct, warn, and train, not because he enjoys conflict, but because he fears God and loves the child more than his own comfort.

Chapter 7: The Modern Church Rewards Flatterers and Attacks Reprovers

One of the sickest signs of modern Christianity is that it often rewards flatterers and attacks reprovers. The man who speaks smoothly, avoids controversy, praises everyone, criticizes nothing, stands for nothing too sharply, and keeps the atmosphere positive is called gracious. The man who opens the Bible, names error, warns about sin, exposes false doctrine, and refuses to sell the truth for applause is called divisive. That shows how far the religious temperature has dropped. When a generation hates the man who rebukes and loves the man who flatters, it has already chosen comfort over truth.

Isaiah 30:10 describes people “which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things.” There it is. Smooth things. That is what religious flesh wants. It does not want right things. It wants smooth things. It wants sermons without edges, songs without doctrine, fellowship without correction, unity without truth, and grace without godliness. It wants a preacher who can make disobedience feel safe and worldliness feel spiritual. That appetite is not new. It is the old rebellion in a new suit.

But God’s man cannot be governed by that appetite. He must speak the truth whether the crowd wants smooth things or not. He must remember that afterwards matters more than immediately. The crowd may dislike the rebuke today, but some soul may thank God for it tomorrow. A family may be spared. A young man may be rescued. A doctrine may be preserved. A sinner may be awakened. A saint may be corrected before worse damage comes. Flattery wins the moment. Rebuke may win the future. Proverbs 28:23 says the rebuker shall find more favour afterwards, and the Bible is right whether the age likes it or not.

Conclusion

Proverbs 28:23 gives a lesson that needs to be written across pulpits, homes, friendships, ministries, and every place where words are used: “He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.” The flatterer may be appreciated first. The rebuker may be resented first. The flatterer may seem kinder in the moment. The rebuker may seem harder in the moment. But the Bible tells you to wait for the afterwards. Wait until the fruit appears. Wait until the man realizes he was warned before he destroyed himself. Wait until the soft words are seen as bait and the hard words are seen as mercy.

Truth may bruise the ego, but flattery can damn the direction of a life. A flatterer does not have to hate you openly to harm you. He only has to love your approval more than your soul. He only has to stay silent when you need warning. He only has to praise what should be corrected. He only has to let you think you are safe while you are drifting. A faithful

rebuke, on the other hand, may feel like an injury, but it may be the clean cut of a surgeon instead of the dirty wound of an enemy. The issue is not whether it hurts. The issue is whether it heals.

So choose faithful wounds over deceitful kisses. Choose the preacher who will tell you the truth over the performer who keeps you comfortable. Choose the friend who can correct you over the flatterer who only admires you. Choose the parent who chastens in love over the coward who lets foolishness grow unchecked. Choose the Book over the voice that tells your flesh what it wants to hear. The modern church may reward flatterers and attack reprovers, but the judgment of God will reverse many reputations. The smooth-tongued coward may be popular today, but the faithful rebuker will find more favour afterwards.

8 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - The Net Spread for Thy Feet

Introduction

Proverbs 29:5 says, “A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.” That is one of the strongest pictures in the entire Bible on the subject of flattery. God does not say the flatterer merely speaks too much. He does not say the flatterer is just overly complimentary, socially polished, or a little excessive in his praise. He says the flatterer is spreading a net. That means flattery is not merely noise. It is a trap. It has design. It has placement. It has timing. It has intention. It has prey in view. The flatterer is not just talking. He is setting something. He may not look like a hunter, but he is laying out the cords. He may not sound like an enemy, but he is arranging the snare. He may smile while doing it, but the smile does not change the nature of the net.

That image destroys the harmless view of flattery. A net is not placed where nothing is expected. A net is placed where something is meant to be caught. That means the flatterer has an object. He wants something from the person he flatters. He may want influence, access, money, lust, loyalty, protection, admiration, silence, promotion, or control. He may want the person to lower their guard, reveal secrets, excuse sin, overlook error, or follow his lead. Whatever the specific goal, the principle is the same: the flattering words are not free. They are bait tied to an agenda. That is why the Bible believer must learn to hear flattery differently than the world hears it. The world hears praise and says, “How kind.” The Bible hears false praise and says, “Where is the net?”

The net works because the victim often enjoys the bait. That is the terrifying part. The flatterer does not always have to shove a man into the snare. He only has to make the man

admire himself while stepping into it. A man who believes every compliment becomes vulnerable to manipulation. A woman who needs constant praise becomes vulnerable to seduction. A preacher who feeds on applause becomes vulnerable to compromise. A leader who loves admiration becomes vulnerable to corruption. The most dangerous words are not always insults. Sometimes the deadliest words are the ones that make you feel bigger than you are, safer than you are, wiser than you are, and more untouchable than you are. Flattery does not catch a man by making him feel small. It catches him by making him feel large.

Chapter 1: Flattery Is a Trap, Not a Tribute

The first thing Proverbs 29:5 teaches is that flattery is not tribute. It is a trap. Honest praise gives honour according to truth. Flattery gives praise according to agenda. Honest praise says, “That was good,” because it was good. Flattery says, “You are amazing,” because it wants something. Honest praise can strengthen humility because it recognizes God’s grace, good labour, faithful service, or true virtue. Flattery inflames pride because it exaggerates, manipulates, and directs the attention toward self. That is why flattery is dangerous. It looks like tribute, but God calls it a net.

A trap does not have to look ugly to be deadly. In fact, a trap works best when it hides itself. The hunter does not hang a sign over the snare that says, “Step here and be captured.” He covers it. He disguises it. He places it in the path where the animal naturally walks. That is how flattery works. It is placed along the path of human ego. It lies where pride already likes to travel. It does not need to create a new appetite. It simply takes advantage of an old one. Fallen man already wants to be admired, praised, confirmed, exalted, understood, and excused. Flattery spreads the net right there.

That is why the spiritual man has to judge flattery by Scripture, not by sensation. The flesh loves the sensation of being praised. It feels warm. It feels safe. It feels validating. It feels like friendship. But Proverbs says a net may be under it. A man must learn to ask hard questions. Is this true? Is it measured? Is it righteous? Is it trying to move me somewhere? Is it making me more humble before God or more impressed with myself? Is this person faithful, or just smooth? Honest praise can be received with thanksgiving. Flattery must be recognized as bait.

Chapter 2: The Net Is Spread for the Feet

Proverbs 29:5 says the net is spread “for his feet.” That is a precise image. The net is meant to affect the walk. It is meant to catch the man in his movement. It is meant to alter his path, stop him, control him, or bring him down. Flattery is not merely aimed at the ears. It is aimed at the feet. The flatterer wants the person to go somewhere, do something, accept

something, excuse something, believe something, reveal something, or join something. The lips speak to the ears, but the net waits for the steps.

This is why flattery often appears right before a decision. Someone flatters before asking for a favor. Someone flatters before introducing a compromise. Someone flatters before presenting a temptation. Someone flatters before asking for private information. Someone flatters before making a doctrinal suggestion. Someone flatters before pulling a person into a quarrel. The praise softens the person so the next step feels natural. Once the ego is warmed, the feet are easier to move. That is why Proverbs uses the image of a net for the feet. Flattery wants motion. It wants direction.

A Bible believer must learn to watch what follows the compliment. The compliment itself may sound pleasant, but what comes next? Does the flatterer praise your discernment, then ask you to listen to gossip? Does he praise your courage, then push you into foolish boldness? Does he praise your compassion, then ask you to excuse sin? Does he praise your wisdom, then ask you to join his side against someone else? Does he praise your ministry, then seek access to your platform? The net is often revealed by the next step being requested. The flattery is the cover. The desired movement is the point.

Chapter 3: Flattery Appeals to Pride Because Pride Steps Into Nets

The flatterer spreads a net for the feet, but pride helps the feet step into it. That is why flattery is so effective. It speaks to something already present in the flesh. It tells a man what he wants to believe about himself. It tells him he is special, exceptional, misunderstood, necessary, wise, strong, spiritual, gifted, important, or untouchable. The flesh hears that and relaxes. Pride loves to be admired. Pride loves to be confirmed. Pride loves to be separated from ordinary men. Pride says, "At last, someone sees what I am." That is the moment the foot begins to move toward the net.

A humble man is harder to trap with flattery because he knows too much about himself. He knows his flesh. He knows his weakness. He knows his dependence on God. He knows the good in him came from grace, not self-glory. He knows applause can be dangerous. He can receive truthful encouragement without inhaling it like incense. But a proud man breathes praise deeply. He needs it. He craves it. He follows it. That craving makes him manageable. The person who can feed his ego can often steer his steps.

This is why constant praise can weaken spiritual judgment. A man surrounded by flatterers may start to think correction is persecution. He may start to think disagreement is disloyalty. He may start to think caution is unbelief. He may start to think his instincts are always spiritual. That is when he becomes easy to catch. The flatterer does not have to

argue him into the net. He only has to keep telling him how wise he is while guiding him forward. Pride does the walking. Flattery only lights the path.

Chapter 4: The Net Often Feels Like Admiration

The net of flattery often feels like admiration, and that is why so many people miss it. They are expecting danger to feel threatening. They are expecting temptation to feel ugly. They are expecting enemies to sound hostile. But the net may feel like warmth, respect, appreciation, attraction, loyalty, or support. It may come from someone who seems to understand you better than others do. It may come from someone who says what your wounded pride has been waiting to hear. It may come from someone who appears to recognize your value when others have overlooked it. That feeling can become intoxicating.

This is especially dangerous for people who have been neglected, criticized, betrayed, or wounded. A starving ego will eat almost anything. A lonely heart can mistake attention for love. A discouraged preacher can mistake applause for confirmation. A weary wife can mistake admiration for affection. A frustrated husband can mistake sympathy for wisdom. A leader under pressure can mistake flattery for loyalty. The flatterer often studies the hunger before offering the bait. He knows what has been missing, and he supplies a counterfeit.

The Bible believer must understand that not every word that feels healing is holy. Some words soothe the flesh while poisoning the soul. Some admiration is a net. Some sympathy is seduction. Some praise is a purchase offer. The question is not merely, "How did it make me feel?" The question is, "Where is it leading me?" If admiration leads away from duty, away from purity, away from humility, away from truth, away from fidelity, away from obedience, then it is not a blessing. It is bait. The devil has no problem making you feel valued if that feeling moves your feet into a snare.

Chapter 5: Leaders Are Especially Vulnerable to the Net

A leader who loves admiration is in danger. Whether he is a preacher, father, teacher, business owner, public voice, ministry worker, or ruler, the danger is the same. Leadership brings attention, and attention attracts flatterers. People flatter leaders because leaders can give access, approval, opportunity, money, platform, position, protection, or recognition. The higher a man stands, the more likely he is to meet people who praise him for what they can get from him. That means leadership requires unusual sobriety about praise.

A preacher who feeds on applause will eventually adjust the sermon to keep the applause coming. A pastor who needs to be liked will avoid the texts that make people uncomfortable. A public teacher who loves admiration will begin measuring truth by

response. A father who wants his children to approve of him more than he wants to train them will become weak. A businessman who loves compliments may promote flatterers instead of faithful workers. A political leader who loves public adoration can be steered by whoever praises him best. That is the net spread for the feet.

This is why a leader must keep men around him who can tell him the truth. Not yes-men. Not praise machines. Not professional encouragers who never rebuke. A leader needs faithful voices that are not impressed enough to lie. He needs people who care more about the truth than his mood. He needs the Book above his own instincts. He needs prayer, humility, and the fear of God. If a leader removes reprovers and surrounds himself with flatterers, he has built the net around his own feet. The fall may not be immediate, but it is being arranged.

Chapter 6: The Net Can Be Religious

Some of the most dangerous flattery in the world is religious flattery. It uses spiritual vocabulary to make the net look holy. It says, "God is really using you," when the real goal is to gain favor. It says, "You are so anointed," when the real goal is to get access. It says, "Nobody teaches it like you," when the real goal is to attach itself to the platform. It says, "I have been praying about this," when the real goal is to manipulate with spiritual pressure. It says, "The Lord laid you on my heart," when the heart may be full of ambition, curiosity, or covetousness.

This kind of flattery is especially dangerous because Christians want to believe spiritual words. They do not want to seem suspicious of encouragement. They do not want to be hard or ungrateful. But spiritual language does not sanctify manipulation. A hook is still a hook if someone paints a Bible verse on it. A net is still a net if someone spreads it in the church parking lot. Judas did not betray the Lord with a curse. He betrayed Him with a kiss. Religious softness can carry treachery just as easily as open hostility.

A Bible believer must learn to test spiritual flattery by fruit, doctrine, motive, and time. True spiritual encouragement points a man back to God and truth. Flattery points him back to himself. True encouragement strengthens humility. Flattery inflames self-importance. True encouragement can coexist with correction. Flattery hates correction. True encouragement does not demand access as payment. Flattery usually wants something. When religious praise makes a man feel too important to be corrected, too used of God to be questioned, or too special to be warned, the net is already tightening.

Chapter 7: Escape the Net by Loving Truth More Than Praise

The only real escape from the net of flattery is to love truth more than praise. A man who needs compliments can be bought cheaply. A man who loves applause can be moved

easily. A man who cannot live without admiration will eventually serve the people who supply it. But a man who loves truth more than praise is harder to trap. He can be encouraged without being owned. He can receive honour without becoming intoxicated. He can be appreciated without surrendering discernment. He can hear compliments without letting them govern his steps.

Loving truth more than praise means welcoming faithful rebuke. It means letting the Word of God search the heart. It means being more thankful for the man who warns you than the man who flatters you. It means asking God to keep you small in your own eyes. It means remembering that without Christ you are nothing, without the Book you know nothing safely, and without grace you would fall as quickly as any other sinner. It means refusing to believe the inflated version of yourself that flattery tries to sell you.

The wise man does not despise all praise. He simply refuses to be ruled by it. If praise is true, he receives it humbly and gives God the glory. If praise is exaggerated, he lets it fall to the ground. If praise is manipulative, he steps away from the net. If praise is followed by a request that moves him toward compromise, he recognizes the design. The flatterer spreads a net for the feet, but the man who walks in truth does not have to step into it. Psalm 119:105 says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” The Word lights the path so the net can be seen.

Conclusion

Proverbs 29:5 is plain: “A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.” That one verse tears away the smile and shows the snare. Flattery is not just pleasant speech. It is often a trap with design, intention, and prey. The flatterer may sound harmless, but God says he is spreading something. He is arranging words in such a way that the hearer will lower his guard, feed his pride, and move his feet in the desired direction. That is why flattery must never be judged merely by how it sounds. It must be judged by what it is doing.

The net works because the bait feels good. People enjoy being admired. They enjoy being told they are special, wise, strong, necessary, misunderstood, and unusually gifted. But that enjoyment can become the very path into bondage. A man who believes every compliment becomes vulnerable to manipulation. A woman who needs constant praise becomes vulnerable to seduction. A preacher who feeds on applause becomes vulnerable to compromise. A leader who loves admiration becomes vulnerable to corruption. The danger is not always in harsh words. Sometimes the deadliest words are the ones that make the flesh feel safe, large, and untouchable.

The answer is humility before God and love for truth. Let the Book judge the compliment. Let the Spirit of God expose the motive. Let faithful rebuke be more precious than flattering praise. Do not let admiration move your feet where Scripture told you not to walk. Do not let smooth lips guide your steps into a snare. The flatterer does not have to push you if he can make you admire yourself while stepping forward. But the Word of God is a lamp unto the feet, and under that light the net can be seen before the foot is caught.

9 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - Flattering Titles and the Fear of Man

Introduction

Job 32:21-22 says, “Let me not, I pray you, accept any man’s person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away.” That is a remarkable statement in the middle of a world that is drunk on titles, status, platforms, credentials, religious celebrity, and human reputation. Elihu did not say, “Let me learn how to flatter important people so I can gain influence.” He did not say, “Let me praise great men so they will open doors for me.” He did not say, “Let me use the right titles so I can be accepted among the respected crowd.” He said he would not accept any man’s person, and he would not give flattering titles unto man. Why? Because he feared his Maker. He knew words are not weightless. He knew that dishonest honor given to man is dangerous business before God.

