

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH

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THE RIGHT USE OF THE TONGUE

BY: C. D. COLE

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver," Proverbs 25:11.

"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 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. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God," James 3:1-9.

James has more to say about the tongue than any other writer in the Bible. In his discourse on the human tongue, he doesn't argue much, but gets the truth over by a series of ills.

I shall use James to show the power of the tongue; other Scriptures that speak of the need of prayer for the right use of

the tongue and then show the proper uses of the tongue. And so our outline is: power of the tongue; prayer for the tongue; and proper way to use the tongue.

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

James makes three points: the importance of the tongue. It is a small organ, but boasts great things. It is like a bit in the horses mouth; a rudder that guides the ship and a tiny spark that sets a forest on fire.

The tongue is insubordinate. No man can tame the tongue. Wild beasts can be tamed but the tongue is an unruly member. James says the man who can use his tongue right; who always says the right thing; is a fully mature person, who can control the rest of his body.

The tongue is inconsistent. The tongue is not bound by any law of consistency. *"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing," James 3:10.* With it we bless God and curse man made in the image of God. Tobias was the servant of Rabbi Simon. One day Rabbi Simon told Tobias to go to the market and get the best thing he could find. Tobias came back with a tongue, which was cooked and eaten. The next day the Rabbi told him to go to the market and get the worst thing he could find. He went and came back with a tongue. And when the Rabbi remonstrated with Tobias, the servant said, "Is there any thing better than a tongue; and is there anything worse than a tongue."

PRAYER FOR THE TONGUE

"Set a watch, O LORD, before my

mouth; keep the door of my lips," Psalm 141:3.

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer," Psalm 19:14.

All of us need to pray for grace and wisdom in the use of our tongue. There is nothing opened by mistake more often than the mouth.

An old proverb says: Think twice before you speak once. We might coin another proverb like this: He who thinks twice will often keep silent.

If God intended that we should talk more than we hear, He would have given us two mouths and one ear. *"...Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath," James 1:19.*

PROPER USE OF THE TONGUE

Paul says, *"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man," Colossians 4:6.*

"...The tree is known by his fruit...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. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," Matthew 12:33, 35, 36.

Consider the tongue of our Lord Jesus Christ. His speech made Him different from all other men. *"The officers answered, Never man spake like this man," John 7:46.* Jesus was truth incarnate. In His early ministry He went to Nazareth, his home town and preached.

"And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth...," Luke 4:22. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," John 6:37. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," John 5:40. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light," Matthew 11:28-30.

All of us can testify to the blessing of words fitly spoken. We wonder what we would have done at times if someone had not spoken a word of encouragement.

One of my very best friends in Florida was Dr. Ed Solomon, long time editor of Florida Baptist Witness, and now in glory. He spoke words of encouragement when I needed them. One day in a meeting at St. Petersburg he asked me to write weekly for the Witness. And when my doctrinal position would be questioned he would defend me.

Ed Solomon had an impediment in his speech from childhood to the day of his death. He turned this handicap to good account. He would tell a lot of stories on himself. He had a way of saying that he began to preach before he could talk plain. And he would get the attention of the audience by saying, "Now hear the wisdom of Solomon."

In his last editorial he tells about his first sermon. He preached his first sermon to his own church. He had a big sermon and practiced on it in the woods until he had it down perfect. But the closer he got to the church the farther he got away from the sermon. He had asked that only a few people be told that he was going to preach, but when he got to the church there was a great crowd. "Every man and his dog, every girl and her sweetheart, every woman and her baby were there. The whole hill was covered with mules, horses, buggies and wagons, and people."

The sight of the crowd took the breath out of him and made him afraid. His text was, "What think ye of Christ?" Matthew 22:42. He would say over and over, "Brethren, what think ye of Christ?" He was like the boy whose mother said that he was awfully smart, but his mouth would not go off. But he

finally got his mouth started and he kept up until he had to pray for the Lord to stop it. There was a lot of confusion; the babies were crying; dogs were trying to out bark him; young people were going in and out. Finally he said, "Brethren, I am not through, but I expect I had better quit." They took no chances and arose and filed out of the house with an air, "just as we expected." Nobody came forward to congratulate him. Ed stood there bewildered and wishing he was dead. He said to himself, "They said I was a fool for trying to preach and now I have found it out for myself." He got in the buggy with his father to go home, dejected, disappointed, and whipped. But as they drove off he heard a familiar voice crying out. "Oh, Mr. Solomon, wait a minute." It was dear old Sister Ash. She came running up to the buggy and grabbed Ed by the arm and said, "Eddie, God bless you, you did so much better that I thought you could." And looking at his father she said, "Mr. Solomon, you ought to be proud of this boy; he is going to call many sinners to repentance."

