

The Power of Words

Jesus said, "By thy words thou shalt be JUSTIFIED, and by thy words thou shalt be CONDEMNED." Let us turn to the incident—Matt. 12:33. We have this heading in our Bible—"Destiny in words." Our destiny is coupled to our words. The tree is known by its fruit (v.33). And a MAN is known by his WORDS. How can one being evil speak good things (v.34)? "Out of the abundance of the HEART the mouth speaketh," and the result is as we read in v.35: "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Note the warning in v.36:

"But I say unto you, that EVERY idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

We MUST give account. "Idle" is "pernicious" in the Diaglott. Webster defines pernicious as—"Having the quality of injuring, destructive, malicious, wicked." Of SUCH words we shall give an account.

GOOD WORDS

Our thought this morning is not to speak only of words that are harmful, but also of the power of GOOD words. Words can bring about the greatest of all good. Salvation comes by the use of words—"It pleased God by the foolishness of PREACHING to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). And on the other hand, words can "set on fire the whole course of nature" (Jam. 3:6)—

"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell."

The Scriptures speak of SOUND words—WHOLESOME words. And they also speak of words that eat as doth a canker. Let us consider 2 Old Testament examples:—

JOB

Job knew the value and responsibility of words, even before his affliction. And AFTERWARDS he realized even more the need of great care in what we speak. "How forcible are RIGHT words!" (Job 6:25). And the testimony in 1:22 was that Job, despite all the evils that had come upon his house, "sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." And then, after even his BODY was stricken with a horrible disease, it was testified of Job (2:10), "In ALL this did not Job sin with his lips." Here was a man of whom God spoke, saying—

"Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is NONE like him in all the earth—a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?"

Here was a man we may well endeavor to follow. We would that God could so speak of US! Yet, to show the danger of words, we cite how even Job was later reproved, because he was provoked to say words he ought not to have said. God addressing Job (38:1-4) said—

"Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man. I will demand of thee, and ANSWER thou Me! Where wast THOU when I laid the foundations of the earth? DECLARE, if thou hast understanding!"

And God went on to take Job severely to task for some of the things that Job had unwisely said in his anguish. Then Job's answer (40:3-5)—

"Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, hut I will not answer. Yea, twice, hut I will proceed no further." And 42:1-3: "I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not—things too wonderful for me, which I knew not"

What a lesson for US, brethren and sisters! Perhaps we all know what a struggle it is to keep back words that we are moved to speak—to refrain from MURMURING, Israel's greatest sin. Surely if ANY case for protesting one's lot seemed justified, then Job's did. But it was necessary that Job repent and acknowledge that God's way was right, and not to be questioned.

MOSES

We have the lesson also of Moses. Another man who stood very high in the sight of God; a man who was of a quiet and meek spirit. It was his desire that God would choose someone else for the high position of delivering and leading Israel. And later on, when his own brother Aaron and sister Miriam chided him concerning the Ethiopian woman he had married, he meekly held his peace, and it was testified of him at that time (Num.. 12:3)—

"Now the man Moses was very meek, above ALL the men which were upon the face of the earth."

Such a man was Moses. Yet as we read in Jam. 3:1, "The tongue can no man tame." And the ONE thing recorded against Moses is as we read in Psa. 106:32:

"They (Israel) angered Him (God) also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he SPAKE UNADVISEDLY with his lips."

If such strong men as these—Job and Moses—could be provoked to speak things they ought not, how careful WE need be!

THE PROVERBS

Many of the Proverbs give us instruction along this line. One that often comes to mind is: "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." In other words, if we do a LOT of talking, we are SURE to say things we ought not. Perhaps this is one of our most common failings. Most of us say too much—too carelessly. For where care is used, many thoughts will never be spoken or written.

"A fool is full of words" (Eccles. 10:14) . . . "But he that refraineth his lips is wise." (Prov. 10:19).

We are instructed to ORDER our conversation. Not to let ourselves DRIFT into all manner of speech—something that can so EASILY happen, even when we have no ill intentions. The exhortation is to order it: control it: DIRECT it. See to it that it follows a right course. And we shall find real diligence is necessary.

TALEBEARING

James says that words can "set on fire the whole course of nature," and "in many things we all offend." TALEBEARING is one of the greatest evils. "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body" (Prov. 18:8). It is repeatedly condemned in the Proverbs. James also says, "Behold how GREAT a matter a little fire kindleth." Whereas on the other hand we read in the Proverbs, "Where there is no talebearer the strife ceaseth."

Hasty words are condemned. We are exhorted to be swift to hear—SLOW to speak. "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him" (Prov. 29:20). The exhortation to us is: "Let your speech be ALWAYS with GRACE, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). "Using," as the apostle says elsewhere, "SOUND speech that cannot be condemned" (Tit. 2:8).

WORDS OF COMFORT

Good words are highly commended in the Scriptures: the desire to encourage by a good word—a word of appreciation—a word of real COMFORT. "A word in due season, how GOOD it is!" (Prov. 15:23). And of Christ it was prophesied (Isa. 50:4)—

"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a WORD IN SEASON to him that is weary."

We read, "Heaviness in the heart of a man maketh it stoop, but a good word maketh it glad" (Prov. 12:25). And again, "A word fitly spoken" is likened to "apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11). "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (Prov. 16:24). But FLATTERY we should carefully avoid, for we are warned, "The Lord shall CUT OFF all flattering lips" (Psa. 12:3).

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is GOOD to the use of edifying, that it may minister GRACE unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:29-32).

It is not strange that we should exhort one another in these things. The apostle found it necessary even in his day, when the Spirit was openly manifested in the ecclesias. How much GREATER is the danger in these far-off days, when the whole earth is filled with violence, and men and women are given over to corrupt conversation, and reverence for God's Name is not in all their thoughts.

Ours is a command to SEPARATION: to be holy—set apart—from the nations. This applies also to our CONVERSATION. "Be ye HOLY—separated, sanctified—in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. 1:15), whether we consider the word to mean our literal speech or our whole manner of life.

BITTER WORDS

David speaks of words—bitter words—as arrows. He speaks of those who "whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect" (Psa. 64:3—4). The thought is that many RIGHTEOUS men are the VICTIMS

of such arrows. And in the Proverbs we read, "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword." In contrast to this, it continues, "The tongue of the WISE is health" (Prov. 12:18).

The Scriptures condemn "watching for iniquity and making a man an OFFENDER FOR A WORD (Isa. 29:21). We are ALL guilty before God. Let us, therefore, beware of finding fault with every error in our brother's words, and pay more attention to our OWN. It is so easy to catch hold of a man's word over critically, and make him an offender.

PASS OVER MUCH THAT IS SAID

Also we are advised in Ecclesiastes to "Take no heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee. For oftentimes, also, thine OWN heart knoweth that THOU hast cursed others" (7:21). The word "curse" here means "lightly esteem, revile, vilify." The thought is—do not pay attention to all the evil we hear others say about us, but remember that we also are guilty of such failings. It is best to pass over much that is said.

One of the qualifications of those who will dwell on high in the Kingdom is that they "Speak uprightly" (Isa. 33:15). "He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that speak NO GUILE" (1 Pet. 3:10). And of those who will stand on Mount Zion—those who will have been redeemed it is testified: "In their mouth was found no guile" (Rev. 14:5):

Finally, brethren and sisters, we have this well-known verse—

"Then they that feared the Lord SPOKE OFTEN one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and thought upon His Name" (Mal. 3:16).

Of what must such conversation be that is worthy of a record in heaven! What are WE recording day by day?

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