This is not an attack on proper respect. The Bible commands honour where honour is due. It teaches respect for age, authority, office, labour, parents, rulers, elders, and those who faithfully minister the Word. A Bible believer should not be rude, flippant, childish, or disrespectful toward legitimate authority. But there is a difference between honour and flattery. Honour tells the truth about a man’s office, labour, or service. Flattery inflates the man until he becomes something more than a servant. Honour recognizes responsibility. Flattery feeds vanity. Honour can coexist with correction. Flattery makes a man untouchable. Honour says, “This man has laboured.” Flattery says, “This man is indispensable.” Honour respects the office. Flattery builds a throne for the flesh.

This essay goes straight into the religious celebrity machine because that machine runs on flattering titles. Men love to be called great, revered, apostolic, prophetic, scholarly, anointed, influential, visionary, indispensable, and specially chosen. They love initials after their names, robes on their bodies, seats on platforms, introductions that sound like coronations, and crowds that treat them like living monuments. That is not New Testament humility. That is old Adam wearing a ministerial badge. Elihu had enough fear of God to

refuse that game. He knew the Maker was listening. He knew that the man giving flattering titles might gain favor with men while losing ground before God. The religious world may reward the title-giver, but heaven weighs the tongue.

Chapter 1: Elihu Refused to Accept Any Man's Person

Elihu begins by saying, "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person." That phrase deals with partiality. It means he did not want to be swayed by the outward standing, age, reputation, influence, authority, or appearance of the men before him. He had listened while older men spoke. He had waited. He had shown restraint. But when it was time to speak, he did not want the person of man to govern his words. He wanted truth to govern his words. That is a rare thing. Most people speak differently when important people are in the room. Their convictions shrink. Their compliments grow. Their courage starts looking for an exit.

Accepting a man's person is one of the first steps toward flattering titles. Once a man becomes impressed with flesh, his tongue starts bending. He speaks one way to the poor man and another way to the rich man. He speaks one way to the unknown brother and another way to the famous preacher. He speaks one way to a man with no platform and another way to a man with a crowd. He starts measuring how his words will affect his opportunities. That is the fear of man taking over the tongue. Proverbs 29:25 says, "The fear of man bringeth a snare." One of the first places that snare shows up is in speech.

A Bible believer has to settle that no man is big enough to change the truth. Age does not change it. Scholarship does not change it. popularity does not change it. ordination does not change it. denominational rank does not change it. social media reach does not change it. A man may deserve respect for his labour, but he does not deserve worship. He may deserve a fair hearing, but he does not deserve immunity. He may have knowledge, but he is not the final authority. The moment a man's person becomes larger in your eyes than the words of God, your tongue is already preparing to flatter.

Chapter 2: Flattering Titles Go Beyond Proper Honour

The passage says, "neither let me give flattering titles unto man." That means there are titles that go beyond proper respect and enter into flattery. This matters because people often hide flattery under the excuse of honour. They say, "I am just respecting the office." Sometimes that is true. Other times they are feeding a religious idol. There is a line between acknowledging a man's labour and inflating his importance. There is a line between saying, "He has taught well," and treating him as though he cannot be questioned. There is a line between appreciating a servant and crowning him like a prince.

Flattering titles are dangerous because they reshape how people see the man. Titles can create distance between the servant and the people he is supposed to serve. They can make correction feel impossible. They can train the crowd to assume that the titled man must be right because he has the costume, the credentials, the reputation, or the platform. The flesh loves that. It loves being placed above ordinary examination. It loves language that makes it feel elevated. But the New Testament pattern is not celebrity exaltation. It is service. Jesus said in Matthew 23:11, “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.” That sentence cuts the legs out from under a lot of religious pageantry.

There is nothing wrong with identifying a pastor as a pastor, a teacher as a teacher, an elder as an elder, or a brother as a brother. The Bible uses words for offices and functions. The problem is when titles become incense offered to man. The problem is when titles are used to make a man untouchable, unquestionable, or larger than the Book. The problem is when the introduction becomes worship in a suit. The problem is when a sinner saved by grace starts believing the adjectives placed before his name. Proper honour tells the truth. Flattering titles inflate the flesh.

Chapter 3: The Religious Celebrity Machine Feeds on Flattery

The religious celebrity machine cannot survive without flattery. It needs people to keep saying the man is special, unique, anointed, unmatched, profound, revolutionary, apostolic, prophetic, historic, and necessary. The machine has to keep the image large because once the image shrinks, people might start judging the message by Scripture instead of judging Scripture by the man. That is why religious celebrity often depends on atmosphere. The lights, the music, the introduction, the branding, the stage, the crowd, the camera angles, the book blurbs, the endorsements, and the titles all work together to make the person seem larger than life.

This has infected pulpits, seminaries, denominations, conferences, online ministries, and social media platforms. Men who are supposed to be servants are marketed like products and treated like brands. Their followers defend them like bodyguards. Their errors are excused because of their influence. Their sins are softened because of their usefulness. Their words are quoted like Scripture. Their critics are treated like enemies of God. That is what flattering titles can produce. They move a man from being a minister under authority to being a personality above examination. That is not honour. That is idolatry with church clothes on.

Paul refused that spirit. In 1 Corinthians 3:5 he said, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?” There is the right view. Who is Paul? A minister. Who is Apollos? A minister. Not a religious celebrity. Not an untouchable icon. Not a personality

cult. A minister. A servant. A worker under God. Paul would not let men make too much of him. Modern Christianity often does the opposite. It takes men with gifts, platforms, learning, voices, charisma, or influence and starts laying flattering titles at their feet. Before long, the servant begins to smell the incense and forgets he is dust.

Chapter 4: Flattering Titles Feed the Receiver's Flesh

This essay must warn not only the giver of flattering titles, but also the receiver. Men love titles because titles feed the flesh. They make a man feel important. They create a sense of rank. They distinguish him from others. They can make him believe he is above the ordinary rules that govern other men. Once a man begins to enjoy flattering titles, he starts needing them. Once he needs them, he can be controlled by those who supply them. The man who needs to be called great is no longer free. He is a slave to the mouths that keep him great.

That is dangerous in ministry. A preacher who loves flattering titles may begin to protect the image more than the truth. He may avoid admitting error because great men are not supposed to be wrong. He may resist correction because anointed men are not supposed to be questioned. He may treat disagreement as rebellion because influential men get used to being obeyed. He may begin to confuse his platform with God's approval. That is how titles become chains. They feel like crowns at first, but they can become shackles around the soul.

The safest man is the man who remembers he is nothing without the Lord. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." That is the antidote. By the grace of God. Not by titles. Not by credentials. Not by applause. Not by introductions. Not by reputation. Not by followers. Not by flattering lips. A man may labour faithfully, and that labour may be recognized, but the flesh must not be allowed to sit down and eat glory. When men praise you truthfully, pass it upward. When they flatter you falsely, reject it. When they crown you too highly, remember the crown belongs at Christ's feet.

Chapter 5: Flattering Titles Corrupt the Speaker

Job 32:22 says, "For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away." Elihu was not only concerned about what flattering titles would do to the man receiving them. He was concerned about what giving them would do before God. That is the forgotten side of this issue. The flatterer often thinks he is being strategic. He thinks he is gaining favor. He thinks he is opening doors. He thinks he is building relationships. But Elihu understood that the Maker hears the title. God weighs the speech. God sees whether the honour is true or inflated, whether the words are clean or corrupt, whether the motive is reverence or advantage.

The speaker is corrupted when he uses titles to buy favor. He becomes a verbal merchant. His words are no longer servants of truth. They become coins spent for influence. He gives a man a title not because it is true, but because it is useful. He says what will make the man like him. He praises what will get him closer. He magnifies another man so he can climb into the shadow of that man's greatness. That is not humility. That is ambition crouching low so it can spring higher.

This is where the fear of God must govern the tongue. Elihu said "my maker." He did not say "my audience." He did not say "my opportunity." He did not say "my reputation." He did not say "my network." He said "my maker." He knew he would answer to God for how he spoke about men. That kind of fear is missing today. Men fear losing access more than losing a clean conscience. They fear offending a big name more than offending the God who made them. They fear being excluded from a platform more than being judged for dishonest speech. Elihu's words bring the matter back where it belongs: the Maker is listening.

Chapter 6: Flattering Titles Create Untouchable Men

One of the worst fruits of flattering titles is the creation of untouchable men. When a person is constantly elevated with exaggerated language, people begin to hesitate to correct him. They think, "Who am I to question him?" They think, "He has done so much good." They think, "He is too important to confront." They think, "If I speak, people will accuse me of attacking God's servant." That atmosphere is deadly. It provides cover for error, pride, manipulation, abuse, doctrinal drift, and moral failure. Untouchable men are often manufactured by flattering tongues.

The Bible gives no man that kind of immunity. Paul rebuked Peter publicly when Peter was wrong in Galatians 2. That was not rebellion. That was truth. Peter was an apostle, but he was not above correction. Paul was a mighty apostle, but the Bereans were noble for searching the Scriptures daily to see whether those things were so in Acts 17. That means apostolic preaching itself was tested by Scripture. If apostles were not above scriptural examination, then no preacher, scholar, pastor, evangelist, teacher, bishop, professor, conference speaker, or online personality is above it either.

Flattering titles resist that kind of examination because they train people to see the man first and the truth second. That is backwards. The Book must judge the man. The man must not become the lens through which the Book is permitted to speak. When titles make a man untouchable, they have become corrupt. When honour makes rebuke impossible, it is no longer biblical honour. When respect turns into fear of man, the net is already spread. The servant of God should be respected in truth, but he must never be placed above the truth.

Chapter 7: The Fear of God Breaks the Fear of Man

The only cure for flattering titles is the fear of God. Elihu could refuse flattering titles because he feared his Maker more than he feared men. That is the order that must be restored. When the fear of God is weak, the fear of man grows strong. When the fear of man grows strong, the tongue starts bending. It bends around important people. It bends around rich people. It bends around popular people. It bends around educated people. It bends around powerful people. But when the fear of God is strong, the tongue straightens out. It remembers that God is greater than the greatest man in the room.

The fear of God does not make a man rude. It makes him honest. It does not make him dishonour authority. It keeps him from worshipping authority. It does not make him despise labourers in the Word. It keeps him from turning labourers into idols. It does not make him refuse all titles of office or function. It keeps him from giving flattering titles that inflate flesh and corrupt judgment. The fear of God puts every man in his proper place, including the speaker. God is God. Christ is the head. The Bible is the authority. Men are servants.

A man governed by the fear of God can speak plainly even when important people are present. He can honour without flattering. He can disagree without showing contempt. He can appreciate without idolizing. He can correct without trembling before human reputation. He can refuse to use inflated religious language just to gain acceptance. That kind of man is free. The flatterer is not free. He is a slave to human approval. Elihu's freedom came from this fact: he knew his Maker was the one he had to answer to. That is where clean speech begins.

Conclusion

Job 32:21-22 gives a needed rebuke to a religious world that loves titles too much: "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away." Elihu refused to let human status govern his tongue. He would not accept a man's person, and he would not inflate a man with flattering titles. He understood that the issue was not merely social manners. It was accountability before God. The Maker hears the titles men give. The Maker knows when honour has crossed into flattery.

There is proper respect in Scripture, and that must not be denied. Honour faithful labour. Respect biblical office. Esteem those who serve well. Give thanks for teachers, preachers, pastors, parents, elders, and servants who have helped you. But never let honour become incense offered to flesh. Never let a title make a man untouchable. Never let religious admiration become idolatry. Never let a servant become a celebrity in your mind. Never let

a platform become a throne. The moment the man becomes bigger than the Book, the whole thing is out of order.

The flatterer may think he is gaining favor with men, but he is losing ground before the Maker who weighs every word. That is the issue. A title can be a tool of truth or a tool of corruption. It can identify service, or it can feed pride. It can show respect, or it can manufacture idols. Elihu chose the fear of God over the fear of man. That is the choice still required. Honour what God says to honour, but do not flatter flesh. Respect servants, but do not worship them. Appreciate men, but keep Christ preeminent. The safest tongue is the one that speaks under the eye of the Maker.

10 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - A Flattering Mouth Worketh Ruin

Introduction

Proverbs 26:28 says, “A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.” That verse tears the mask clean off flattery and shows what God thinks about it. The world may call it charm. The flesh may call it kindness. The politician may call it diplomacy. The salesman may call it persuasion. The false preacher may call it encouragement. The seducer may call it affection. But the Bible says “a flattering mouth worketh ruin.” Not healing. Not wisdom. Not holiness. Not repentance. Not correction. Not safety. Ruin. That is the end of the road. The flattering mouth may sound soft at the beginning, but God tells you where it finishes. It does not build a man. It breaks him. It does not strengthen a home. It weakens it. It does not help a church. It poisons it. It does not produce humility. It inflames pride. It does not make a man safer. It makes him easier to destroy.

The first half of the verse is just as important: “A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it.” That means false speech is not love, even when it is spoken with a smile. The liar may pretend to care. He may say he is only trying to help. He may wrap his words in sympathy, tenderness, and religious language, but God says a lying tongue hates those it afflicts. That is a hard sentence, but it is Bible. When a man lies to another man, he is not loving him. When he tells him what is false in order to gain favor, avoid conflict, manipulate his emotions, or protect a hidden agenda, he is doing the work of hatred. He may not feel hatred. He may not call it hatred. The person receiving it may not recognize it as hatred. But the Bible judges the act by the damage it does, not merely by the emotion claimed by the speaker.

This essay must press that truth hard because many people still think flattery is harmless if the tone is nice. It is not harmless. A man does not have to curse you to ruin you. Sometimes he only has to praise what God is trying to kill. He does not have to strike you with a fist if he can feed your pride with his mouth. He does not have to drag you into compromise if he can convince you that compromise is wisdom. He does not have to openly oppose your soul if he can make you feel good while you are drifting. Flattery ruins judgment because it clouds discernment. It ruins humility because it inflames pride. It ruins relationships because it builds them on performance rather than truth. It ruins leadership because the leader begins listening only to those who praise him. It ruins churches because people stop wanting sound doctrine and start wanting emotional stroking. It ruins young people because they are trained to crave affirmation more than correction. A flattering mouth worketh ruin, and God put that warning in the Book because He knows exactly how sweet words can leave a bitter harvest.

Chapter 1: Flattery Ruins Judgment

Flattery ruins judgment because it clouds discernment. A man under the influence of flattery does not see clearly. He begins to judge people by how they make him feel instead of whether they are telling him the truth. He begins to trust the mouth that praises him and distrust the voice that corrects him. He begins to think agreement is loyalty and rebuke is hostility. That is how judgment gets turned upside down. The flatterer does not need to prove anything. He only needs to make the man feel admired long enough for discernment to take a nap. Once the ego is stroked, the mind often becomes less watchful.

This happens constantly in personal life, ministry, business, politics, and church circles. A man hears someone praise his wisdom, and suddenly that person's counsel seems wiser than it really is. A preacher hears someone praise his boldness, and suddenly he ignores the warning of the faithful brother who sees pride creeping in. A woman hears someone say she deserves better, and suddenly her vows begin to look like chains instead of covenant. A young man hears someone flatter his intelligence, and suddenly he becomes too smart to believe simple Bible truth. Flattery does not merely add pleasant words to the room. It changes the atmosphere of judgment. It makes the person being flattered feel qualified to trust himself more.

The Bible believer has to understand that praise can intoxicate. It can make a man emotionally drunk. When a man is drunk on admiration, he does not walk straight. He misreads danger. He overestimates himself. He underestimates temptation. He trusts the wrong people. He rejects the right warnings. That is why flattery works ruin. It does not always destroy by direct attack. It destroys by making the victim less able to recognize the attack when it comes. A man who loves truth must learn to sober up under praise. If a

compliment makes your discernment weaker, that compliment has already started working ruin.

