

BLESSING GOD AND CURSING MEN.

"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. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." – James 3:8-10.

THESE words of the inspired Apostle are addressed to the "brethren" – not to the world. Indeed, the entire Epistle is addressed to the Church: the fact that in opening it James addresses "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," is not to the contrary of this. We are to remember that to the twelve tribes of Israel, the natural seed of Abraham, pertained originally the great promise of God made to Abraham. By natural heredity, then, God's offer or proposition to bless the world belonged to fleshly Israel, as the divine instruments, if they would comply with the divine conditions. But one of the divine conditions was that they should have the faith of Abraham, and should not be considered the promised seed of Abraham without that faith, since Abraham was to be the Father of the Faithful. Our Lord and the apostles, in the New Testament, set forth clearly how and why natural Israel, as a nation, was broken off from inheritance under that covenant: the Apostle representing the promise as an olive root, describes all Israelites as branches, growing up out of that root, and tells us that many of the natural branches were broken off, the vast majority, and that only a remnant at the first advent were found possessed of the faith of Abraham, and accepted by our Lord as members of the new house of sons. – John 1:12.

The Apostle further explains that the rejection of the unbelieving of natural Israel left the way open to engraft in the place of the broken-off branches some from amongst the Gentiles, possessed of the faith of Abraham. And this, we see, has been the work of this Gospel age, – grafting into the original root of promise believers from amongst the

Gentiles, who were once without God and having no hope in the world, strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, but are now brought nigh, united with Christ, and through him united with the Abrahamic root of promise, and inheritors of all its richness and fatness. – Eph. 2:12,13; Rom. 11.

Thus we see that these spiritual Israelites become the Israelites indeed, from the divine standpoint, the actual inheritors of the Abrahamic promise: altho we see also yet to be fulfilled certain gracious earthly promises to the natural seed of Abraham, they nevertheless have missed, have lost, as a nation, as a people, the great prize: as the Apostle declares, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for: but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." – Rom. 11:7.

So then the "twelve tribes" of Israel had promises made to them which apply not merely to themselves, but also and specially to Spiritual Israel, whom they typified; while the original election or predestination of God, respecting the Abrahamic seed, that it should be 144,000, or 12,000 from each tribe, still stands; and consequently that each one accepted from amongst the Gentiles, and engrafted into this root of Abrahamic promise, is counted as taking the place of one of these broken-off branches of the various tribes. By the time the Gospel age shall have finished its work, a Spiritual Israel will have been found – "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," – showing forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light – neither one more nor one less **[R2443 : page 67]** than the original, elect, predetermined number, – a natural Israelite having been "broken off" for each one from the Gentiles "grafted in." The Church is thus referred to in Revelation 7:3-8: and the sealing of the **[R2443 : page 68]** Church is spoken of as being so many from each of the tribes, with the intimation that all of these will have been "sealed in their foreheads" before the great time of trouble shall come upon the world.

So, then, the Epistle of James is to be understood as addressed to these true Israelites, engrafted into the root of promise, and taking the place of the natural Israelites. And to this agree the words of the Apostle Paul, "They are not all Israel which are of Israel." (Rom. 9:6,7.) And again, "He is not a Jew which is a Jew outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart." (Rom. 2:28,29.) And again, the words of our Lord in addressing his Church: "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan." – Rev. 2:9; 3:9.

Our Lord recognized this same distinction between natural and true Israelites: when receiving Nathaniel he declared, "Behold, an Israelite indeed." These *two* Israels, of the flesh and of the spirit, were typified in Isaac and Ishmael, and again, as the Apostle declares, in Jacob and Esau. (Rom. 9:8-13,22-33.) In each case the inheritor of the promise was the younger brother; as illustrating that Spiritual Israel would be developed *after* natural Israel, and take its place as heir of the chief blessings mentioned in the Abrahamic Covenant. However, we are to remember that a blessing was granted also in each case to the elder brother, in the types; and so it is in the antitypes, – while God has appointed Christ to be the heir of all things, and has called the Church as his Bride, to be his joint-heir in all things, he has nevertheless provided that blessing shall flow from these to the earthly seed, and in turn through the latter to all the families of the earth. – Rom. 11:26-33.

Having thus definitely determined that the holy spirit, through the Apostle, is addressing the Church, let us consider the astounding statement of our text, and seek to ascertain in what sense it should be understood; resolving that, should we find that in any sense or degree it applies to us individually, we will assuredly quickly respond to the spirit's teaching, and correct so evil a condition.

