

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

Restraining The Tongue

Bob Gessner

For we all often stumble and fall and offend in many things. And if any one does not offend in speech (never says the wrong things) he is a fully developed character, able to control his whole body and to curb his entire nature (James 3:2).

From time to time, we receive much needed instruction about the dangers of the teaching of *Speaking in Tongues*, but we also need to be instructed about the dangers of carelessly *speaking in tongues* that God has given to all of us. Below is a list of ways that as God's people we can wrongfully employ the tongue.

1. We often flatter people, saying nice things about them which we really do not mean.

This is not only dishonest, but it generally leads us into future problems. "A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet" (Prov. 29:5). There are times when we have to tell people the truth even if it is not flattering to them. "He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward than he who flatters with the tongue" (Prov. 28:23). Paul was careful not to use flattery in his reaching out to others with the truth. We do not build others in Christ by flattery. "But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness - God is witness" (1 Thess. 2:4,5).

2. More often than we realize, we use the tongue to boast. Boasting is a very subtle thing that can happen before we realize it. We do something that we think merits the attention of others and we begin to talk about it. "Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things" (James 3:5). We not only boast about our past accomplishments, but many times we boast about our future plans. This is as much a manifestation of pride as the former. "But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil" (James 4:16). If flattery is used to appeal to the pride of others, boasting is an act of self-flattery.

3. The tongue too often is engaged in gossip. Many times we do not intend it to be gossip, but our tongue has a way

of straying from our original intentions. Whenever we talk about people behind their backs, we are generally engaging in gossip. One of the characteristics of the wicked is described as those "who sharpen their tongue like a sword, and bend their arrows (bitter words), that they may shoot *in secret* at the blameless" (Ps. 64:3,4). Our tongue can become a sword that pierces others in the back. Many a character has been smudged by careless words spoken by others.

4. All of us have experienced at times the horror of allowing the tongue to take off during a time of anger. We know what it is to give someone a real "tongue lashing". We are really defending our injured pride. "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell...With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, *These things ought not to be so*. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? (Ja. 3:6,9-11).

5. Finally, the tongue is often used as a weapon of deceit. We utter many words of hypocrisy with the tongue. We make ourselves sound far more pious than we really are. "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 Jn. 3:18). Peter exhorts us to lay aside all guile and hypocrisy (1 Pet. 2:1). The tongue loves to run ahead of our true heart experiences.

Let us then become increasingly aware of the dangerous potential of the tongue. James says that it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison (Ja. 3:8). When we become aware of its evil employment, we can then turn to the Lord for deliverance. Too often we do not recognize the sin of the tongue and thus we do not judge the sin before God. No man can tame the tongue, but God can control it if we ask Him in sincerity. May we daily breathe the prayer of Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer". *

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Shields and Shishaks

Mark Kolchin

Coming through another winter Olympic season, we have all undoubtedly heard the oft-repeated phrase in the commercials and elsewhere to “Go for the Gold!”. It is the verbal and vivid reminder to anyone engaged in competitive sport (or any other arena for that matter) - to excel and be the best in their particular discipline. To this day, I have never heard anyone say to a fellow colleague: “Go for the Silver” or “Go for the Bronze!”. The fact that there are runners up that finish in second and third place is fundamental, but the ambition of all the participants from the outset is to do well and to win.

When applying this principle to our spiritual life in Christ, we should have the same standard of excellence for the best of Masters. In writing to the Philippian believers, Paul exhorted the saints there to “approve the things that are excellent”, Phil. 1:10. He did not encourage them to lower the bar or change the standard from the previous generation with the claim that “times have changed”. Not at all. Paul would later challenge the saints at Philippi by example when he stated in clarion tones, “I press for the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”, Phil. 3:14. It is that indeed – a high and holy calling, issued from the One who said “Be ye holy, for I am holy...”, 1 Peter 1: 15. It was his standard of excellence and one that he desired for them also, requiring dedication and diligence and a steadfast pressing on with a high standard to attain to and hold.