And he did. Ed Solomon was a great preacher. He could never talk plain, but he made people understand him. He capitalized on his misfortune. The words of that dear old woman revived the spirit of the young preacher who could not talk plain and who had made a miserable failure. And going home that day, he said in his heart, "I shall not disappoint that dear old soul; I will preach or I will die."

A minister who was having rough sledding in his pastorate and about ready to give up, was surprised one day to have a stranger say: "I thank you for that sermon; it did me good." He hurried home and told his wife the good news. They bowed their heads and wept.

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver," Proverbs 25:11.

Last October I ran the following in our church bulletin: *"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will," II Timothy 2:24-26.*

I was told of a preacher friend in

Florida who said that when he found out that one of his members did not like him, he would do his best to win him by lovingkindness and special attention. And this pastor stayed with that church years, even until they retired him.

I was also told of the confession of a layman concerning his pastor: He said, "Our pastor had one trait that you rarely ever found in a pastor. He never seemed to remember an injury. I was prejudiced against him when he came to us. I often spoke of him disparagingly, I knew he was told of it all, and yet when he met me he treated me as if I were his very best friend. It breaks my heart to think of it now, and if I meet him in heaven I am going to throw my arms around his neck and beg his forgiveness.

In three or four days after mailing this bulletin, I received a letter from the pastor of one of our larger churches in another part of the state. This letter read something like this: "I have been reading your articles in the church bulletin and have been blessed by them, but this is to thank you for the bulletin of this past week. He went on to tell how one of his men had hurt him with ugly opposition and that the bulletin saved him from making a mistake. He said that he had just received an ugly letter from this man and was about to loose patience with him. I prayed much on Saturday night, and Sunday morning I came to my study early and found the bulletin open on my desk. I began to read your paragraph and took it as a message from God and made up my mind to make another effort to win this man.

"In company we need to guard the tongue; in solitude we need to guard the heart and its thoughts." One can judge himself better by his thoughts than by his words. *"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he," Proverbs 23:7.*

It is good to be able to use the tongue in five languages, but it is better to hold the tongue in one language.

MORAL AND POSITIVE COMMANDMENTS

BY: C. D. COLE

Introduction: Your attitude towards the commandments is a test of spirituality. A man may appreciate the promises and yet not be very spiritual. But to be able to say, *"I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold,"* Psalm 119:127, is a proof of spirituality. *"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous,"* I John 5:3. *"If ye love me, keep my commandments,"* John 14:15.

Brethren, we must have tender hearts towards the commandments of God. *"Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word,"* Isaiah 66:1,2. *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,"* Psalm 51:17.

The very wickedness in the midst of which we live should make us love God's commandments and make us more careful in keeping them. David said of the wicked, *"...they have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold,"* Psalm 119:126, 127. Seeing other people sin makes the spiritual man the more anxious to live holy. You do not have to have a holy environment to live a godly life. The strength for a holy life is from God and not in a good environment.

Ought we to keep all the commandments of the Bible? Must a child of God do everything commanded in the Bible? *"Salute one another with an holy kiss..."* Romans 16:16. *"All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss,"* I Corinthians 16:20. *"...Go not*

into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not," Matthew 10:5. You can readily see that all commandments are not to be kept by everybody. There are commandments for particular people, for a particular time. Every commandment in this Bible that is made to me is to be kept. It is our individual responsibility to find these commandments and then have a tender heart towards them, and seek by grace to keep them.

We need to distinguish between two kinds of commandments: moral and positive. Unless we do, we will confound the eternal standard of right and wrong of the ten commandments with the ceremonial law given to Israel to be kept until the time of reformation. The ten commandments have never nor will they ever be repealed; the commandments concerning the tabernacle and its ritual of worship was repealed when Christ came and *"took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross,"* Colossians 2:14.

A moral commandment was given because it is right; the positive commandment is right because it is commanded. A moral commandment is of perpetual obligation; a positive commandment may be binding at one period of time and abolished at another. *"Thou shalt not kill,"* Exodus 20:13. *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it,"* Genesis 2:17. *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain,"* Exodus 20:7. God said unto Abraham, *"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of,"* Genesis 22:2. Of a moral commandment the reason for it can be seen; but of a

positive commandment there is no reason for it except it pleased God to give them. The obligation of man to love and obey his creator began with man's existence, but it was not until God planted a garden in Eden, that man was put under a positive law. *"And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,"* Genesis 2:15-17. The keeping of a positive law is a greater test of obedience than the keeping of a moral law. Because a man never commits murder or theft or adultery is no special evidence of love to God; he can see a reason for these laws; but to kill one's own child as Abraham was commanded to do is proof that he loved God. *"And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me,"* Genesis 22:10-12.

The best evidence of spiritual love and reverence is to do a thing only because God commands it. It is the purpose of a positive law to prove or test us, whether we will yield implicit obedience to God's commandments, or hesitate till we perceive the reason for them.

***"If ye love me,
keep my
commandments,"
John 14:15.***