BLESSING GOD WITH THE TONGUE.

We may readily see how the Apostle means that God's people bless or praise his name with their tongues. They do so in prayer; they do so in their hymns of praise; they do so in declaring his truth, and in witnessing to his providences on their behalf. In a word, we bless God with our tongues by showing forth his praises, who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

CHRISTIANS WHO CURSE MEN WITH THEIR TONGUES.

But in what sense does the Apostle mean that Spiritual Israelites *curse men* with their tongues? – and that so commonly, so generally prevalent as to require public reproof? Surely no Christian curses his fellowman by oaths and profane swearing! But are there not other ways in which our tongues may be a *curse* and an *injury* to fellow-men? We are to remember that the meaning of our English word "curse" has somewhat altered in common usage within the last century, having very generally lost the sense of *injury* and assumed wholly the sense of swearing, profanity. In the Greek language different words are used when referring to a cursing oath (*viz.*, *anathema*, and *anathematiso*, used ten times in the New Testament), and when referring to a spoken condemnation as a blight or curse (*viz.*, *katara* and *kataraomai*, which signify condemnation, – to speak against, to speak evil of, to injure). The latter is the word used by the Apostle James: hence his language really is – With the same tongue wherewith we praise and honor God, we do injury to fellow-men, by evil-speaking, slandering, etc. Thus our Lord, using the same word, said, "Bless them that curse [speak evil of] you." The Apostle Paul, using the same word, admonishes God's people to "Bless and curse not" – speak favorably of others, but do not speak injuriously of them. Again, we are told that our Lord *cursed* (the same Greek word) the figtree, saying, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth" – he injured it, he made a declaration unfavorable to its future development. Thus also the Apostle declares that the Jews under the Law were under a *curse* –

not that the Law was evil, but that, because of imperfections of the flesh, the Israelites came under the *condemnation* (curse) of the Law. He declares also that "Christ hath redeemed us [formerly Jews] from the curse [condemnation] of the Law, being made a curse for us" – having suffered for us the full condemnation or blight which the Law imposed upon the transgressor. (Gal. 3:10-13.) He illustrated the same thought in connection with the word "curse," when he declares that garden land which had been overgrown with thorns and briars is "nigh unto cursing" – not ready for profanity, but for *condemnation*, as unfit for tillage, until burned over and its weeds exterminated. – Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:14; Mark 11:21; Heb. 6:8.

Having thus before our minds the real word, and its signification as used by the Apostle, we see that while *curse* is a proper enough translation of the original, the whole difficulty is that present-day common usage and common education have largely hidden from sight this signification of the word. (Similarly the word *evil* has lost its original breadth of meaning, and [R2443 : page 69] is almost invariably considered to signify immorality, badness, wickedness; whereas in its breadth of meaning it may be used to refer to anything that is undesirable, not good, such as calamities, etc.)

Looking at the Apostle's statement from this stand-point, we see clearly that his charge is applicable to Christian people of to-day to an alarming extent. How many there are who do injury with their tongues to their fellow-creatures, who use the same tongue in offering praise to God. We know of no evil to which God's consecrated people are more exposed than to this one. With many it is as natural to gossip as to breathe: they do it unconsciously. We have even known people who took cognizance of the Scriptural injunction against slander and evil-speaking, who were so utterly confused on the subject, and so unaware of their own conduct, that they would declare their horror of speaking a slander in the very same breath in which they utter slanders. We mention this in proof that this evil is so ingrained in fallen human nature as to elude the notice of the new nature sometimes for years –

and thus escapes the correction in righteousness which the Lord's Word directs, and which all who are truly the Lord's people desire.

Many are the peculiar subterfuges which the fallen nature will use, in its attempt to stifle the voice of conscience and yet maintain the use of this channel of evil, – long after it has been driven from evil practices which are less common, less popular, more generally recognized as sinful.

(1) It will say, I mean no harm to anybody; but I must have something to talk about, and nothing would be so interesting to friends and neighbors as something which has more or less of a gossipy flavor (scandal) connected with it. But is evil-speaking, slander, any the more proper on this account for the children of the light? By no means. Hence it is that the Scriptures instruct us, "Let your conversation be such as becometh saints;" "Let your speech be with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man;" "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." – Phil. 1:27; Col. 4:6; Eph. 4:29.