Chapter 2: Flattery Ruins Humility

Flattery ruins humility because it feeds the part of man that most needs to be crucified. The flesh does not need help thinking highly of itself. It came from Adam already poisoned with pride. It already wants to be admired, noticed, praised, defended, excused, and elevated. Flattery walks up to that old man and serves him a feast. It tells him he is special. It tells him he is wiser than others. It tells him he is unusually gifted. It tells him people do not appreciate him enough. It tells him his critics are jealous. It tells him his warnings are always right, his instincts are always spiritual, and his opinions are unusually important. That kind of talk is not nourishment for the new man. It is fertilizer for the old man.

Humility is not built by constant admiration. Humility is built by truth, prayer, suffering, correction, Scripture, dependence on God, and the continual remembrance that without the Lord Jesus Christ a man is nothing. John 15:5 says, “for without me ye can do nothing.” That statement does not flatter anybody. It does not tell the flesh it is impressive. It does not make room for boasting. It takes the crown off Adam and throws it in the dust. That is where humility begins. Flattery does the opposite. It puts the crown back on Adam’s head and says, “You really are something.” That is spiritual poison.

This is especially dangerous for anyone with gifts. A gifted man who listens to flattery can become unbearable. A gifted preacher can begin to think the power is in his personality. A gifted singer can begin to think the worship belongs to him. A gifted writer can begin to think his words are the final word. A gifted teacher can begin to think correction is beneath him. A gifted leader can begin to think the work cannot continue without him. Flattery takes a gift that should glorify God and turns it into a mirror for the flesh. Then the man ruins himself while thinking he is rising.

Chapter 3: Flattery Ruins Relationships

Flattery ruins relationships because it builds them on performance rather than truth. A relationship sustained by flattery is not honest. It requires people to keep saying what the other person wants to hear. It trains everyone involved to manage image instead of walk in light. The flatterer performs admiration. The one being flattered performs the version of himself that keeps admiration coming. Nobody is truly known. Nobody is truly corrected. Nobody is truly safe. The relationship may feel warm, but it is built on wax near a fire.

Real relationships need truth. Marriage needs truth. Friendship needs truth. Church fellowship needs truth. Ministry partnership needs truth. Parent and child relationships need truth. Without truth, affection becomes theater. Two people can smile, praise one

another, and call it peace while resentment grows underneath. A husband can flatter his wife to avoid hard conversations. A wife can flatter her husband to manipulate him. Friends can flatter each other so neither one has to repent. Church members can flatter leaders so they can stay close to influence. That kind of relationship is not fellowship. It is negotiation with compliments.

The Bible says in Ephesians 4:15 that we are to speak “the truth in love.” Not truth without love, and not love without truth. Flattery pretends to be love without truth, but it is not biblical love at all. It refuses to tell the truth because truth may cost something. It may cost comfort, approval, closeness, reputation, or opportunity. So the flatterer chooses the easier road and keeps the relationship pleasant while making it weaker. Over time, the relationship loses its backbone. Nobody can rebuke. Nobody can confess. Nobody can confront. Everybody is acting. That is ruin.

Chapter 4: Flattery Ruins Leadership

Flattery ruins leadership because it isolates the leader from honest correction. A leader who begins to love praise will gradually gather people who give it and avoid people who do not. That is how the circle tightens. The flatterers stay close because they know how to keep the leader pleased. The faithful reprovers get pushed away because their presence interrupts the atmosphere of admiration. Before long, the leader only hears from people who benefit from telling him he is right. That is a deadly condition. A leader surrounded by flatterers is like a king surrounded by mirrors. Everywhere he looks, he sees himself enlarged.

This applies in government, business, family, church, and ministry. A ruler who loves flattery will make foolish decisions because nobody dares tell him the truth. A pastor who loves flattery will drift because the people closest to him are trained to agree. A father who loves flattery will become weak because his home learns how to manage his ego. A ministry leader who loves flattery will become a little pope in his own circle, unable to hear correction without treating it as rebellion. Leadership requires truth in the room. Flattery removes it.

The Bible gives plenty of warnings about leaders who listen to the wrong voices. Rehoboam rejected wise counsel and listened to the young men who fed his pride, and the kingdom split. Ahab hated Micaiah because Micaiah would not prophesy good concerning him, and Ahab loved the smoother voices that told him what he wanted. That pattern repeats everywhere. The leader who cannot endure truth becomes a danger to everyone under him. Flattery ruins him first, and then his ruin spreads. When the head is intoxicated with praise, the body suffers the fall.

Chapter 5: Flattery Ruins Churches

Flattery ruins churches because it changes the appetite of the people. A church that becomes accustomed to smooth words loses the taste for sound doctrine. The people begin to expect sermons that affirm them, encourage them, entertain them, and soothe them, but never cut them. They begin to measure preaching by how it made them feel instead of whether it told them the truth. They begin to reward the preacher who strokes them and resent the preacher who reproves them. Once that appetite sets in, the church is in danger even if the building is full.

Second Timothy 4:3-4 says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” That is the religious appetite produced by flattery. Itching ears do not want a sword. They want a scratch. They do not want doctrine that corrects lusts. They want teachers selected “after their own lusts.” That is flattery institutionalized. The pulpit becomes the servant of the congregation’s appetite rather than the mouthpiece of the Book.

A church ruined by flattery may still be active, crowded, emotional, wealthy, admired, and busy. It may have lights, music, programs, online reach, conferences, and a reputation. But if the people no longer endure sound doctrine, ruin has already begun. The measure of a church is not how many people clap but whether the Word of God has free course. A church that loves flattery will eventually hate the preacher who tells the truth. It will call conviction negativity. It will call separation legalism. It will call discernment divisiveness. It will call plain preaching unloving. That is what happens when a flattering mouth works ruin in a congregation.

Chapter 6: Flattery Ruins Young People

Flattery ruins young people by training them to crave affirmation more than correction. This generation has been praised into fragility. Many have been told they are special, brilliant, brave, authentic, amazing, and perfect just the way they are, while very few have been taught to receive reproof, confess sin, submit to authority, work hard, be quiet, endure hardship, and fear God. Constant affirmation without correction does not produce strength. It produces soft pride. It produces people who collapse when life does not applaud them. It produces people who think disagreement is abuse and correction is hatred.

Children and young people need love, encouragement, affection, and instruction. They should not be crushed, mocked, neglected, or provoked to wrath. But love does not mean flattery. A child does not need to be told that every impulse is valid, every feeling is truth,

every desire is identity, and every act of self-expression is holy. That is how you raise a fool. Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." The Bible does not flatter children. It tells the truth about them because God loves them.

A young person trained to live on praise becomes easy prey. The world will flatter him into rebellion. The strange woman will flatter him into lust. False teachers will flatter him into unbelief. Social media will flatter him into narcissism. Employers, politicians, movements, and devils will all learn which words make him move. If he has not been taught to love truth more than praise, he will follow the mouth that makes him feel best. That is ruin. Better a young person be lovingly corrected early than flattered into destruction later.

Chapter 7: Flattery Ruins the Soul by Praising What God Is Trying to Kill

The deepest ruin of flattery is spiritual. Flattery praises what God is trying to kill. God is trying to kill pride, and flattery feeds it. God is trying to expose sin, and flattery covers it. God is trying to humble a man, and flattery inflates him. God is trying to bring repentance, and flattery tells him he has nothing to repent of. God is trying to detach him from the world, and flattery tells him he can be worldly and wise at the same time. God is trying to make Christ everything, and flattery keeps whispering that the man is something.

The Christian life involves a cross. Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ." That is not flattering language. The old man does not need improvement. He needs death. The flesh does not need admiration. It needs crucifixion. The flattering mouth walks up to the crucifixion and says, "Come down. You are too valuable to die." That is satanic in principle. When Peter tried to turn the Lord Jesus Christ away from the cross, the Lord said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Smooth words that oppose God's purpose may sound affectionate, but they are devilish.

This is why flattery is so dangerous in spiritual growth. A man under conviction does not need someone telling him he is fine. A proud man does not need someone telling him he is bold. A worldly man does not need someone telling him he is relatable. A bitter man does not need someone telling him he is discerning. A rebellious man does not need someone telling him he is courageous. He needs the Book. He needs truth. He needs the Holy Ghost to put the finger on the sore spot. He needs the wound that heals. Flattery may make him feel better for the moment, but it works ruin because it keeps alive what God is trying to put to death.

Conclusion

Proverbs 26:28 says, "A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin." That verse must be believed. The flattering mouth is not a harmless

mouth. It is not a loving mouth merely because it sounds kind. It is not a safe mouth merely because it avoids offense. It is not a spiritual mouth merely because it uses religious language. God says it works ruin. That ruin may come slowly, quietly, pleasantly, and with many compliments along the way, but it is ruin all the same. The final result of flattery is not health. It is destruction dressed in soft speech.

Flattery ruins judgment, humility, relationships, leadership, churches, young people, and the soul itself. It clouds discernment, inflames pride, weakens truth, isolates leaders from correction, trains congregations to reject sound doctrine, teaches young people to crave affirmation, and praises what God is trying to kill. That is why it is connected with lying and hatred. The flatterer may sound loving while doing the work of an enemy. He may smile while making a man weaker. He may praise while leading a soul away from correction. He may comfort while helping sin survive. A man does not have to curse you to ruin you. Sometimes he only has to bless the wrong thing.

The cure is to love truth more than pleasant speech. Let the Bible wound what needs wounding. Let faithful correction do its work. Let praise be honest, measured, and submitted to God. Let no man feed your pride with words God never authorized. Let no preacher, friend, parent, spouse, leader, or teacher mistake flattery for love. The mouth that truly loves will tell the truth. The mouth that fears God will not praise sin, inflate flesh, or protect pride. A flattering mouth worketh ruin, but a faithful mouth can help turn a soul back from the edge.

11 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - Flatteries and the Rise of a Vile Person

Introduction

Daniel 11:21 says, “And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.” That verse moves the study of flattery out of the bedroom, out of the private friendship, out of the church hallway, out of the whispered conversation, and places it in the throne room. Flattery is not only a personal sin. It is a political weapon. It is not only used by the strange woman, the talebearer, the cowardly friend, or the double-hearted church member. It is used by rulers, climbers, tyrants, false prophets, cult builders, religious professionals, and ambitious men who know how to say what others want to hear in order to gain what they were never worthy to receive. Daniel says a “vile person” rises, and he does not obtain power by honour. He obtains it “by flatteries.”

That is a frightening sentence because it shows how corrupt leadership can rise without rightful honour if it has enough smooth speech. The vile person does not begin by announcing, “I am vile.” He does not walk into the kingdom with a sign around his neck saying, “I am here to corrupt, deceive, manipulate, and rule.” No, he comes peaceably. He speaks calmly. He learns the fears of the people. He studies the ambitions of the powerful. He tells every group what it wants to hear. He strokes the pride of the elite. He soothes the anxieties of the masses. He promises stability to the fearful, promotion to the ambitious, protection to the weak, gain to the greedy, and meaning to the confused. He does not have honour, so he manufactures consent. He does not have rightful glory, so he uses flattering words to borrow it from fools.

This is why discernment cannot judge a leader merely by tone. Smoothness is not holiness. Calmness is not truth. Peaceable entrance is not proof of righteous intent. A serpent can move quietly. A deceiver can speak gently. A tyrant can smile before he tightens the chain. A false prophet can sound comforting before he sells the congregation. A cult leader can speak of love, family, unity, purpose, and destiny while building a prison around souls. Daniel 11:21 shows that flattery is one of the oldest tools of corrupt leadership. Smooth speeches can carry a kingdom into bondage. A vile person can rise because people prefer words that feed the flesh over truth that judges the heart.

Chapter 1: A Vile Person Does Not Always Look Vile at First

The verse calls him “a vile person,” but that is God’s description, not necessarily the people’s first impression. That is the point. Men often do not recognize vileness when it first appears because it does not always appear in filthy clothing, ugly manners, or obvious cruelty. Sometimes vileness appears educated, polished, diplomatic, refined, religious, charismatic, compassionate, visionary, and calm. God sees the nature before men see the fruit. God calls him vile before the crowd has finished applauding him. That is why Scripture must be trusted over appearances. The Bible describes what men often discover too late.

A vile person may speak the language of peace. He may talk about unity, healing, restoration, security, progress, justice, revival, reform, or destiny. He may seem like the solution to confusion. He may appear at a moment when people are weary and desperate for leadership. That is when flatteries work best. Tired people want reassurance. Frightened people want safety. Angry people want a champion. Ambitious people want opportunity. Religious people want signs that God is on their side. A vile person studies all of that and adjusts his words accordingly. He becomes whatever the audience needs him to be, at least long enough to get the kingdom.

The Bible believer must learn that early presentation is not final proof. The question is not whether the man sounds peaceful. The question is whether he is true. The question is not whether he can speak well. The question is whether his words line up with righteousness. The question is not whether he makes people feel secure. The question is whether he is leading them toward truth or using their desires as steps to a throne. Vileness often hides itself behind the very words people most want to hear. That is why God gives the label before man sees the collapse. The Book tells you what the smile is hiding.

Chapter 2: He Comes Peaceably

Daniel 11:21 says, “but he shall come in peaceably.” That is how the trap opens. He does not come in looking like war. He comes in looking like peace. He does not begin with obvious force. He begins with controlled entry. He knows that if he comes too violently too soon, men will resist. So he comes peaceably. He reassures. He negotiates. He smiles. He speaks softly. He presents himself as reasonable, stabilizing, necessary, and calm. He knows that people will often surrender more willingly to a man who promises peace than to a man who threatens war.

This principle is everywhere. Corrupt political leaders come peaceably by promising safety. Religious climbers come peaceably by promising unity. False teachers come peaceably by promising deeper understanding. Cult leaders come peaceably by promising family. Compromisers come peaceably by promising balance. Tyrants often come peaceably by promising order in the middle of chaos. The first move is not always a sword. Sometimes the first move is a handshake. Sometimes bondage begins with relief. Sometimes the chain is first introduced as protection.

That is why peace must be tested by truth. Peace is a good word when God defines it, but a dangerous word when deceivers use it. Jeremiah warned about those who cried, “Peace, peace; when there is no peace.” The word itself can be used as a covering for surrender, compromise, and deceit. A man can say, “Let us have peace,” when what he means is, “Stop resisting my agenda.” He can say, “Let us have unity,” when what he means is, “Stop testing my doctrine.” He can say, “Let us move forward,” when what he means is, “Forget the old landmarks.” Peace without truth is not peace. It is a lullaby before capture.

Chapter 3: He Obtains What Honour Would Not Give Him

Daniel says this vile person is one “to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom.” That means he does not properly receive the kingdom by rightful honour. He does not stand as one naturally worthy of the place. The honour is not given to him in the proper way. Yet he obtains it anyway. How? “By flatteries.” That is a powerful lesson. Flattery can give a man what honour would deny him. It can open doors that character could not open. It can

manufacture promotion where integrity is absent. It can place a vile man into a position he never deserved.

This happens in every realm. A man without character flatters his way into leadership. A preacher without depth flatters his way into a pulpit. A politician without righteousness flatters his way into office. A teacher without fidelity to Scripture flatters his way into influence. A worker without faithfulness flatters his way into favor. A religious climber without spiritual substance flatters his way near the important men. Flattery is the counterfeit currency of the unworthy. Where honour cannot honestly be given, flattery tries to purchase the seat.

That is why flatterers are so dangerous in institutions. They can rise faster than faithful men because they know how to manage perception. Faithful men labour, tell the truth, take correction, build slowly, and wait on God. Flatterers study the room. They learn who must be praised, who must be soothed, who must be impressed, and who must be used. They do not need a good name if they can create a good impression. They do not need honour if they can manipulate the honour-givers. That is how vile people obtain kingdoms, offices, ministries, platforms, movements, and influence.