When Shishak, King of Egypt invaded Jerusalem during Rehoboam’s reign, (1 Kings 14:25-28), he took away the gold shields in the temple that Solomon had built. Over five hundred shields of hammered gold occupied that temple (1 Kings 10:16-17), a plethora of precious items that characterized the glorious kingdom of Solomon and house of the Lord. But because of rank failure among the Lord’s people (1 Kings 14:23-24), these shields were taken away by the Egyptians and God’s protection of the nation was removed as well. These Egyptian intruders entered the land and took away the heritage of God’s people and the things that were counted dear to the nation. But rather than repenting, Rehoboam replaced the gold shields with bronze ones, shields which looked the same but were in actuality, a cheap substitute. They were still handled with pomp and ceremony and also treated with care (v. 28), but certainly did not possess the value of the shields that were taken away.

I have often pondered this incident from the Scriptures and have wondered if it does not have a parallel for us today. Are there precious truths once held dear to a previous

generation that somehow have been taken away from us? Have we lost our grip on them and have allowed the world to snatch them away because of the intrusion of modern-day Shishaks? I have sensed it in my own life and ask if it is true of others also? What has happened to those gold shields – the discipline of personal prayer and devotional time, the regular reading of the Scriptures, the faithful attendance to the meetings of the church, the extended fellowship with the Lord’s people? All precious protective shields, for sure in our walk with Christ. It does not stop there – perhaps it has an application to the local church as well. The lack of fellowship, the abbreviated schedule of meetings, the emphasis on music over sound biblical teaching and worship as the centerpiece of the church. Maybe not, but maybe so. How easy it is for us to ignore the biblical injunction to take heed to the things that we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip from our grasp, Heb. 2:1. Worse, is the temptation to replace them with those things which have a resemblance but are cheap look-alikes – casual attendance, token prayer time, cursory devotions and the like. We can all fill in the blank as to what those substitutes are in our experience.

Paul told Timothy to “lay hold of eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:12). Solomon urged, “Buy the truth and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23) and to “remove not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set”, Prov. 22:28. Whatever the cost, we are not allow Shishak take away the gold that is the standard of the house of the Lord. Whether it is Shishak or Amalek who stole David’s possessions (1 Sam 30.2), or the Philistines who choked up Abraham’s wells with dirt (Gen. 26:18), every generation needs to discover, uncover, or recover the words of truth and like Israel, possess their possessions, Obad. 17. * Article appeared in Cornerstone Magazine. Used by permission of author.

Being Thankful for Anything, Everything and Nothing

Bruce Hulshizer

The Lord gives us great encouragement by tracing the theme of thanksgiving in Paul’s letter to the Colossians. There are several reasons for thanksgiving. We should be thankful for anything, everything and nothing.

Paul’s thanksgiving for the saints as the letter begins is because of the day they understood the grace of God in truth – they realized they did not deserve anything, yet God had provided salvation for them in Christ. What a help grace is to spur us on in thanksgiving! We do not deserve anything! So then if we receive anything, it is an amazing privilege, and we can be very thankful!

Paul and Epaphras shared the same struggle (1:29; 4:12) to see all believers having the full assurance of knowing the

The Uniqueness of Christ

A.J. Higgins

“Never man spake like this Man” John 7:46 KJV
“Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.”

John 7:46 NASB

Everything about the Lord Jesus Christ was unique and singular.

No one ever came as He did. He “became flesh,” teaching of His prior existence, an eternal existence. He came into the world voluntarily. He “took part” of flesh and blood (Heb 2:14.) He ever existed and became incarnate. We were conceived and came into the world.

No one ever lived as He did. His was a life of infinite delight to His Father. There were no “off days” in His service. There were no times when He needed to be recalled to His purpose or rededicated to His commission. His was a consistent life of consecrated service to His God.

No one ever spoke as He spoke. His words were full of grace and truth. His words brought healing to the sick, comfort to the sorrowing, life to the dead, and spiritual life to the spiritually dead. Men marveled at His words. Those who came to twist His words and trap Him in His words, left speechless, amazed at His wisdom. And yet it all seemed so artless and simple. He resorted to no deep arguments or clever rationalizations. There were no involved theological arguments appealing to the past teachings of Rabbis as marked the men of His day. The simplest of illustrations from everyday life silenced the brightest of His critics.

Never man loved as He did. “Greater love hath no man than this ...” (John 15:13.) Of course, no man ever loved the Lord His God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, except for this Man! Here was the only One Who returned God’s love both in full measure and in like kind. And here was a Man Who loved His neighbor as Himself. His love for others took Him to a cross. Here is a love that is unique not only in its extent, but in its very motive and purity. It is, in the words of Isaac Watts, “Love so amazing, so divine.”