But the scandal-monger, however refined his methods and words, well knows that so far from the scandal ministering grace to the hearer, it ministers evil; – that the hearer is impelled by the forces of his fallen human nature to go quickly and tell the scandal further, to others; – true or false, he knows not and heeds not: it has kindled in his heart a flame of carnal sentiment which issues from his lips to "set on fire the course of nature" in others, similarly weak through the fall. The fallen nature feasts and revels in just such things, feeling the more liberty to do so because they delude themselves that thus they are moralizing – preaching against sin, and that in thus discussing and impliedly denouncing the *said-to-be* transgressions of another, they are mentioning matters abhorrent to their righteous souls. Alas! poor, weak, fallen humanity's reasonings are seriously defective when the Lord's counsels in righteousness are ignored.

As for the point that there would be little else to talk about if scandals were thoroughly eliminated from Christian conversation, and were all to abide strictly by the Apostle's injunction, "Speak evil of no man," we answer: Is there not a wide scope for conversation amongst Christian people, on the subject of the riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus our Lord, expressed in the exceeding great and precious promises of the divine Word? In these things we have indeed that which not only ministers grace to the hearer, but which adds also to the grace of the speaker. It showers blessing on every hand, so far as the "new creature" is concerned, and assists in deadening the old nature with its evil desires, tastes, appetites.

This is what the Apostle had in mind, evidently, when he said that the Lord's people should "show forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light." And a heart filled with the [R2444 : page 69] spirit of love, the spirit of God, the spirit of the truth, and overflowing with the same at the mouth will be sure to overflow that which is within, for, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." An evil mouth, therefore, a mouth which does injury to others, either to fellow-members of "the body of Christ" or to those that are without, indicates an evil heart, – implies that the heart is not pure. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." – 1 Pet. 2:9; Matt. 12:34; 5:8.

(2) Another excuse for gossip about other men's matters is offered by others, who say: I can talk about religious matters to those who are religiously inclined, but when I am with worldly people, or with professors of religion who take no interest in religious themes, I must be agreeable and accommodating, and must at least *hear* their gossip and news; and if I do not share in such conversation I would be considered very peculiar, and my company would not be desired. Yes, we answer; but this is to be one of the peculiarities of the "saints:" they are not only to be different from the world, but different also from the nominal professors of religion. Their religion is not merely to be on the surface, and on one day of the week, and under a certain suit of

clothes; but is to be of the heart, related to all the affairs of life, for every day and every moment. To follow strictly the divine injunction will indeed separate you from some who are now your friends [R2444 : page 70] and who love such evil things, – forbidden us who have become sons of God and who have received of his spirit of sonship, the spirit of Love.

And that the Lord understood and meant this is evident from the fact that he foretold to us that the way of discipleship would be a "narrow way." If, therefore, your failure to be an entertaining visitor, neighbor, friend, is because of your fidelity as a "new creature" to the law of Christ, Love – which "worketh no ill to his neighbor," either in word or deed, – then indeed you have cause for rejoicing, because you are suffering a little, experiencing a loss, for Christ's sake, for righteousness' sake. The loss may at first seem heavy, but if you endure it for Christ's sake, in obedience to his righteous law of Love, you will soon be able to say with the Apostle that such losses are "light afflictions," not worthy to be compared with the offsetting blessings. – Phil. 3:7,8; 2 Cor. 4:17.

Your cause for rejoicing is that you have the Lord's promise that such suffering shall work out for your good. Companionship with those who are not seeking to walk according to the mind of the spirit, but according to the common "course of this world," is injurious to the saints, to those who are seeking to walk in harmony with the new mind. They are far better off without such worldly companions and friends, and in proportion as they are separated from these will they find closer fellowship with the Lord himself and with his Word, and with all who are true members of his Body, and under the direction of his spirit. It is in harmony with this that the Scriptures declare, in so many words, that the friendship of this world signifies enmity against God. (Jas. 4:4.) God has purposely placed the matter in such a position that his people must take their choice, and lose either the divine friendship and fellowship, or the worldly friendship and fellowship; because those things which the Lord loves are distasteful to the

worldly, and those things which the worldly love, evil deeds and evil thoughts, evil-speaking, are an abomination in the sight of the Lord, and those who love and practice such things lose his fellowship – they are not of his spirit. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." – Rom. 8:9.