Chapter 4: Flatteries Feed Every Group What It Wants

A vile person rises by telling different people what their flesh wants to hear. To the fearful, he promises safety. To the ambitious, he promises promotion. To the greedy, he promises gain. To the wounded, he promises revenge. To the religious, he promises blessing. To the intellectual, he promises superiority. To the rebellious, he promises liberty. To the weary, he promises rest. To the angry, he promises a target. That is how flatteries work on a public scale. They are customized lies. They are not one-size-fits-all. They are tailored to appetite.

This is why corrupt leaders often sound inconsistent if you compare what they say to different audiences. They do not speak from truth. They speak toward advantage. They will sound traditional to one group, progressive to another, humble to one group, strong to another, religious to one group, pragmatic to another. The words shift because the goal is not faithfulness. The goal is acquisition. They want the kingdom. They want the movement. They want the crowd. They want the office. They want the loyalty. So they feed each group the flavor it prefers.

The Bible believer must judge words by truth, not by how personally satisfying they sound. The question is not, “Did he say what I wanted?” That is exactly how flatteries catch people. The question is, “Did he say what is right?” Did he speak according to the Book? Did he tell the truth even when it cost him? Did he rebuke sin in his own camp as well as the sins of his enemies? Did he maintain one standard, or did he bend his speech according to the room?

A vile person can gather a broad following by giving every crowd a little taste of its own desire. Truth does not operate that way. Truth stays truth when the room changes.

Chapter 5: Flattery Is the Language of Corrupt Power

Power loves flattery because flattery bypasses conscience. It does not ask people to think deeply. It asks them to feel approved, protected, and included. A corrupt leader knows that many people can be governed through their desires long before they are governed through laws. If he can flatter their pride, calm their fears, and direct their anger, he can move them. That is why flatteries belong in the study of kingdoms. They are not merely private compliments. They are instruments of rule.

Tyrants have always understood this. They flatter the nation by telling it it is destined for greatness under their hand. They flatter the masses by telling them their problems are all caused by convenient enemies. They flatter the elites by promising them access and preservation of privilege. They flatter the religious by borrowing holy language. They flatter the young by promising revolution, identity, and purpose. They flatter the old by promising restoration of what was lost. Then, when enough people are emotionally invested in the flattering story, the vile person has his base.

Religious tyrants do the same thing. They flatter followers by telling them they are the chosen remnant, the enlightened group, the special inner circle, the ones who truly understand, the ones who cannot be wrong because their leader has special insight. That kind of flattery creates dependence. It binds people to the leader by making them feel superior for belonging. Once that happens, correction from outside feels like persecution, and warnings sound like attacks. The flatteries build a wall around the mind. Smooth speech becomes a prison.

Chapter 6: False Prophets and Religious Climbers Use the Same Tool

The vile person in Daniel belongs to a prophetic and political context, but the method shows up constantly in false religion. False prophets rise by flatteries. They tell people what feeds their flesh while claiming to speak for God. They tell the covetous that wealth is proof of favor. They tell the rebellious that God understands their disobedience. They tell the proud that they are anointed and misunderstood. They tell the worldly that holiness is bondage. They tell the unstable that every impulse is the Spirit. They tell crowds that judgment is negative and correction is unloving. That is flattery in a pulpit.

Religious climbers use the same method on a smaller scale. They flatter established men to gain introduction. They flatter audiences to gain followers. They flatter donors to gain money. They flatter movements to gain acceptance. They flatter controversy when it benefits them and flatter unity when controversy costs too much. They know how to say the

right thing to the right people at the right time. They do not serve truth; they serve ascent. They are always climbing. Their words are steps.

Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:5, “For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness.” That is the clean contrast. Paul’s ministry was not built by flatteries. He did not use smooth words to hide covetous motives. He did not stroke the saints to gain advantage. He stood under the eye of God. That is what every minister should fear. God is witness. When a man remembers that God is witness, he will not use flattery to build what only truth should build.

Chapter 7: Discernment Must Judge Words by Truth, Not Tone

Daniel 11:21 teaches that tone can be deceiving. The vile person comes peaceably and obtains by flatteries. That means a man can sound calm, pleasant, diplomatic, loving, and wise while doing wicked work. Therefore, discernment cannot be tone-based. It must be truth-based. A soft voice can lie. A smooth speech can corrupt. A peaceful entrance can lead to bondage. A flattering message can conceal a vile motive. Tone may affect delivery, but truth determines substance.

This is desperately needed now because people often mistake harshness for error and smoothness for truth. If a man says something plainly, they assume he is unloving. If another man says something softly, they assume he is safe. That is childish. The serpent in Genesis did not need to scream. He only needed to question God’s words. The issue was not volume. The issue was deception. Smooth speech can be deadly when it turns people away from what God said. Plain speech can be merciful when it exposes the trap.

The Bible believer must ask different questions. Is this statement true? Does it agree with Scripture? What does this speaker want from the hearer? Is he feeding pride, fear, ambition, lust, covetousness, bitterness, or rebellion? Does he speak the same truth when the audience changes? Does he rebuke his own side as well as the other side? Does he exalt Christ or himself? Does he build dependence on the Lord and His words, or dependence on his own personality and leadership? Those questions cut through flatteries. Smooth words can carry a kingdom into bondage, but truth can keep the feet from following.

Conclusion

Daniel 11:21 says a vile person comes peaceably and obtains the kingdom by flatteries. That verse proves flattery is not a small sin restricted to private conversation. It is a tool of corrupt power. It can move thrones, institutions, churches, movements, denominations, and nations. It can lift vile men into places honour would never rightly give them. It can make people surrender discernment because they like the way the words make them feel.

It can turn fear, ambition, greed, religion, anger, and pride into stepping-stones for a deceiver.

The vile person does not have to announce his vileness. He comes peaceably. He learns the language of the people he wants to rule. He tells every group what it wants to hear. He strokes the strong, soothes the weak, flatters the religious, excites the ambitious, comforts the fearful, and gathers the discontented. He does not need true honour if he can gain power by flatteries. That is why men must not be judged merely by their smile, tone, polish, diplomacy, or promise of peace. The question is truth. The question is righteousness. The question is whether the words are anchored to God or tailored to appetite.

The warning is simple: do not let smooth speeches carry you into bondage. Do not follow a man because he flatters your fear, your pride, your group, your grievance, your ambition, or your desire for safety. Do not confuse peaceable entrance with righteous intent. Do not mistake religious vocabulary for fidelity to God. A vile person can rise by flatteries, and history is full of fools who helped him rise because they loved the sound of their own desires coming out of his mouth. Let the Book judge the speech. Let truth test the leader. Let God's words carry more weight than every polished promise from men who want a kingdom.

12 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - Corrupted by Flatteries

Introduction

Daniel 11:32 says, "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." That verse is one of the great dividing lines in the Bible on the subject of flattery. It shows two kinds of people standing under the same pressure. One group is corrupted by flatteries. The other group knows God, stands strong, and does exploits. The difference is not that one group heard flattery and the other group never heard it. The difference is what was already inside them when the flattery came. Flattery is powerful, but it is not magic. It looks for an opening. It searches for a crack. It tests the heart. It finds the secret compromise, the hidden ambition, the quiet rebellion, the buried resentment, the love of position, the fear of loss, the appetite for recognition, and then it presses right there. It does not always create the corruption from nothing. Often, it exposes and develops the corruption that was already waiting for permission.

The verse says, “such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries.” That means flattery has a special power over people who already have a wicked bend against the truth. They are not innocent lambs merely confused by pleasant words. They are already wrong in their attitude toward the covenant, and the flatteries become the tool that carries them further. If a man secretly wants compromise, flattery tells him he is being balanced. If a man secretly wants position, flattery offers him advancement. If a man secretly wants rebellion, flattery tells him he is brave. If a man secretly hates correction, flattery tells him he is being persecuted. If a man secretly wants to be admired, flattery tells him he has finally found people who recognize his greatness. The flatterer does not have to build the whole house of iniquity. He only has to unlock the door.

But Daniel 11:32 does not end in defeat. It does not merely show the corrupted crowd. It shows a resistant people: “but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.” That is the cure. Not suspicion alone. Not cynicism. Not paranoia. Not living as though every compliment is a loaded gun. The cure is knowing God. The man who knows God is not easily bought by the devil’s compliments. He has a stronger anchor than human approval. He has a higher fear than the fear of man. He has a richer reward than position. He has a clearer authority than smooth speech. He has a deeper identity than the praise of men. Flattery corrupts the unstable, the ambitious, the carnal, and the covenant-breaker, but it cannot easily purchase the man who knows God.

Chapter 1: Flattery Corrupts What Is Already Bent

Daniel 11:32 does not say the flatteries corrupt those who are walking straight with God. It says, “such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries.” That is an important distinction. Flattery often works because there is already something bent inside the hearer. The flattering words find the bend and push it farther. They find the inward leaning and give it momentum. They find the quiet disloyalty and make it feel justified. They find the secret desire and offer it a respectable name. That is why flattery is so deadly. It is not merely an outside voice. It becomes an inside agreement.

A man who is already irritated by truth is easy to flatter away from it. A man who already dislikes correction is easy to convince that rebuke is abuse. A man who already envies another man’s place is easy to convince that he deserves more. A man who already resents authority is easy to convince that rebellion is courage. A man who already loves money is easy to convince that covetousness is stewardship. A man who already wants sin is easy to convince that grace means permission. Flattery does not need to create the appetite. It only needs to bless it.

That is why the heart must be judged before the flatterer arrives. A man who refuses to let God deal with the hidden bend will eventually meet someone who knows how to exploit it. The devil studies appetites. He does not bait every trap the same way. He brings the compliment that fits the corruption. He brings the voice that sounds like relief. He brings the person who says what the flesh has been rehearsing in secret. If the heart is not right with God, flattery will not seem like corruption. It will seem like confirmation.

Chapter 2: Flattery Gives Compromise Permission

If a man secretly wants compromise, flattery will give him permission. That is one of the clearest ways it corrupts. A man may know what the Bible says. He may have been taught right. He may have stood right at one time. But compromise begins whispering in him. He gets tired of being separate. He gets tired of being called narrow. He gets tired of losing opportunities. He gets tired of standing outside the respectable circle. Then flattery comes along and says, "You are not compromising. You are maturing. You are becoming more gracious. You are learning balance. You are finally seeing the bigger picture." That is when the slide becomes spiritualized.

Compromise rarely advertises itself as compromise. It usually asks to be called wisdom. It wants a clean title. It wants a soft introduction. It wants to look like growth, compassion, scholarship, unity, or strategy. Flattery supplies the language. It tells the compromising man that he is not drifting from the Book; he is becoming more nuanced. It tells him he is not weakening doctrine; he is reaching more people. It tells him he is not fearing man; he is being careful. It tells him he is not selling truth; he is building bridges. By the time the flatterer is finished, the man can betray his old convictions and still feel noble.

The Bible believer must understand that not every bridge is holy. Some bridges are built from truth to error. Not every open door is from God. Some doors open into a furnace. Not every opportunity is a blessing. Some opportunities are bribes in religious clothing. If compromise has already begun in the heart, flatteries will make it feel like obedience. That is why a man must keep asking, "What saith the scripture?" not, "What makes me appear balanced?" The devil has plenty of compliments for men who are willing to shave the edges off the truth.

Chapter 3: Flattery Offers Advancement to Ambition

Flattery corrupts the ambitious by offering advancement. Ambition loves to be noticed. It loves recognition. It loves being told that it has potential, influence, leadership qualities, unusual gifting, or a special destiny. There is nothing wrong with faithful service, holy desire, or labouring to be useful to God. But selfish ambition is a different creature. It wants place. It wants visibility. It wants rank. It wants to be near power. It wants a title, a platform,

a circle, an introduction, a seat at the table. Flattery comes along and says, “You deserve it.”

This is how many men are corrupted in ministry, business, politics, and religious institutions. They are not always bought at first with money. Sometimes they are bought with recognition. Someone praises them, includes them, promotes them, invites them, introduces them, and tells them they are too gifted to stay where they are. Then the price begins to appear. Soften this. Avoid that. Do not be so hard on this issue. Be careful with that verse. Stop naming that error. Do not offend these people. Smile for this crowd. Repeat this language. The ambitious man tells himself he is gaining influence for good, but the flatteries have already started shaping his steps.

A man who can be bought with advancement is not strong enough to handle the place he wants. If flattery can move him before he gets position, position will ruin him after he gets it. The cure is to be content to serve where God puts you, whether men notice or not. A man anchored in God does not need the devil to tell him he is important. He does not need flatterers to promote him. He does not need a platform badly enough to trade truth for one. If God wants a man somewhere, God can put him there without requiring him to kneel before smooth talkers.

Chapter 4: Flattery Turns Rebellion Into Bravery

One of the most poisonous forms of flattery is the kind that tells a rebel he is brave. Rebellion does not like to be called rebellion. It wants a heroic name. It wants to be called courage, independence, discernment, boldness, or standing against control. Sometimes a man really does have to stand against wrong authority. Sometimes obedience to God requires resistance to men. But rebellion abuses that truth by applying it to every situation where the flesh does not want to submit. Flattery comes along and says, “You are not rebellious. You are courageous. You are one of the few who sees it.”

That kind of flattery is everywhere. A child dishonours parents and is told he is finding his voice. A church member attacks biblical authority and is told he is standing against abuse. A wife undermines her husband and is told she is reclaiming power. A man refuses correction and is told he is not letting people control him. A doctrinal novice rejects sound teaching and is told he is thinking for himself. Again, there are real abuses in the world, and those should be judged by Scripture. But rebellion often hides itself behind the language of liberty. Flattery supplies that language.

The Bible believer must test rebellion by the Book, not by how noble it feels. Is the issue truly obedience to God, or is it pride refusing correction? Is the stand truly for truth, or is it a personal grievance dressed in doctrine? Is the resistance truly biblical, or is it flesh kicking

against restraint? Flattery will always tell the rebel he is brave because bravery sounds better than stubbornness. But God knows the difference. A man who knows God does not need flattering permission to disobey. He fears the Lord enough to examine whether his courage is clean or carnal.

Chapter 5: Flattery Makes Hatred of Correction Feel Like Persecution

If a man secretly hates correction, flattery will tell him he is being persecuted. That is one of the most common tricks in religious life. A faithful rebuke comes. A plain warning is given. A doctrinal correction lands. Instead of humbling himself, the man runs to flatterers who tell him what his flesh wants to hear: “They are just jealous. They are threatened by you. They cannot handle your calling. They hate your boldness. They are attacking you because you are doing something right.” That kind of speech can harden a fool faster than almost anything.

There is real persecution in the Christian life. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But not every rebuke is persecution. Not every consequence is an attack. Not every correction is jealousy. Not every warning is hatred. Sometimes a man is not being persecuted. Sometimes he is being exposed. Sometimes he is not suffering for righteousness. Sometimes he is suffering because he has been foolish. Flattery blurs that line and makes the man feel noble in his resistance to truth.

This is why flatterers are dangerous after correction. They show up when the wound is fresh and offer the wrong kind of comfort. Instead of helping the man search himself, they help him defend himself. Instead of asking whether the rebuke was true, they ask whether the tone was perfect. Instead of bringing him to repentance, they bring him to self-pity. They pour honey on the very place God was cutting. That is how flattery corrupts. It interrupts the work of conviction and replaces it with the comfort of wounded pride.

Chapter 6: Knowing God Makes a Man Strong

Daniel 11:32 gives the contrast: “but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.” The answer to flattery is not merely learning all the tricks of flatterers. That helps, but it is not enough. The deeper answer is knowing God. A man who knows God is not desperate for human approval. A man who knows God is not easily moved by promises of advancement. A man who knows God is not intoxicated by praise. A man who knows God can stand when crowds bend, because his strength comes from a higher source than the mood of men.

To know God is not merely to know facts about God. It is to walk with Him, believe His words, fear His holiness, trust His promises, depend on His grace, and value His approval above the applause of flesh. That kind of knowledge strengthens the inner man. It gives a

man ballast. He is not tossed around by every compliment. He is not bought by every opportunity. He is not frightened by every threat. He is not seduced by every smooth voice. He knows who God is, and that knowledge makes the flatteries of men look small.