No one ever died as He died. Many had been nailed to crosses. Thousands had been crucified in the “slaves” rebellion under Spartacus. The cruelty of Rome was open and obvious for all to see. The brutality of the scourging, the inhumanity of the crucifixion, and the pitiless treatment of its victims were the standard for Roman execution. But yet the Lord Jesus died as no one else. He “laid down” His life. He alone had the authority to do this (John 10:18.) His was a willing sacrifice. He “gave Himself” (Gal 1:4.)

No one ever rose as He rose. Others had been recalled to life: Lazarus, the widow’s son, Jairus’ daughter, and several

in the Old Testament. But their recalls to life differed in two major ways from His. They rose to die again. He rose in the power of an endless life. They were recalled to life by others. The Lord Jesus, while dead, had power over death, and raised Himself from the dead (John 2:19; 10:18.) Everything about our Lord Jesus Christ is unique and worthy of worship. * Used by permission of author.

How may I pass through life with the least inconvenience?

John Newton

If I am redeemed from eternal misery by the death of Jesus; and if He is now preparing a glorious mansion for me near Himself, that I may drink of the rivers of pleasure at His right hand for evermore – then the question is not (at least ought not to be), “How may I pass through life with the least inconvenience?”

Rather it should be: “How may my little span of life be made most subservient to the praise and glory of Him who loved me, and gave Himself for me?”

“Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers – but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect!”
1 Peter 1:17-19 *

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will of God fully (1:9; 2:2; 4:12), realizing their completeness in Christ (1:28; 4:12). If we have Christ, we have everything (2:9-15). Saints that realize this by faith will be overflowing with thanksgiving! (2:7) There is no improvement possible. No one has anything to offer us! (2:4-23) Christ is all, and we have all in Him. What a place of rest and joy! What a help this is to spur us on in thanksgiving! We do not deserve anything, and yet we have everything!

Because we have everything in Christ (complete forgiveness of sins, new life in a risen Christ, settled access to God, and on it goes!), then we need nothing. In the new life of the new self, Christ is all and in all (3:10-11). Thus, we are delivered from the vain striving to obtain for self. That life of desire to fill self leaves people empty and irritated and never satisfied (3:5-9). Instead, out of our place of complete satisfaction, we are freed to overflow with kindness, humility, love, peace, and thanksgiving! (3:12-17)

What a help these truths are to spur us on in thanksgiving! We don’t deserve anything, and yet we have everything, so we need nothing. Grace. Completeness in Christ. Satisfaction. When thoughts of ingratitude come to mind, we can remind ourselves of anything, everything and nothing. “And be thankful.” (3:15) *

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How Shall We Then Live?

Wayne Schlichter

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;... these things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority,” “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, Titus 2:11-12, 15; 3:1

How Shall We Then Live?

Back in the 1970’s one of the prominent Theologians was Francis Schaeffer. Dr. Schaeffer was not only a prolific writer; he was also a man of great vision. His ministry was often directed to the culture of the day, and where it was taking us. The title to this paper, “How Shall We Then Live?” is a title of one of his books, that was also made into a documentary Christian film.

We are now living in the culmination of what Dr. Schaeffer predicted would take place in the culture if there were not National and International repentance. Dr. Schaeffer gleaned his knowledge from the Holy Bible. Our Bible is a treasure house of truth.

The verses above are only a dot of the whole. We Christians are called to a life that is characterized by righteous living. This can only come as we yield to the Holy Spirit who indwells us. When reading these verses, we can see that this instruction is not the way of the world. Today, we have ungodliness, frivolous entertainment with lewdness revealing the sins that should never be displayed. Lawlessness in our society has heightened from misdemeanor into mass murder.

These are things that the Bible said would come to pass in “the Latter times—the Last days,” We must be aware of the times in which we live.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away,”

Since this pretty well sums up our culture today, “How Shall We Then Live?” We are to live godly lives, obedient to the laws of the land. Jesus called us to be “salt”: that which gives flavor, and preserves from corruption. We must be “light” to shine in this dark world. The light of the gospel is the only message that can change the human heart. The only hope of mankind is the Lord Jesus Christ. All other efforts are doomed with the darkness of this world.

The world is a sinking ship. We are to call people off the ship into the lifeboat of Christ. Bailing the water from the earthly Titanic will not do. People will either go down with the ship or take the heavenly flight with Christ. There are no other options. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). *

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