(3) Another way by which some otherwise good Christian people avoid this question, and justify themselves in this common fault of humanity, is by confining themselves (as they think) to the truth: tho how frequently their gossip-loving natures pervert their judgments and lead them to accept as truth things respecting which they have little or no knowledge, they never know. Nor are such anxious to know more, after they have circulated a slander with their stamp of verity on it: to find it untrue would prove them "false witnesses" and put them to trouble to correct the lie; the pride of the natural mind objects and refuses to believe the truth under such circumstances. Thus one evil leads to another.

Such will say, – Oh, I never tell anything for *truth* until I positively know it to be true – of my own observation, my own personal knowledge. Anything that I do not know of myself to be true I am always careful to so state, and say, I have heard thus and so, or, I am told thus and so; I do not vouch for the truth of it myself. Thus I am sure that I always avoid speaking evil of anyone. Perhaps there is no more common delusion on this subject than is thus expressed. The depraved taste hedges itself behind conscience, and declares that it is always right to speak the truth, and hence God cannot have meant that speaking the truth would be slander, but that in condemning evil speaking and slander, as works of the flesh and the devil, he must have meant the speaking of that which is false, untrue.

This is a great mistake: a slander is equally a slander, whether it is true or whether it is false, and is so regarded, not only in the law of God, but also in the laws of civilized men. True, in human law, if a suit were brought for slander, if it were proven that the charges made

by the slanderer had some basis of fact, that would probably be considered by the Court and jury an extenuating circumstance, and would probably very much reduce the amount of the verdict for damages. A slander is anything which is uttered with the intention of injury to another, whether true or false, and the laws of men agree with the law of God, that such injury to another is wrong.

In other words, divine and human laws agree that a first wrong does not justify a second wrong. Human law says, If a wrong has been committed, the Courts are open to the injured one to seek redress or the punishment of the evil doer; but the injured one shall not be permitted to take the remedy into his own hands, either by making an assault with physical force nor by the use of the more subtle weapon, the tongue, to assassinate his character with the poisoned stiletto of envy and malice. True, many slanderers are never prosecuted; true also, the newspapers of the United States have sometimes escaped heavy damages for libelous slander by the plea that they did not publish the defamations as of malice, but simply as news, which, they claimed, properly belonged to the public as in the cases of politicians who were seeking the franchises of the people for positions of public trust. Then again, public men knowing that much of the false statements by the opposition press will be properly credited as falsehoods, consider it good policy to let any ordinary slanders go unchallenged in the Courts. **[R2444 : page 71]** The effect is a gradual growth of slander among the people – sure to work evil to themselves and to their institutions; – for government officers and courts and everybody of influence coming under such slanders (generally, we believe, untrue) lose their influence for good over the lower classes, who are thus being helped along to greater lawlessness day by day, and preparing for the period of anarchy which the Scriptures tell us is near at hand.

But the Law of God, the Law of Christ, goes much further and deeper into such matters, naturally, than do the laws of men; for it deals not with men, but with the "new creatures in Christ Jesus" –

transformed by the renewing of their minds, and under special New Covenant relationship, and bound by the law of that New Covenant – Love – which "worketh no ill to his neighbor," under any circumstances, under any provocation: which on the contrary returns "good for evil" – "blessing for cursing."

The Law of the New Covenant, Love, commands *silence* to all who acknowledge that law and the Law-Giver, saying, "***Speak evil of no man.***" (Titus 3:2.) It goes further than this and declares against evil thoughts, evil suspicions, evil surmisings, against neighbors. It declares that love filling our hearts will not only hinder evil conduct and injurious words, but will prevent evil thoughts: "Love thinketh no evil," – can only be convinced of evil by indisputable proofs. Indeed, to impress this subject and its importance in his sight, the Great Teacher declares to the pupils in his school – With what judgment ye judge others, I will judge you. (Matt. 7:1.) And again he tells them to pray to the Father – "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." (Matt. 6:12.) Again he declares, If ***at heart*** ye treasure up resentment against others, the Heavenly Father will not forgive you. (Matt. 18:35.) Ah! indeed, a Christian after the Lord's pattern, a graduate of the school of Christ and prepared to teach others, is one who not only outwardly, but inwardly also, is clean – separated, washed by the water of divine instruction, from the meanness, the filthiness of the flesh. He is no longer the slave of sin, controlled by the desires and weaknesses of his fallen flesh and its spirit of the world, bearing fruits unto unrighteousness, – anger, malice, hatred, strife, slander, evil-speaking. (Col. 3:8; 1 Pet. 2:1,2.) From his high standpoint of appreciation of the divine law, the advanced Christian sees that in the Lord's sight hatred is ***murder***, slander is ***assassination***, and the destruction of a neighbor's good name is ***robbery*** and rapine. And any of these things done in the Church, among the professed people of God, is doubly evil – the assassination and robbery of a ***brother***. – Compare 1 John 3:15 and Matt. 5:21,22.