This is why shallow religion produces people easily corrupted by flattery. If a man only knows church culture, he can be bought by church praise. If he only knows ministry politics, he can be bought by ministry opportunity. If he only knows religious vocabulary, he can be moved by religious compliments. But if he knows God, the matter changes. The praise of men loses some of its glitter. The threats of men lose some of their terror. The offers of men lose some of their power. A man who knows God does not need the devil's compliments to know where he stands.

Chapter 7: The People Who Know God Do Exploits

Daniel 11:32 does not say the people who know their God will merely avoid corruption. It says they "shall be strong, and do exploits." That is important. Biblical resistance to flattery is not passive suspicion. It is active strength. The people who know God are not merely hiding in a corner trying not to be deceived. They are standing, acting, serving, witnessing, resisting, obeying, and accomplishing what God has for them in the middle of corrupt times. Flattery corrupts one crowd, but the knowledge of God strengthens another crowd for action.

This matters because some people respond to corruption by becoming cynical and useless. They see flatterers, compromisers, ambitious climbers, false leaders, and religious corruption, and they withdraw into bitterness. That is not the answer. The answer is to know God and do what is right. Stand for the Book. Speak truth. Serve faithfully. Rebuke when needed. Encourage honestly. Refuse flattery. Refuse compromise. Refuse to be bought. Refuse to be moved by men who know how to stroke the flesh. Then keep going. Do exploits. Do not merely complain about the darkness. Walk with God in it.

A man anchored in God can do this because his strength is not in his own personality. It is not in being naturally suspicious, naturally bold, naturally argumentative, or naturally independent. His strength is in the Lord. The people that do know their God shall be strong. That means the strength flows from the knowledge of God, not from human stubbornness. There is a big difference between a stubborn man and a strong man. A stubborn man resists because he is proud. A strong man stands because he knows God. One is flesh. The other is faith.

Conclusion

Daniel 11:32 exposes both the danger and the cure: "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall be corrupted by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be

strong, and do exploits.” Flattery corrupts the man who already has a wicked bend against truth. It finds the crack and widens it. It finds the secret compromise and blesses it. It finds the hidden ambition and offers it advancement. It finds rebellion and calls it bravery. It finds hatred of correction and calls it persecution. It does not merely deceive the innocent. It often corrupts those who were already looking for permission.

That is why every man must keep his heart before God. The question is not merely, “Are flatterers dangerous?” They are. The deeper question is, “What is in me that flattery could use?” Is there ambition waiting to be praised? Is there compromise waiting to be justified? Is there rebellion waiting to be called courage? Is there pride waiting to be admired? Is there resentment waiting to be confirmed? Is there fear of man waiting for a smoother path? Flattery is dangerous because it speaks to something. The heart must be searched before the flatterer arrives.

But the verse does not leave the Bible believer trembling before smooth talkers. It points to strength: “the people that do know their God.” That is the answer. Know God. Know His words. Know His holiness. Know His Son. Know His grace. Know His judgments. Know His faithfulness. A man anchored in God does not need the devil’s compliments. He does not need a vile person’s promises. He does not need a flatterer’s permission. He can stand strong and do exploits while the unstable are being corrupted around him. Flattery may buy the carnal, but it cannot easily purchase the man who knows God.

13 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - When Many Cleave With Flatteries

Introduction

Daniel 11:34 says, “Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.” That is a subtle verse, and subtle verses are often where the sharpest warnings are hidden. The passage does not merely show enemies attacking the faithful from the outside. It shows people attaching themselves to the faithful with flatteries. That means flattery can come dressed as support. It can arrive as admiration. It can sound like loyalty. It can join itself to a righteous stand, a faithful testimony, a doctrinal movement, a public controversy, a growing ministry, or a man who is gaining attention for telling the truth. Not everyone who comes close is there because he loves the truth. Some cleave with flatteries.

That is a hard lesson, but it is necessary. When a man stands for truth and begins to gain attention, flatterers will find him. When a ministry begins to grow, flatterers will appear.

When a voice begins to matter in a controversy, flatterers will gather near it. When a work begins to bear fruit, people will want association with it. Some will be sincere. Some will be helped. Some will love the Bible, receive correction, grow in truth, and stand when it costs them something. But others will cleave with flatteries. They will praise the stand, admire the courage, speak highly of the doctrine, celebrate the boldness, and act loyal while their attachment is not rooted in conviction. They do not necessarily love the truth. They love being near the momentum.

This essay must be balanced. The answer is not paranoia. A man should not become so suspicious that he cannot receive encouragement, fellowship, help, or honest appreciation. God uses people. True friends exist. Faithful brethren exist. Real helpers exist. Encouragement in the work of God can be a blessing. But Daniel 11:34 warns that praise is not proof of loyalty. Attachment is not proof of conviction. Association is not proof of faithfulness. Many may cleave, but some cleave with flatteries. Time, truth, pressure, correction, and doctrine reveal who is real. The flatterer may stand close while the movement is rising, but the faithful man stands when the cost arrives.

Chapter 1: Flattery Can Attach Itself to a Good Cause

The first lesson in Daniel 11:34 is that flattery is not always attached to obviously wicked things. Sometimes it attaches itself to a good cause. That is what makes the verse so important. The faithful are being helped “with a little help,” and then many cleave to them with flatteries. The setting is not merely a brothel, a political throne, or a wicked conspiracy. It is a place where there is a righteous people under pressure. Yet flattery shows up there too. That means no good work is automatically safe from flattering attachments.

This matters in every age. A doctrinal stand can attract flatterers. A King James Bible stand can attract flatterers. A hard stand against false doctrine can attract flatterers. A ministry exposing error can attract flatterers. A preacher who rebukes compromise can attract flatterers. A public voice that begins to gain traction can attract flatterers. They come because good causes often generate visibility, and visibility attracts people who want to be seen near the thing that is gaining strength. They may speak the language of conviction, but sometimes what they really want is proximity.

The devil does not only oppose good causes by sending enemies against them. Sometimes he sends flatterers into them. Enemies attack from without. Flatterers attach from within. The open enemy may sharpen the work by forcing clarity, but the flatterer can soften it by feeding pride, confusing loyalty, and creating a false sense of strength. A man must learn that a crowd gathering around truth is not the same as a crowd governed by truth. Some

people love the truth. Some love the noise around it. Some love the doctrine. Some love the drama. Some love the stand. Some love standing near the man who made the stand.

Chapter 2: Many Cleave, But Not All Cleave Honestly

Daniel 11:34 says, “many shall cleave to them with flatteries.” The word “cleave” is strong. It means they attach themselves. They join themselves. They draw near and stick close. But the verse tells you the manner of their cleaving: “with flatteries.” That means the attachment is not clean. It is not rooted in a single-hearted love for truth. It is mixed with smooth speech, praise, advantage, and possibly hidden motives. The cleaving may look like fellowship, but God calls attention to the flatteries.

Not all who attach themselves to a work are part of the work in heart. Some people cleave because they want association. They want to be able to say they were there. They want to be known as part of the circle. They want the reputation of standing with the bold without paying the price of boldness themselves. Others cleave because they want influence. They see a man or movement gaining attention, and they want to guide it, shape it, steer it, soften it, or use it. Others cleave because they want access. Access to private conversations, platforms, audiences, friendships, strategies, names, and opportunities. Others simply want to ride the wave.

This is why numbers can be deceptive. “Many” is not always proof of purity. Many can gather, many can praise, many can share, many can comment, many can say amen, many can admire, and still many may not be rooted. The test is not how many cleave when the movement is exciting. The test is who remains when truth becomes costly. Who receives correction? Who stands when there is reproach? Who holds doctrine when popularity fades? Who stays faithful when there is no advantage? Who loves the Book when the crowd moves on? That is where flatteries are separated from faithfulness.

Chapter 3: Praise Is Not Proof of Loyalty

This chapter needs to be nailed down plainly: praise is not proof of loyalty. A man can praise you and still not be loyal. A woman can admire your stand and still not be rooted in the truth behind the stand. A person can speak well of your courage and still disappear when courage becomes expensive. A follower can share your posts, compliment your words, and thank God for your voice while having no real intention of being corrected by the same doctrine he applauds. Praise is easy when it costs nothing. Loyalty is proven when truth demands something.

Flattery often imitates loyalty because loyalty is valuable. People who stand for something want to know they are not alone. They appreciate encouragement. They are strengthened when others say, “Keep going.” There is nothing wrong with that when it is sincere. But the

flatterer knows encouragement opens the door. He knows praise makes a man feel supported. He knows admiration can create trust. So he uses language that sounds like loyalty. He says, "I am with you." He says, "Nobody says it like you." He says, "You are one of the few standing." He says, "I have your back." Then comes the test, and suddenly his back is gone.

Real loyalty is not proven by words in calm weather. It is proven by truth under pressure. When doctrine is challenged, does he stand? When correction comes, does he receive it? When the crowd turns, does he remain? When the work is no longer popular, does he still care? When association with truth brings reproach, does he still cleave? When the leader he admired says something from the Bible that cuts his own flesh, does he submit to the Book or withdraw into offense? Praise is pleasant, but it is not proof. The flatterer can praise a man all the way up the hill and leave him at the first sound of a cross.

Chapter 4: Public Controversy Attracts Flatterers

Public controversy attracts flatterers because controversy creates visibility. When a man begins answering error, exposing hypocrisy, defending Scripture, or standing in a heated doctrinal battle, people gather. Some gather because they love truth. Some gather because they enjoy the fight. Some gather because they like seeing someone say what they were afraid to say. Some gather because the controversy gives them a sense of belonging. Some gather because they smell opportunity. That is when flatteries begin to multiply. "You destroyed him." "Nobody can answer you." "You are the only one with courage." "You are the voice for this generation." Dangerous words, especially when they land on flesh.

A man in controversy must be extra careful with praise. The flesh enjoys winning. It enjoys applause after a sharp answer. It enjoys watching opponents retreat. It enjoys being told that it is bold, brilliant, and necessary. But controversy can already heat the blood, and flattery throws fuel on it. A man who begins by defending truth can end up defending his own image if he drinks too deeply from public praise. He can start loving the fight more than the souls involved. He can start measuring faithfulness by crowd reaction. He can start mistaking sharpness for spirituality and applause for approval from God.

The answer is not to avoid every controversy. Some battles must be fought. Paul withstood Peter to the face. Elijah mocked Baal's prophets. The Lord Jesus Christ rebuked Pharisees plainly. Truth is not served by cowardly silence. But the man in the fight must keep his heart low. He must remember that the goal is truth, not ego. He must let the Book govern his tone, content, and motives. He must not let flatterers turn him into a performer for a cheering section. Public controversy can gather a crowd, but only God can judge whether the heart stayed clean in the battle.

Chapter 5: Ministry Growth Requires Discernment

When a ministry grows, discernment must grow with it. Growth brings more people, more opportunities, more influence, and more encouragement, but it also brings more flatterers. Some people will love the work sincerely. Some will be helped by the teaching. Some will become faithful brethren. But others will come because growth itself attracts them. They want to be near what is increasing. They want to know the person behind the work. They want to be connected before the thing becomes larger. They may not even fully understand their own motives, but their attachment is mixed.

This is why a growing work cannot be governed by praise. It must be governed by doctrine, prayer, order, truth, and fear of God. The moment growth becomes the master, flattery becomes more powerful. If a man is desperate to keep people, he will avoid saying what makes flatterers leave. If he is desperate to grow the audience, he will soften the message to keep the crowd pleased. If he loves the encouragement more than the correction of the Book, the work will begin to drift. Growth is not wrong. But growth without discernment can become a feeding ground for flatterers.

Faithful ministry must remember that not all help helps. Daniel says they were “holpen with a little help,” but many cleaved with flatteries. Sometimes the help is real, but the attachments around it are mixed. That means every addition is not automatically strength. Every supporter is not automatically a soldier. Every admirer is not automatically a fellow labourer. A wise man receives true help with gratitude but keeps the work submitted to God. He lets truth test the help. He lets time reveal the helpers. He does not hand the wheel to people merely because they cheered loudly from the roadside.

Chapter 6: Correction Reveals Who Cleaves by Truth

One of the surest ways to reveal who is cleaving by truth and who is cleaving by flattery is correction. Flattery loves admiration but hates correction. A flatterer may praise a man’s doctrine until that doctrine corrects him personally. He may admire strong preaching until strong preaching steps on his toes. He may celebrate rebuke when it is aimed at his enemies, but despise it when it lands in his own lap. That is why correction is a gift. It does not merely help the corrected person. It also reveals the nature of attachment.

The sincere man can be wounded and remain. He may not enjoy correction at first. Nobody’s flesh does. But if he loves truth, he will eventually bow to the Book. He will search the matter. He will consider whether the rebuke was right. He will let God deal with him. The flatterer does not do that. He begins to withdraw, whisper, resent, or reframe the situation. The same mouth that once said, “I appreciate your boldness,” now says, “He is

too harsh.” The same person who once admired the stand now complains when the stand touches his own compromise. That reveals what he was attached to.

This is why a truth movement must not remove correction to keep flatterers comfortable. If people only cleave as long as they are praised, let them go. If they only support the work as long as their sin is untouched, let them go. If they only admire the preacher as long as he rebukes everyone else, let them go. Truth does not exist to maintain a fan base. It exists to honour God. The Book will eventually separate flatterers from faithful men because the Book does not flatter anybody. It cuts all flesh, including the flesh standing near the work.

Chapter 7: Discernment Without Paranoia

This subject can become dangerous if handled wrongly. A man can hear Daniel 11:34 and start assuming every encourager is false, every supporter is suspect, every compliment is manipulation, and every new person is a threat. That is not wisdom. That is paranoia. The Bible does not command believers to be suspicious wrecks who cannot receive love, help, or fellowship. The same Bible that warns about flatteries also speaks of faithful brethren, loyal friends, fellow labourers, comforters, helpers, and saints who minister to one another. The problem is not encouragement. The problem is flattery.

Discernment without paranoia means receiving honest encouragement humbly while refusing to be ruled by praise. It means appreciating sincere help without handing over trust too quickly. It means loving people while testing fruit. It means allowing time, truth, pressure, correction, and doctrine to reveal what is real. It means not becoming intoxicated by admiration and not becoming bitter because flatterers exist. A balanced man can say, “Thank God for faithful helpers,” while also remembering, “Many shall cleave with flatteries.”

The Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect pattern. He loved men. He taught men. He fed men. He wept over men. He gave Himself for sinners. Yet John 2:24-25 says He did not commit Himself unto them because He knew what was in man. That is not paranoia. That is divine discernment. Love people. Help people. Receive true fellowship. But do not be naive about human nature. Do not confuse praise with proof. Do not confuse numbers with strength. Do not confuse association with loyalty. Let truth test everything.

Conclusion

Daniel 11:34 gives a warning that every faithful work needs to hear: “many shall cleave to them with flatteries.” Flattery can attach itself to good movements, righteous causes, faithful people, and public stands for truth. It does not always come from obvious enemies. Sometimes it comes from those who seem to be joining the work. They praise the courage, admire the doctrine, celebrate the boldness, and speak as though they are loyal, but the

attachment may be mixed with ambition, curiosity, opportunity, image, or the desire to be near strength without possessing it.

This is especially important in a time of ministry platforms, social media followings, public controversies, and fast-growing movements. A man can gain a crowd quickly, but a crowd is not the same as a company of faithful soldiers. Some people want truth. Some want drama. Some want association. Some want access. Some want influence. Some want to ride the wave. Some want to be seen near a stand they would not take alone. That is why praise cannot be the measure of loyalty. Time reveals. Doctrine reveals. Pressure reveals. Correction reveals. Cost reveals.

The answer is discernment without paranoia. Do not despise true encouragement. Do not reject faithful help. Do not become cold, suspicious, and ungrateful. But do not let flattery govern the work. Do not let praise inflate the flesh. Do not hand trust to every mouth that says the right things. Keep the Book central. Keep Christ preeminent. Keep correction alive. Keep motives under judgment. The flatterer may cleave for a season, but truth will eventually show who is standing on conviction and who was only holding on with smooth words.

14 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - Flattering Divination and the Smooth Voice of False Prophecy

Introduction

Ezekiel 12:24 says, “For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.” That is one of the strongest phrases in the Bible for exposing religious deception that comes wrapped in spiritual language. “Flattering divination” is not ordinary flattery at the dinner table, in the marketplace, in a friendship, or in a political speech. It is spiritual flattery. It is falsehood that claims divine authority. It is smooth deception wearing the costume of revelation. It is the voice that says, “Thus saith the Lord,” when the Lord has not spoken. It is the religious tongue that tells people what they want to hear and then has the audacity to attach God’s name to it. A man can lie on his own and do enough damage, but when he lies in the name of God, he poisons the soul while pretending to feed it.

That phrase “flattering divination” should make every Bible believer stop and think. Flattery is bad enough when a man is trying to manipulate another man. But flattering divination takes the sin higher and makes it more dangerous. It baptizes lies in spiritual vocabulary. It

tells the rebellious they are blessed. It tells the covetous they are favored. It tells the proud they are chosen. It tells the compromised they are covered. It tells the disobedient they are entering their season. It tells the worldly they are walking in liberty. It tells the lazy they are waiting on God. It tells the ambitious they are anointed for greatness. It tells the unrepentant they are under attack because of their calling. That is not prophecy. That is velvet wrapped around a lie.

This essay must go straight at modern prophetic entertainment, prosperity preaching, destiny talk, emotional manipulation, and the smooth religious voice that passes itself off as the Spirit of God. The issue is not only that false prophets are wrong. The issue is that they flatter people into spiritual sleep. They do not pierce the conscience. They massage it. They do not call sinners to repentance. They tell them God is impressed with their dreams. They do not open the Book and let the sword cut. They wave words around like incense until everyone feels important, destined, favored, and safe. But God said there would be no more vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. The Lord gets tired of religious men putting velvet on a lie and calling it ministry.

Chapter 1: Flattering Divination Is a Lie With God's Name on It

Flattering divination is more dangerous than ordinary lying because it claims to speak from God. A liar in the street may deceive a man about business, money, friendship, or reputation. But a false spiritual voice deceives a man about God, judgment, obedience, blessing, sin, and the direction of his life. That is why this sin is so severe. When a man says, "God told me," or "The Lord showed me," or "I feel prophetically that this is your season," he has entered dangerous ground. If God did not speak, the man is not merely mistaken. He is using the Lord's name to give weight to his own imagination.

The Bible never treats false prophecy lightly. God's words are pure words. God does not need man's invention added to His speech. He does not need a dreamer, performer, salesman, or religious entertainer to manufacture messages that keep a crowd emotionally stirred up. The false prophet's trade is deception with spiritual authority. He knows people are more likely to accept a lie if it comes wearing God's label. So he does not merely say, "I think you will be blessed." He says, "God says you are about to step into overflow." He does not merely say, "You have potential." He says, "The Lord told me there is a mantle on your life." That shifts the speech from opinion to claimed revelation, and that is where the fear of God ought to make a man tremble.

A Bible believer does not need flattering divination because he has a Book. He has the words of God. He has doctrine. He has promises rightly divided. He has warnings. He has the gospel of the grace of God. He has instruction in righteousness. He does not need

some spiritual fortune-teller dressing up his imagination in Bible words. If God has spoken in the Scriptures, then the preacher's job is to preach the Scriptures, not invent smooth messages to keep people emotionally dependent on him. The moment a man's "prophetic word" starts replacing the authority of the written word, the net is already being spread.

Chapter 2: Vain Vision Produces Empty Religion

Ezekiel puts "vain vision" right beside "flattering divination." That connection matters. A vain vision is an empty vision. It may be dramatic, emotional, colorful, impressive, and loudly delivered, but it is empty because God is not in it. It has religious atmosphere without divine authority. It has excitement without truth. It has movement without substance. It has spiritual language without spiritual reality. That is a perfect description of much modern religious entertainment. There is always a vision, always a word, always a dream, always a season, always a shift, always a breakthrough, always a new level, but very little Bible, very little repentance, very little fear of God, and very little sound doctrine.

Vain vision is attractive because empty people love impressive emptiness. The flesh would rather hear something dramatic about its destiny than something doctrinal about its duty. It would rather be told that doors are opening than be told to confess sin. It would rather be told that enemies are falling than be told to humble itself. It would rather be told that increase is coming than be told that godliness with contentment is great gain. Vain vision flatters the imagination. It gives people spiritual theater instead of spiritual truth. It makes them feel like something heavenly is happening when often nothing more is happening than emotional manipulation.

The danger of vain vision is that it trains people to prefer spectacle over Scripture. Once a crowd becomes addicted to "words," "visions," "dreams," and "prophetic declarations," plain Bible preaching begins to feel dry to them. They want a performance. They want drama. They want personal predictions. They want someone to call out their future. They want goosebumps. But the Christian life is not built on goosebumps. It is built on truth. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. A vain vision may excite a crowd for an hour, but the words of God can establish a soul for eternity.

Chapter 3: False Prophecy Flatters Rebellion

One of the ugliest things about flattering divination is that it often blesses people God is trying to correct. It tells rebellious people they are favored. It tells disobedient people they are misunderstood. It tells people walking contrary to Scripture that God is about to vindicate them. That is a satanic comfort. It takes away the sting of conviction and replaces it with a spiritual compliment. Instead of saying, "Get right," it says, "Get ready." Instead of

saying, “Repent,” it says, “Receive.” Instead of saying, “Your sin is the problem,” it says, “Your enemies are the problem.”

That kind of speech is deadly because rebellion is always looking for a prophet. A rebel wants someone with spiritual language to tell him he is not a rebel. He wants someone to put holy oil on his disobedience. He wants a voice that can make him feel persecuted instead of corrected. Flattering divination gives him exactly that. It says, “They do not understand your calling.” It says, “They are attacking you because you are chosen.” It says, “God is removing people from your life because they cannot go where you are going.” Sometimes that may sound profound, but often it is just rebellion being rocked to sleep in a religious cradle.

The true word of God does not flatter rebellion. It exposes it. Saul spared what God told him to destroy, and Samuel did not show up with a destiny word. He said, “to obey is better than sacrifice.” David sinned with Bathsheba and had Uriah killed, and Nathan did not show up saying, “Your next season will be greater than your last.” He said, “Thou art the man.” That is the difference between a true prophet and a flattering diviner. The true word pierces. The false word pampers. The true word brings a man down so God can lift him rightly. The false word lifts him up while he is still dirty.

Chapter 4: Prosperity Preaching Is Flattering Divination With a Price Tag

Prosperity preaching is one of the most obvious modern forms of flattering divination. It tells covetous people that their greed is faith. It tells materialistic people that their appetite for more is a divine promise. It tells poor people that if they sow into the preacher’s ministry, God is obligated to release wealth. It tells wealthy people that their abundance proves spiritual greatness. It turns God into a banker, faith into a transaction, giving into a slot machine, and preaching into a sales pitch. Then it calls the whole mess “kingdom principles.”

That is flattery because it tells the flesh what it wants to hear. The flesh wants more. It wants comfort, increase, status, possessions, display, and ease. Prosperity preaching comes along and says, “God wants that for you.” It does not teach contentment. It does not warn about covetousness. It does not preach that the love of money is the root of all evil. It does not remind people that they brought nothing into this world and can carry nothing out. It does not teach saints to set their affection on things above. It flatters the covetous heart and sells the lie as revelation.

The apostle Paul said, “For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness.” That verse rips the mask off the prosperity performer. Flattering words and a cloke of covetousness belong together. The preacher

flatters the crowd with promises of increase, and behind the curtain the covetous machine is running. He says the people are sowing for their miracle, but the miracle keeps landing in his account. That is not apostolic ministry. That is religious merchandising. It is flattering divination with a price tag.

Chapter 5: Destiny Talk Often Flatters Pride

Modern religious “destiny” talk is another smooth voice that needs to be tested. Not every use of the word destiny is automatically wicked, but much of what passes under that banner is little more than pride wearing perfume. People are constantly told they are world-changers, history-makers, barrier-breakers, atmosphere-shifters, mantle-carriers, prophetic voices, and kingdom influencers. The language sounds exciting, but it often trains people to think too much of themselves and too little of Christ. It creates a religious ego and then calls it calling.

The New Testament does not flatter the believer’s flesh. It tells him he is crucified with Christ. It tells him to present his body a living sacrifice. It tells him to be not highminded. It tells him to condescend to men of low estate. It tells him that God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. It tells him to esteem others better than himself. That is the opposite of the constant “you are greatness waiting to happen” language that fills so much modern religious speech. The Bible gives the believer a position in Christ, but it does not make his flesh a celebrity.

Destiny talk becomes dangerous when it replaces obedience with self-importance. A person who thinks he is too special for ordinary faithfulness is already in trouble. He wants a platform but not a prayer closet. He wants influence but not humility. He wants a mantle but not submission to Scripture. He wants recognition but not suffering. He wants to be told he is chosen, but he does not want to be corrected. Flattering divination feeds that appetite. It tells him God is impressed with his future while ignoring what God has already commanded in the present.

Chapter 6: Flattering Divination Puts People to Sleep

The issue with flattering divination is not only that it is false. It is that it puts people to sleep. It lulls the conscience. It tells people they are safe when they need warning. It tells them they are blessed when they need rebuke. It tells them to expect breakthrough when they need repentance. It tells them to wait for increase when they need to make something right. It does not awaken. It sedates. It is spiritual anesthesia administered by men who do not intend to do surgery.

That is why smooth false prophecy is so dangerous in a time of judgment, compromise, and apostasy. When the house is on fire, the false prophet sings lullabies. When the sword is

coming, he talks about promotions. When sin is spreading, he talks about favor. When people are departing from Scripture, he talks about fresh revelation. When churches are becoming worldly, he talks about new levels. When the people need a trumpet, he brings a harp. That kind of ministry does not prepare anyone for reality. It keeps them dreaming while the walls crack.

True preaching wakes people up. It may comfort the brokenhearted, but it does not comfort rebellion. It may strengthen the weak, but it does not strengthen wickedness. It may encourage the faithful, but it does not encourage compromise. It draws lines. It gives warning. It sounds the trumpet. It says what God said even when the crowd wants softer music. Flattering divination massages the conscience. Bible preaching pierces it. One helps a man sleep in danger. The other shakes him before the roof falls.

Chapter 7: God Will Not Tolerate Flattering Divination Forever

Ezekiel 12:24 says, “For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.” God’s answer is that this thing will not stand forever. Men may build ministries on it. Crowds may love it. Money may flow through it. Books may be sold from it. Conferences may be filled by it. Broadcasts may be funded by it. But God says there shall be no more. That is the final word. Flattering divination has an expiration date. The Lord gets tired of religious men putting His name on their lies.

This is a comfort and a warning. It is a comfort because false spiritual speech will not reign forever. God knows every false word spoken in His name. He knows every fake prophecy, every manipulative promise, every covetous appeal, every destiny speech that fed pride, every false comfort given to rebels, and every vain vision used to keep people loyal to a man instead of obedient to the Lord. Nothing is hidden. God is not confused by the stage lights. He is not impressed with the crowd. He is not deceived by the tears, music, and emotional atmosphere. He knows what is vain and what is true.

It is also a warning because every speaker should fear God. If a man does not know that God has spoken, he should keep his mouth shut. If he has the Bible, he should preach the Bible. If he wants to encourage, let him encourage with truth. If he wants to warn, let him warn with Scripture. If he wants to comfort, let him comfort according to sound doctrine. But let him not invent divine messages to flatter the flesh. The Lord will not let flattering divination stand forever. The Book outlives the performer. Truth outlives the vision. God outlives the lie.

Conclusion

Ezekiel 12:24 exposes a sin that is still thriving in modern religion: “vain vision” and “flattering divination.” This is spiritual deception that tells people what they want to hear in

the name of God. It is false prophecy with a soft voice. It is prosperity preaching with a holy costume. It is destiny talk that inflates pride. It is emotional manipulation that passes itself off as the Spirit. It does not call sinners to repentance. It does not bring saints under the authority of Scripture. It does not pierce the conscience. It massages it. It tells men they are entering their season when they may need to fall on their face.

The danger is not merely that false prophets get predictions wrong. The danger is that they flatter people into spiritual sleep. They comfort rebellion. They bless covetousness. They excuse compromise. They inflate pride. They replace the written word with private revelation. They make people dependent on smooth voices instead of established in the Book. They say peace when there is no peace, victory when there is no obedience, favor when there is no repentance, and breakthrough when there is no brokenness. That is not ministry. That is velvet on a lie.

The answer is simple: back to the Book. Let the words of God judge every vision, every prophecy, every dream, every declaration, every promise, every sermon, and every spiritual voice. If it flatters the flesh, beware. If it excuses sin, reject it. If it elevates man, test it. If it bypasses Scripture, mark it. If it makes the preacher rich and the people gullible, flee it. God has already spoken, and His words are enough. The Lord will have no more vain vision nor flattering divination when He cleans house. Until then, the Bible believer must refuse the smooth voice of false prophecy and stand with the sharp, clean, living words of God.

15 of 15: The Wicked Art of Flattery - Paul's Ministry Had No Flattering Words

Introduction

First Thessalonians 2:5 says, "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness." That verse is the clean closing note for this whole series because after the Bible has exposed the rotten heart, the lying tongue, the strange woman, the double heart, the talebearer, the net, the flattering title, the corrupt ruler, the false prophet, and the ruin worked by smooth speech, God gives the Church Age believer a pattern in the apostle Paul. Paul did not build his ministry with flattery. He did not manipulate saints with sweet talk. He did not hide covetousness under religious vocabulary. He did not preach to become popular, rich, admired, untouchable, or permanently insulated from correction. He had affection for the saints, but not flattery. He had boldness, but not cruelty. He had persuasion, but not manipulation. He had authority, but not showmanship. He had zeal, but not fleshly salesmanship. He ministered as a man who knew God was listening.

That phrase “neither at any time used we flattering words” is a statement many modern ministries could not honestly make. Much of the modern platform culture lives on flattery. It flatters the audience to keep them engaged. It flatters donors to keep them giving. It flatters sinners to keep them comfortable. It flatters church members to keep them returning. It flatters religious consumers by telling them they are special, favored, destined, misunderstood, and on the edge of a breakthrough, while never telling them the plain truth about sin, doctrine, judgment, holiness, separation, repentance, or the authority of the words of God. It uses emotional hooks, branding, staged vulnerability, polished testimonies, soft sermons, and spiritual marketing to keep people feeling connected while starving them of truth. That is not apostolic ministry. That is flattering words with a fog machine.

Paul’s ministry gives the cure for the wicked art of flattery. The cure is not a mean spirit. It is not a harsh personality. It is not pride disguised as boldness. It is faithful ministry under the eye of God. Paul could be tender as a nurse and firm as a father. He could comfort saints and rebuke error. He could weep and warn. He could reason and thunder. He could love deeply without becoming a flatterer. That balance is almost lost today because many people think the only alternatives are cruelty or compromise. The Bible gives a better way: plain speech, pure motives, sound doctrine, no covetous cloak, no baited compliments, and God as witness. The preacher’s job is not to make men feel important. It is to tell them the truth before God.

Chapter 1: Paul Refused Flattering Words

Paul said, “For neither at any time used we flattering words.” That is a sweeping statement. He did not say he rarely used them. He did not say he tried to avoid them when possible. He said, “neither at any time.” That means flattery had no rightful place in apostolic ministry. Paul did not see it as an innocent technique, a useful strategy, a harmless way to connect with people, or a necessary part of growing influence. He refused it. His ministry was not built on telling men what their flesh wanted to hear. It was built on preaching the truth of God.