To utter a defamatory or injurious remark against another, and then to add, "I do not know whether it is true or not," is to show that the speaker is exercised [R2445 : page 71] by an evil spirit and not by the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love; – he wishes to injure or curse his fellow-creature, is anxious to do so. He would feel restrained to some extent from telling what he knew to be absolutely untrue, but he delights to speak evil, and glad to know of evil that he may roll it as a sweet morsel over his tongue, and hence speaks of even those scandals which he *does not know to be true*, and attempts to excuse himself with such an apology as the above. Verily, it is with force that the Scriptures declare that the natural heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Those who thus speak, and thus attempt to justify their misconduct, have either never entered the school of Christ, or are as yet only in the infant-class, and do not know that theirs is the spirit of murder, and not the spirit of brotherly-love. Oh! that all true Christians might learn the scope of this law of Love, in its relationship not only to God, but also to fellow-men; what a bridling of tongues it would mean, what a carefulness of speech! As David said, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." And he who watches his tongue is putting a detective upon his deceitful heart and can the better know it and master it, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." – Jer. 17:9; Psa. 39:1; Matt. 12:34.

The only exception to this rule, "Speak evil of no man," would come in where we might know of an absolute necessity for making known an evil – where the relating of the evil would be contrary to our heart's wishes, and only mentioned because of necessity – because of love for others who, if not informed, might be injured. For instance, the law of the land demands that, if we know of murder having been committed, it shall not be considered slander, but on the contrary be considered duty, to make known to the proper officers of the law the *facts* (not suspicions) which have come under our observation. Likewise, if we knew of some weakness in a brother or sister, and realized that they were about to be placed in a dangerous position, because of some other brother or sister not knowing of that weakness,

it might become our duty to make known, either to the individual or congregation liable to be injured, so much of our knowledge of *facts* (not suspicions) as might be necessary to guard them against injury through the weakness mentioned. But this would not be speaking evil, but, on the contrary, would be speaking with a good motive, with the intention of preserving the one party from extraordinary temptation, and of preserving the other party from injury. And before anything should be said on the subject we should most positively satisfy our own consciences that [R2445 : page 72] our motive in speaking is a good one, and not an evil one, that we are about to use our tongue to bless, and not to injure. And even then, prompted by the spirit of love and kindness toward the weak brother, as well as toward the others, we should avoid mentioning one solitary item that would not be necessary to the object in view.

But some will object to limiting this liberty to cases of positive *knowledge*, and urge that absolute knowledge generally being small little could be said. We answer that this is in line with the Divine law, – "Love thy neighbor *as thyself*." You would not want your neighbor to use brain and tongue in evil surmises and slanders against you; and you should not do so to him. The law of the land does not demand that you should tell one word more than you *know* (of personal knowledge) against your neighbor – it does not ask your suspicions and evil surmisings. And on the contrary, the law of the Lord commands that all under the New Covenant shall not utter one solitary suspicion against a neighbor: and that if suspicion beyond knowledge is *forced* upon the mind by associated circumstances, the new mind shall promptly, with its native benevolence, counterbalance the suspicions by suggestions of the possibility of misinformation or misinterpretation and always give the apparently guilty the benefit of the doubt.

Another will object, – Oh! I could never waste so much time in getting at *facts*. Life is too short! Why, I would have no time at all left

for my own business, if I carefully hunted up the *facts* so as always to speak from *knowledge* and never from hearsay!

Just so! and the lesson to you should be to follow the Scriptural rule – "Speak evil of no man."

(1) Because you have not the time to get at the facts, and quite probably also lack the ability to judge impartially, if you had *all* the facts before you.

(2) Because, if you have the spirit of Christ, love, dwelling in you richly, you will prefer to tell no one the facts, even if you have the chain of evidence complete: you will loathe the matter the more in proportion as the known facts are unfavorable. What, then, must be the condition of those who have itching ears for scandals and of those whose tongues delight in scandal as a sweet morsel, and are anxious to scatter an evil report of which they have no knowledge – only prejudiced hearsay? The most generous view possible of such is that they have *little* of the spirit of Christ; – that they are deficient in brotherly love and have never truly learned "the golden rule."