That refusal matters because Paul had every human reason to use flattery if he had wanted to. He faced opposition. He was slandered. He was beaten. He was rejected by many of his own nation. He planted churches among people surrounded by paganism, idolatry, philosophy, immorality, and religious confusion. If anyone could have been tempted to soften the message to gain acceptance, Paul could have been. But he would not. He did not adjust the truth to win applause. He did not stroke the Jew to keep him from offense. He did not flatter the Greek to seem intellectual. He did not flatter the rich to gain support. He did not flatter the poor to build a following. He preached Christ.

The modern ministry world needs that sentence nailed across its door: no flattering words. Not “some flattery for outreach.” Not “a little smooth speech for donors.” Not “softening the hard parts so the crowd stays.” No flattering words. A preacher may speak kindly. He may speak wisely. He may speak with tears. He may adapt his manner without corrupting the message. But he must not flatter. He must not use praise as bait. He must not make the flesh comfortable where God is trying to crucify it. He must not tell sinners they are safe when they need salvation, and he must not tell saints they are spiritual when they are carnal. Paul refused flattering words because Paul feared God more than he needed men.

Chapter 2: Paul Did Not Wear a Cloke of Covetousness

Paul immediately connects flattering words with “a cloke of covetousness.” That connection is deadly. Flattery often hides greed. It is a cloak. A cloak covers something. It conceals what is underneath. A man may sound affectionate, humble, spiritual, and encouraging while underneath the speech is covetousness. He wants money. He wants support. He wants gifts. He wants a platform. He wants advantage. He wants influence. He wants a larger following. He wants the people to keep giving, so he keeps flattering. The words are soft because the appetite is hungry.

This verse exposes religious salesmanship. A man can preach with a Bible in his hand and still use flattering words as a cloak for covetousness. He can call it faith. He can call it vision. He can call it sowing seed. He can call it partnership. He can call it kingdom expansion. But if he is manipulating people with spiritual language to feed his own appetite, Paul’s verse judges him. The apostle did not use the saints as a market. He did not turn churches into customers. He did not view believers as donors to be softened with compliments. He did not preach to get into their wallets. He laboured as a servant of Christ, not as a religious merchant.

The modern church is full of covetous cloaks. Some are expensive cloaks. Some are humble-looking cloaks. Some are prosperity cloaks. Some are missions cloaks. Some are building-fund cloaks. Some are online-ministry cloaks. Some are revival cloaks. The issue is not whether a ministry has needs, receives support, or is helped by the saints. Paul himself taught about giving and receiving. The issue is motive and method. Does the preacher tell the truth, or does he flatter the people so they will keep funding him? Does he feed the flock, or does he milk it? Does he serve under God, or does he sell under a religious brand? Paul could say he used no flattering words and no covetous cloak. That is apostolic cleanliness.

Chapter 3: God Is Witness

Paul ends the verse with three fearful words: “God is witness.” That is what makes the verse tremble. Paul did not merely appeal to public reputation. He did not merely say, “You know I did not flatter you,” though he does say, “as ye know.” He goes higher than the congregation. He says, “God is witness.” That means the ministry is conducted under divine inspection. God sees the sermon before the people hear it. God sees the motive before the offering is received. God sees the private ambition behind the public humility. God sees whether the words were spoken for truth or advantage. God sees whether the preacher was feeding sheep or feeding himself.

That is the missing fear in much modern ministry. Men act as though the only witnesses that matter are the audience, the donors, the subscribers, the board, the denomination, the comment section, the analytics, or the applause. But Paul ministered with God in view. He knew the Lord was not impressed by the size of the crowd if the motive was corrupt. He knew God was not deceived by affectionate words if covetousness was hiding underneath. He knew the Lord weighed the ministry. “God is witness” will purify a preacher if he believes it. It will either clean him up or drive him out.

Every man who speaks for God ought to live with those words burning in his conscience. God is witness when he writes the sermon. God is witness when he chooses what not to say. God is witness when he receives praise. God is witness when he handles money. God is witness when he speaks to the weak, the wealthy, the influential, the wounded, the critic, and the supporter. God is witness when he is tempted to flatter the room. God is witness when he is tempted to soften the Book. God is witness when he is tempted to wear a cloak over greed. The fear of man produces flattery. The fear of God produces clean speech.

Chapter 4: True Ministry Can Be Affectionate Without Being Flattering

Some people hear a warning against flattery and think the answer is coldness. That is not Paul. Paul was not a block of ice with a Bible. In the same chapter, he describes himself as gentle among the Thessalonians, “even as a nurse cherisheth her children.” He speaks of affection. He speaks of labour. He speaks of exhorting, comforting, and charging them “as a father doth his children.” That is not harsh, lifeless, mechanical ministry. Paul loved the saints. He was tender with them. He cared for them. He gave himself for them. But he did not flatter them. That distinction must be preserved.

Affection and flattery are not the same. Affection seeks the good of the other person. Flattery seeks advantage for the speaker. Affection can tell the truth. Flattery avoids truth when truth threatens the relationship. Affection is willing to comfort and correct. Flattery comforts where correction is needed. Affection is rooted in charity. Flattery is rooted in manipulation. A preacher can love people deeply and still rebuke them sharply when the

Bible requires it. A parent can cherish a child and still chasten him. A friend can care tenderly and still say, “You are wrong.” That is not contradiction. That is biblical love.

Paul’s example destroys the false choice between sweetness and truth. He did not become a flatterer in order to be affectionate, and he did not become a brute in order to be bold. He could hold both together because his motive was clean. He wanted the saints established in God, not addicted to Paul. He wanted them walking worthy of God, not merely feeling valued by the apostle. That is true ministry. It is tender enough to care and truthful enough to wound. It can embrace without flattering and rebuke without hating. The flesh wants one extreme or the other, but the Spirit gives both grace and truth.

Chapter 5: True Ministry Can Be Persuasive Without Being Manipulative

Paul reasoned with men. He persuaded. He disputed in synagogues. He opened and alleged from the Scriptures. He became all things to all men in a lawful sense that he might by all means save some. But he did not manipulate. That is another essential distinction. Persuasion appeals to truth. Manipulation exploits weakness. Persuasion brings the hearer under the authority of Scripture. Manipulation brings the hearer under the control of the speaker. Persuasion can be strong, urgent, tearful, and intense. Manipulation uses emotional hooks, flattery, guilt, fear, and pressure to get a result.

Modern religious platforms are full of manipulation. They know when to lower the music, when to tell the story, when to compliment the crowd, when to create urgency, when to suggest that giving money proves faith, when to imply that disagreement grieves the Spirit, and when to make people feel they are part of something special if they respond now. That is not apostolic persuasion. That is religious technique. A man can get decisions, donations, tears, comments, shares, and public responses without ever doing clean spiritual work. Manipulation can produce visible results while leaving the soul dependent on the manipulator.

Paul’s ministry was different because the truth carried the weight. He did not need flattery to make the message work. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The words of God are quick and powerful. The Spirit of God can convict, illuminate, comfort, and strengthen without the preacher using carnal methods. A preacher may plead. He may warn. He may reason. He may urge. But he must not manipulate. He must not play games with emotion. He must not flatter the hearer into a response. He must put the truth before men and remember that God is witness.

Chapter 6: Platform Culture Lives on What Paul Refused

The modern platform culture lives on much of what Paul refused. It lives on image, branding, audience management, emotional hooks, careful controversy, controlled

vulnerability, donor psychology, and constant affirmation. It trains people to think ministry is measured by visibility. It rewards men who know how to sound spiritual while staying marketable. It encourages preachers to become personalities, teachers to become influencers, and churches to become brands. In that world, flattery is not a strange intruder. It is part of the machinery.

Platform culture flatters the audience by making them feel central. It says, “You are the movement.” It says, “You are world-changers.” It says, “You are the reason this matters.” It flatters donors by making them feel like the work depends on them. It flatters followers by giving them insider language. It flatters critics when useful and flatters supporters when profitable. It flatters itself most of all by calling growth proof of God’s approval. But numbers can be gathered by flesh. Influence can be obtained by technique. Crowds can be built with smooth words. A full room is not always a faithful ministry.

Paul’s statement cuts through it all. No flattering words. No cloke of covetousness. God is witness. That is the measurement. Not whether the brand grew. Not whether the crowd clapped. Not whether the platform expanded. Not whether the message trended. Not whether the donors were pleased. Did the preacher tell the truth? Were the motives clean? Was covetousness covered or crucified? Was Christ preached or was the audience managed? Was the Book opened or was the flesh stroked? Paul’s ministry does not need modern applause to stand. It stands because it was clean before God.

Chapter 7: The Cure for Flattery Is the Faithful Ministry of Truth

The cure for the wicked art of flattery is the faithful ministry of truth. Not cleverness. Not harshness. Not suspicion. Not performance. Truth. Truth about God. Truth about man. Truth about sin. Truth about Christ. Truth about the cross. Truth about the blood. Truth about grace. Truth about judgment. Truth about the believer’s walk. Truth about the flesh. Truth about the world. Truth about doctrine. Truth about motives. Flattery hides reality. Truth reveals it. Flattery feeds the old man. Truth brings him to the cross. Flattery keeps people dependent on the speaker. Truth brings them under the authority of God.

Faithful ministry tells the lost man that he is not saved by religious works, sacraments, morality, sincerity, heritage, or church membership, but by faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Faithful ministry tells the saved man that eternal security is not a license for carnality, and that the grace which saves also teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. Faithful ministry tells the proud man to humble himself, the rebellious man to submit to God, the bitter man to forgive, the worldly man to separate, the lazy man to

labour, the fearful man to trust, and the doctrinally careless man to study. That is not flattery. That is help.

A faithful ministry may not always be praised in the moment, but it will stand in the judgment of God. It may not always grow quickly, but it will have roots. It may not always attract the flattering crowd, but it will strengthen the sincere. It may lose people who wanted smooth words, but it will help people who wanted truth. That is enough. Paul's ministry proves that the church does not need flattery to be built. It needs the gospel, sound doctrine, pure motives, holy affection, faithful rebuke, patient instruction, and the words of God preached under the eye of the God who witnesses everything.

Conclusion

First Thessalonians 2:5 is the final answer to the wicked art of flattery: "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness." Paul's ministry stands as the clean contrast to every flattering mouth exposed in this series. The strange woman flattered to seduce. The talebearer flattered to gain access. The corrupt ruler used flatteries to obtain a kingdom. False prophets used flattering divination to put people to sleep. But Paul used no flattering words. He did not need them. He had the truth of God, the gospel of Christ, the authority of Scripture, and the fear of God in his ministry.

That does not mean Paul was cold, harsh, or loveless. He was affectionate without being flattering, bold without being cruel, persuasive without being manipulative, and loving without becoming a salesman. That is the balance modern ministry desperately needs. The preacher's job is not to make men feel important. It is to tell them the truth before God. The church's job is not to build a flattering environment where everyone feels affirmed while remaining unchanged. It is to hold forth the word of life. The Christian's job is not to collect compliments or give dishonest praise. It is to speak truth with a clean heart.

So let the final lesson be plain. No flattering words. No covetous cloak. God is witness. That will purify preaching, teaching, friendship, correction, giving, leadership, and fellowship. It will kill religious salesmanship. It will expose platform idolatry. It will protect the sheep from smooth wolves. It will keep the preacher from becoming a performer and the congregation from becoming customers. The cure for flattery is not ugliness. It is truth. Clean truth. Scriptural truth. Charitable truth. Courageous truth. Truth spoken under the eye of God. Flattery may build a crowd for a season, but only truth builds anything worth finding at the judgment seat of Christ.

The Wicked Art of Flattery

Series Conclusion

Flattery is one of the smoothest sins in the Bible, and that is what makes it so dangerous. It does not usually enter like an enemy. It enters like a friend. It does not begin with an open attack. It begins with praise. It does not announce destruction. It whispers admiration. It does not always feel wicked to the one receiving it. It often feels pleasant, encouraging, validating, and safe. But the King James Bible strips the perfume off the corpse and shows what is underneath. Flattery is not merely kind speech. It is not honest encouragement. It is not proper honour. It is not charity. It is not spiritual warmth. When the Bible condemns flattery, it is exposing speech that is divorced from truth, separated from sincerity, and used as a tool of pride, seduction, manipulation, corruption, or gain.

This series began with Psalm 5:9, where the flattering tongue is connected to a mouth with “no faithfulness,” an inward part of “very wickedness,” and a throat described as “an open sepulchre.” That verse alone destroys every light view of flattery. The issue is not merely verbal style. The issue is inward corruption. Flattery may sound polished, but God hears what is behind it. It may smell like perfume to men, but God calls the throat an open grave. That means flattery can be pleasant on the surface and rotten underneath. It can be warm in tone and wicked in motive. It can sound like life while carrying death.

The series then showed that flattery can even be directed toward God. Psalm 78:36 says, “Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.” That is a fearful truth. A man can use religious speech toward God while lying to God. He can praise with the mouth while refusing the Lord in the heart. He can sing, pray, testify, preach, and say “Lord, Lord,” while remaining crooked inside. God does not need compliments from rebels. He does not need religious vocabulary from a heart that will not submit to His words. He desires truth in the inward parts.

Psalm 36:2 showed another terrible form of flattery: self-flattery. “For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.” Before a man flatters others, he may first flatter himself. He becomes his own deceiver. He learns to rename his sin, soften his rebellion, polish his pride, excuse his bitterness, and call compromise wisdom. He sees himself through a mirror of self-justification instead of through the words of God. That kind of man becomes hard to correct because the liar and the victim are living in the same skin. He does not need a flatterer from outside if his own heart has already learned to preach lies to him.

The Proverbs passages on the strange woman revealed flattery as a weapon of seduction. The strange woman “flattereth with her words.” With “much fair speech” she causes the

simple man to yield, and with “the flattering of her lips” she forces him. That warning is literal, moral, and practical. Sexual temptation often begins with words before it reaches the body. But the principle is broader than that. Sin talks. It explains itself. It gives reasons. It makes disobedience feel personal, special, deserved, and justified. The devil’s bait is often soaked in compliments, and the trap does not look like a trap when it is wrapped in admiration.

Psalms 12 exposed the double heart behind flattering lips. “They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.” That is the spiritual anatomy of flattery. The mouth says one thing while the heart holds another. The lips speak praise while the motive calculates advantage. The man says “brother” while thinking “opportunity.” He smiles in one room and poisons in another. His words are not anchored to truth, so they become vanity. God’s answer is severe: “The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips.” Heaven does not admire velvet wrapped around a serpent’s tongue.

Proverbs 20:19 connected the flatterer with the talebearer: “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.” That verse showed how flattery can be used to gain access. The flatterer praises so the gate lowers. He acts interested so the door opens. He compliments so the heart relaxes. Then the talebearer carries away what he gathered. Some people do not compliment because they love. They compliment because they are fishing. They want information, influence, weakness, screenshots, private details, or leverage. God’s counsel is simple: do not meddle with that kind of person.

Proverbs 28:23 gave the necessary contrast between rebuke and flattery: “He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.” That verse goes against the grain of a soft generation that thinks love means constant affirmation. Rebuke may sting at first, but it can save a man from ruin. Flattery may feel good at first, but it can help a man sleep near the edge of a cliff. A faithful friend may wound, and an enemy may kiss. The difference is not how the words feel in the moment, but what they produce afterward. The flatterer may win the immediate smile, but the faithful rebuker may save the soul.

Proverbs 29:5 gave one of the strongest pictures in the whole study: “A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.” Flattery is not just noise. It is a net. It is designed, placed, timed, and intended to catch. It appeals to pride so the victim becomes easier to control. A man who believes every compliment becomes vulnerable to manipulation. A woman who needs constant praise becomes vulnerable to seduction. A preacher who feeds on applause becomes vulnerable to compromise. A leader who loves

admiration becomes vulnerable to corruption. The flatterer does not always have to push a man into the net. He only has to make the man admire himself while stepping into it.

Job 32:21-22 exposed flattering titles and the fear of man. Elihu said, “Let me not, I pray you, accept any man’s person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away.” That is a needed rebuke to religious celebrity culture. There is proper respect in Scripture. Honour faithful labour. Respect biblical authority. But flattering titles go beyond honour and begin feeding flesh. They turn servants into celebrities, preachers into untouchable personalities, and religious leaders into idols. Elihu feared God too much to inflate men with dishonest glory.

Proverbs 26:28 showed the result of a flattering mouth: “A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.” That verse destroys the idea that flattery is love. A flattering mouth does not work healing, holiness, repentance, correction, humility, or safety. It works ruin. It ruins judgment by clouding discernment. It ruins humility by inflaming pride. It ruins relationships by replacing truth with performance. It ruins leadership by surrounding men with praise instead of correction. It ruins churches by training people to desire smooth speech instead of sound doctrine. A man does not have to curse you to ruin you. Sometimes he only has to praise what God is trying to kill.

Daniel 11 moved the study into political and prophetic corruption. A vile person “shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.” That verse showed that flattery is one of the oldest tools of corrupt power. A vile person does not always appear vile at first. He comes peaceably. He knows how to say what each group wants to hear. He soothes fear, strokes ambition, promises advantage, and manufactures loyalty through smooth speech. Tyrants, cult leaders, false prophets, politicians, and religious climbers all understand the power of flattering the flesh. Smooth speeches can carry a kingdom into bondage.

Daniel 11:32 showed how flatteries corrupt those already bent against the covenant: “And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.” Flattery finds the crack and widens it. If a man secretly wants compromise, flattery gives him permission. If he secretly wants position, flattery offers advancement. If he secretly wants rebellion, flattery tells him he is brave. If he secretly hates correction, flattery tells him he is being persecuted. But the cure is not suspicion alone. The cure is knowing God. A man anchored in God does not need the devil’s compliments.

Daniel 11:34 added the subtle warning that “many shall cleave to them with flatteries.” Flattery can attach itself to good movements, faithful people, and righteous causes. Not

everyone who joins a work is sincere. Some admire the stand, praise the courage, speak highly of the doctrine, and act loyal while their attachment is not rooted in truth. Some want association. Some want influence. Some want access. Some want to ride the wave. That warning is especially needed in the age of platforms, social media followings, public controversies, and fast-growing movements. Praise is not proof of loyalty. Time, truth, pressure, correction, and doctrine reveal who is real.

Ezekiel 12:24 exposed “vain vision” and “flattering divination.” This is false spiritual speech that tells people what they want to hear in the name of God. It baptizes lies in religious language. It tells the rebellious they are blessed, the covetous they are favored, the proud they are chosen, the compromised they are covered, and the disobedient they are entering their season. It is the language of false prophecy, prosperity preaching, destiny talk, and emotional manipulation. It does not pierce the conscience. It massages it. It flatters people into spiritual sleep while calling the lullaby a word from God.

The final essay brought the series to Paul’s ministry in 1 Thessalonians 2:5: “For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness.” Paul gives the clean alternative after every counterfeit has been exposed. He did not build churches with flattery. He did not manipulate saints with sweet talk. He did not hide covetousness behind spiritual vocabulary. He did not preach to become popular, rich, admired, or untouchable. Paul’s ministry proves that true ministry can be affectionate without being flattering, bold without being cruel, persuasive without being manipulative, and loving without becoming a salesman.

That is the balance that must be recovered. The answer to flattery is not rudeness. It is truth. The answer to smooth manipulation is not fleshly harshness. It is clean speech under the fear of God. A faithful man can encourage without flattering. He can honour without idolizing. He can comfort without lying. He can rebuke without hating. He can persuade without manipulating. He can love without becoming a coward. The Bible never calls believers to be cruel, but it also never permits them to be flattering liars. Grace and truth belong together.

The great danger of flattery is that it works with the pride already inside fallen man. It tells the flesh what it wants to hear. It tells the sinner he is not so bad. It tells the rebel he is brave. It tells the proud man he is anointed. It tells the covetous man he is favored. It tells the bitter man he is discerning. It tells the compromiser he is balanced. It tells the ambitious man he is called. It tells the unstable man he is persecuted. Flattery is effective because it does not have to create the appetite. It only has to feed it.

Therefore, every man must ask not only, “Who is flattering me?” but also, “What is in me that wants to believe it?” That is where the study becomes personal. The flatterer outside is dangerous, but the appetite inside may be more dangerous. A man hungry for praise will find a flatterer. A woman hungry for admiration will find a seducer. A preacher hungry for applause will find a crowd that corrupts him. A leader hungry for approval will find counselors who tell him what he wants. The net works because the bait is desirable. The hook catches because the mouth opens.

The series also teaches that rebuke is a gift when it is faithful. A man who loves truth should thank God for people who tell him the truth. Not every critic is faithful, and not every rebuke is righteous, but faithful correction is better than flattering praise. It may hurt the pride, but it may rescue the soul. It may sting the flesh, but it may prevent ruin. The flatterer may keep the atmosphere pleasant while the house burns. The rebuker may sound the alarm and be blamed for disturbing everyone. But afterwards, the man who rebukes finds more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.

Flattery must also be rejected in ministry. A preacher is not called to be a religious salesman. He is not called to build a brand by stroking egos. He is not called to keep donors happy with soft words. He is not called to make sinners feel important while leaving them lost, or saints feel spiritual while leaving them carnal. He is called to preach the Word. He is called to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. He is called to preach Christ, defend sound doctrine, warn the unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, and fear God more than he fears men.

Flattery must also be rejected in relationships. Homes cannot be built on it. Friendships cannot be sustained by it. Churches cannot be purified through it. Families cannot be corrected by it. Marriages cannot grow if husband and wife only say what preserves comfort but never truth. Children cannot become wise if parents flatter their foolishness. Friends cannot sharpen one another if they only trade admiration. A relationship without truth is not safe because everyone is acting. Real love tells the truth. Real love can praise honestly, correct faithfully, forgive sincerely, and stand firmly.

Flattery must also be rejected in the public square. Corrupt leaders rise by telling people what they want to hear. Movements grow by flattering grievance, fear, ambition, and pride. False prophets gather crowds by flattering spiritual appetites. Influencers build followings by flattering identity. Political deceivers obtain loyalty by flattering anger and promising safety. A Bible believer must not judge words merely by how they feel. He must judge them by truth. Smooth speeches can enslave. Pleasant promises can corrupt. Peaceable words can hide vile motives. The Book must judge the speaker.

The great safeguard throughout the whole series is the fear of God. Elihu feared his Maker. Paul said, "God is witness." Those are the words that clean the tongue. A man who fears God will not use praise as bait. He will not give flattering titles to gain favour. He will not hide covetousness under spiritual talk. He will not tell lies in God's name. He will not manipulate saints, seduce the simple, or comfort rebellion. The fear of man produces flattery. The fear of God produces truth.

The second safeguard is humility. A humble man is harder to flatter because he knows what he is without God. He does not need inflated praise to stand. He does not require constant admiration to continue. He can receive encouragement without inhaling it like incense. He can be thankful for honest honour without letting it become a crown. He can be corrected without collapsing. He can be rebuked without declaring war. Humility keeps the feet from stepping easily into the net.

The third safeguard is sound doctrine. Flattery thrives where doctrine is weak. If people do not know the Book, they will follow the voice that sounds most comforting. If they do not know the gospel, they will be flattered by works religion. If they do not know grace rightly, they will be flattered into license. If they do not know prophecy, they will be flattered by false visions. If they do not know the difference between Israel and the Church, law and grace, the Rapture and the Second Coming, salvation and discipleship, they will be easy prey for smooth teachers. Doctrine is not dry information. Doctrine is protection.

The fourth safeguard is love for truth over love for praise. That is the final practical lesson. Love truth more than applause. Love the Book more than compliments. Love faithful wounds more than deceitful kisses. Love correction more than ego. Love Christ more than the crowd. Love the judgment seat of Christ more than the comment section. Love God's approval more than man's admiration. A man who loves praise more than truth is already for sale. A man who loves truth more than praise may still be tempted, but he has an anchor.

This series has not condemned true encouragement. It has not condemned proper honour. It has not condemned affection, comfort, gratitude, or sincere praise. The Bible believer should be able to encourage others honestly. He should be able to speak kindly. He should be able to honour faithful labour. He should be able to comfort the weak and strengthen the discouraged. But all of it must be governed by truth. Encouragement without truth becomes flattery. Honour without truth becomes idolatry. Comfort without truth becomes spiritual sedation. Praise without truth becomes bait.

The wicked art of flattery is wicked because it imitates good things while serving evil ends. It imitates love while avoiding truth. It imitates encouragement while feeding pride. It

imitates honour while creating idols. It imitates prophecy while speaking lies. It imitates ministry while hiding covetousness. It imitates friendship while gathering secrets. It imitates loyalty while seeking access. It imitates peace while preparing bondage. That is why it must be exposed. The counterfeit is most dangerous when it resembles the real thing.

So let the conclusion be plain. Beware the flattering mouth. Beware it in yourself first. Beware the self-flattery that excuses sin. Beware the religious flattery that praises God while refusing His words. Beware the seductive flattery that makes sin feel special. Beware the double-hearted flattery that speaks friendship while hiding another motive. Beware the talebearer who flatters to gather secrets. Beware the flattering title that turns a servant into an idol. Beware the political flattery that lifts vile men into power. Beware the prophetic flattery that tells rebels they are blessed. Beware the ministry flattery that hides covetousness behind spiritual words.

And then choose the better way. Choose truth. Choose plain speech. Choose faithful rebuke. Choose honest encouragement. Choose humility. Choose the fear of God. Choose sound doctrine. Choose the ministry pattern of Paul: no flattering words, no cloke of covetousness, God as witness. That is the clean path. That is the safe path. That is the path that keeps the tongue from becoming a trap and the ear from becoming a doorway to ruin.

Flattery may sound sweet now, but it will not stand in the judgment. The Lord shall cut off flattering lips. The flattering mouth worketh ruin. The flattering diviner will be exposed. The vile person who rises by flatteries will meet the God who cannot be deceived. Every smooth word, every hidden motive, every manipulative compliment, every religious lie, every covetous cloak, and every baited praise will be weighed by the Judge of all the earth. Better to have the truth now, even when it wounds, than to be comforted by lies until ruin comes.

The words of God do not flatter man, and that is one of the proofs of their mercy. The Bible tells man the truth about his sin, his flesh, his pride, his weakness, his need, his Saviour, his future, and his accountability. It does not stroke him into hell. It points him to Christ. It does not flatter the believer's flesh. It crucifies it. It does not flatter the preacher. It charges him. It does not flatter the church. It purifies it. It does not flatter the world. It judges it. That is why the Book is safe. It is faithful enough to wound and clean enough to heal.

The wicked art of flattery ends where all sin must end: under the judgment of God and under the authority of His words. Let the flatterer repent. Let the self-deceived man humble himself. Let the preacher cleanse his motives. Let the saint love truth. Let the church reject smooth lies. Let the Bible believer stand in a generation of flattering lips with a single heart, a clean tongue, and a Book that tells the truth. Because when the velvet words have faded,

when the applause is gone, when the titles are dust, when the false visions have failed, and when the nets are exposed, only truth will remain.



THE WICKED ART OF FLATTERY

15 SCRIPTURES • 15 WARNING SIGNS • ONE DEADLY DECEPTION

Smooth Words. Hidden Motives. Eternal Consequences.



#	SCRIPTURE (KJV)	THE WARNING	WHAT FLATTERY DOES	THE HEART CONDITION	THE DIVINE RESPONSE	KEY APPLICATION
1	Psalms 5:9 "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit... the inward part of very wickedness."	 Flattering tongue with no faithfulness inward wickedness	 It hides corruption behind smooth words.	 Wicked, deceitful, dead inside.	 God exposes and abhors it.	 Judge words by truth, not tone.
2	Psalms 78:36 "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues."	 Flattery can be directed toward God.	 It worships God with the mouth but lies in heart.	 Religious hypocrisy, rebellious heart.	 God is not pleased with lying worship.	 Offer God truth, not fake praise.
3	Psalms 36:2 "For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful."	 Self-flattery blinds a man to his sin.	 It deceives the soul before it deceives others.	 Pride, self-deception, spiritual blindness.	 Iniquity will be revealed and hated.	 See yourself as God sees you.
4	Proverbs 7:21 "With much fair speech she causeth him to yield, and with the flattering of her lips she forceth him."	 Flattery is a tool of seduction.	 It lowers guard and leads to sin.	 Lust, weakness, desire for pleasure.	 God warns to flee the snare.	 Guard your heart, flee temptation.
5	Proverbs 7:5 "For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, And behold among the simple ones..."	 Flattery targets the simple.	 It seeks the unwise and the vulnerable.	 Naivety, lack of discernment.	 Wisdom cries warning daily.	 Get wisdom, stay far from her.
6	Proverbs 26:28 "A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin."	 Flattery is rooted in hatred, not love.	 It brings illusion first, ruin later.	 Envy, malice, hidden agenda.	 Ruin is the end of flattery.	 Don't be fooled by sweet tongues.
7	Proverbs 20:19 "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets; therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips."	 Flatterers are often talebearers.	 It gains access to steal and expose.	 Two-faced, untrustworthy.	 God hates false witness and gossip.	 Keep your heart and secrets guarded.
8	Proverbs 28:23 "He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue."	 Rebuke is better than flattery.	 Flattery feeds pride; rebuke brings correction.	 Loves praise more than truth.	 God honours faithful rebuke.	 Receive correction. It leads to life.
9	Proverbs 29:5 "A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet."	 Flattery is a trap.	 It entangles and controls.	 Pride, desire for approval.	 The net will bring you down.	 Walk in humility, not pride.
10	Job 32:21-22 "Let me not... give flattering titles unto man... my maker would soon take me away."	 Flattering titles displease God.	 It exalts man instead of God.	 Loves honor from men.	 God removes those who promote pride.	 Give honor where honor is due—God.
11	Psalms 12:4 "With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak."	 Double heart, double tongue.	 It speaks one thing but means another.	 Hypocrisy, deceitfulness.	 The LORD shall cut off all liars.	 Let your yes be yes, your no be no.
12	Daniel 11:21 "He shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries."	 Flattery lifts up vile men.	 It gains power for the wicked.	 Ambition, love of power.	 God will judge every ruler.	 Discern leaders by their fruit.
13	Daniel 11:32 "Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall be corrupt by flatteries..."	 Flattery corrupts the wicked.	 It strengthens rebellion.	 Covenant breaker, seeks compromise.	 The godly will be strong and do exploits.	 Know God. Stand strong in truth.
14	Daniel 11:34 "Many shall cleave to them with flatteries."	 Many attach with insincere praise.	 It seeks association, influence, access.	 Self-interest, love of visibility.	 Time, truth, and trial reveal all.	 Test all by doctrine and character.
15	Ezekiel 12:24 "Vain vision, and flattering divination, they say, shall not be."	 Flattering prophecy is condemned.	 It speaks what men want to hear.	 Loves lies, hates truth.	 God will stop every lying voice.	 Take every word to the Word.

WHAT IS FLATTERY?

Smooth, pleasing words spoken to manipulate, seduce, gain advantage, or feed pride—always apart from truth and sincerity.



THE ROOT OF FLATTERY

- Pride
- Deceit
- Selfish Ambition



- Lust
- Greed
- Hatred

THE RESULTS OF FLATTERY

- Deceives the simple
- Corrupts the heart
- Brings ruin and shame
- Destroys relationships
- Exalts the wicked
- Hides truth
- Leads to judgment



THE CURE FOR FLATTERY

- ✓ Love truth more than praise
- ✓ Walk in humility before God
- ✓ Seek godly rebuke
- ✓ Know the Word
- ✓ Fear God, not man



FINAL WORD

The LORD hates a lying tongue; but he that doeth truth delighteth in him.

— Proverbs 12:22



LET YOUR WORDS BE TRUE. LET YOUR HEART BE SINGLE. LET YOUR LIFE HONOR THE LORD.

VERSEQUEST MINISTRIES