The Apostle inquires, "Doth a fountain send forth at the same opening bitter water and sweet?" The form of his question implies the answer, No; it is either good water only or brackish water only. He evidently wishes to suggest that we apply the same rule to our hearts and mouths: How is it possible if our hearts have been renewed that our mouths utter loving sweetness to God and bitter acrimony, envy, hatred, strife, towards or respecting our fellow-men?

There is but one way of understanding this, and accounting for it Scripturally. It is expressed by the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 4:7): "We have this treasure [the new heart – the new nature] in an earthen vessel." Not that Christians are of two natures, for that thought is contrary to the science of the Bible. No mixture of natures can be recognized, hence it was that our human natures were first justified through faith and a renouncement of sin, and secondly were consecrated or

sacrificed to death, that instead we might have spiritual natures and become "new creatures in Christ Jesus." The new creature, however, is as yet only in embryo, only the new mind which dwells in and proposes to regulate and govern the mortal bodies, which are reckoned dead so far as the will of the flesh is concerned.

Hence, every Christian may properly use the language of the Apostle, and speak of and think of himself and of other Christians from two different standpoints – the new mind (the new creature) reckoned alive and given control, and the old mind (the old creature) reckoned dead, and deposed from control. But as the new mind is only living a reckoned existence by faith, so the old mind is only dead in a reckoned sense through faith. And as the Apostle declares, these two are contrary the one to the other. There cannot be spiritual progress if the reign is divided. Hence, the new mind which is to us the "treasure," begotten of the spirit of the Lord, through the word of truth, is to keep the old or natural mind, will, or disposition, tastes and appetites, dead; that the new mind may thoroughly and completely control and exercise these mortal bodies, in works and words and thoughts in harmony with the new mind, in harmony with the new law of love, in harmony with the spirit of righteousness and truth.

When, therefore, our mouths are speaking forth heart-felt praise to God, who hath blessed us, lifted our feet from the horrible pit, and the miry clay, and placed us upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and has put a new song into our mouth, our praise implies that the new mind is controlling at such a time, that the treasure in the new heart is overflowing in the mortal body, and going forth through the lips to the praise and edification, the comfort and encouragement, of those who hear. Thus the fountain in our heart is sending forth sweet waters, carrying with them life, blessing, refreshment. But when our tongues speak evil of any, whether it be true or false, it implies that the new nature **[R2445 : page 73]** is, temporarily at least, overcome by the old nature; it implies that another fountain is now operating and using the tongue, the mouth, in issuing forth the words of malice or hatred or

envy or strife or reproach or evil speaking of any kind, – cursing or injuring others in any degree, great or small. This implies that the old nature, the old will, the will of the flesh, is not being kept under, as the Apostle Paul expresses it, – kept dead, kept buried, kept out of sight: there is either a *truce* between the new mind and the old mind, by which the two use the mortal body between them, sometimes for good and sometimes for evil, or a stupor and lethargy has come over the new mind, which is taken advantage of by the mind of the flesh. Such a condition therefore implies slow spiritual development or retrogression – falling away on the part of the "new creature." All such should remember, as the Apostle Paul declares, "The time past of our lives sufficeth us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles," and again he says, "Yield not your members as instruments of unrighteousness; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." – 1 Pet. 4:3; Rom. 6:13.

From this point of view we may console ourselves if in looking backward, we perceive that in our own cases from the same mouth has proceeded praise to God and injury and defamation and slander and evil-speaking and malice and hatred and strife, or any of these, toward our fellow-creatures. It does not, therefore, prove that our hearts were not truly justified, and sanctified by the holy spirit of adoption; – it does not prove that we are not sons of God and partakers of his spirit. It does prove, however, that we are in **[R2446 : page 73]** a sadly improper condition – spiritually sick and in need of taking a purgative, as the Apostle expresses it, saying, "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven [malice, etc.], that ye may be a new [unadulterated, pure] lump" or loaf, – proper representatives of the Body of Christ. – 1 Cor. 5:7.

We may know assuredly that, until the "new creature" gains a thorough victory over the will of the flesh, we will not be winners of the great prize which is promised only "to him that overcometh." The overcoming, however, will be not in the *perfecting of the flesh*, but in the *perfecting of the heart*, – the will, the intentions. As for the

blemishes of the flesh, some of them, undoubtedly, despite every effort on our part to eradicate them, will continue with us so long as we are in the flesh. The perfection which is to be hoped for, and aimed at and expected and gained by the overcomers, is the perfection of the will, heart, intentions. "Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God." Moreover, our physical weaknesses and defects not only vary in kind but in intensity. Some are by nature more inclined to gentleness, kindness, etc.; others, until accepted of Christ, may have very uncouth, coarse, rude, rough earthen vessels: and while the influence of the treasure within, the "new mind," will be sure in any case to exercise a modifying and transforming effect upon the earthen vessel, we cannot expect as much of a change in some as in others. We cannot expect as complete a correction in righteousness in the outward man where coarseness, rudeness, unkindness are, so to speak, bred in the bone and fibre, as we might expect in one born to fine sensibilities.

While recognizing this difference of "earthen vessels," we of course must use our best endeavors each to correct his own. We are to remember that our relationship to one another in the Body of Christ is not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit; hence, as the Apostle declares, we know one another no longer according to the flesh, with its weaknesses, imperfections and ungainly and ungraceful natural tendencies. We know each other only according to the spirit, according to the intentions, according to the heart, – as "new creatures," not as old creatures. (2 Cor. 5:16.) This will lead us to be very pitiful of one another's imperfections of the flesh, so long as we have the assurance that the flesh does not represent our brother's real self, his mind, his will. We are, therefore, to be gentle toward all, kindly affectioned one toward another, so that so far from desiring to wound one another, or to injure one another, or to devour one another with our tongues, we shall sympathize with each other, do each other good, and by words of grace and comfort, or of admonition and reproof spoken in love, may build one another up in the most holy faith – in the likeness of our Lord and Master.

Proceeding with this subject, the Apostle points out that there are two kinds of wisdom, a heavenly and an earthly, and that all of the Lord's people should discern these, and should see to it that theirs is the heavenly. The Apostle's intimation is that there may be some with the Church, who may have counted themselves in the Church, who may have associated themselves with the Church from worldlywise motives – some who have caught sight of the fact that there is a reasonableness and a wisdom in the teachings of the Scriptures, which they admire and which they can turn perhaps to their own advantage. These, he implies, will be inclined to be heady and to make a show of their wisdom, and to be "puffed up" by it, and while outwardly acknowledging the propriety of the Christian graces, brotherly-kindness, gentleness, meekness, patience, love, they have in their hearts bitter envyings and strife – strife to have name and fame – envying [R2446 : page 74] those who may seem to them to have more of these.

These, the Apostle intimates, will find it difficult, yea, impossible, to avoid *cursing* (speaking evil of, injuring) the brethren. It will be so natural to them to do so that they cannot avoid it, because they have not pure hearts – they have not regenerated hearts. If their hearts ever were regenerated, they have returned like the sow to wallowing in the mire – like the dog to his vomit. The Apostle's advice to such as find that they have in their hearts envious and bitter feelings, is that they have no cause to glory or to boast, but on the contrary should acknowledge that, having these evil conditions in the heart, they are not Christians at all, and they should cease to lie against the truth – cease to act fraudulently, hypocritically – cease to continue to claim to have renewed hearts, sanctified in Christ Jesus.

He tells such plainly that their wisdom, their knowledge, is not of God, is not of the holy spirit, – "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for, where envy and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work [to be anticipated]." – Jas. 3:15,16.

It seems evident that, altho the Apostle's denunciation applies to any professing to be Israelites indeed, he nevertheless is specially aiming his remarks at those who profess to be teachers in the Church, to have *wisdom* to a considerable degree. And his words remind us of the words of the Apostle Paul, when speaking of the various gifts distributed to the Church, he seemingly points out the dangers of those of large knowledge, and as an illustration of this principle which James presents, he says: –

Tho I could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Love, it would imply that I had become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, making a noise indeed, but having no feeling respecting the matter myself, – I have neither part nor lot with those who possess the spirit of Christ. Altho I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and tho I have all faith, and have not Love, I am nothing; and tho I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not Love, it profiteth me nothing. – 1 Cor. 13:1-8.

Thus the Apostle points out distinctly that knowledge and oratory are not the most vital tests, but that Love permeating the heart and extending out through all the course of life, and actuating and operating our mortal bodies, is the real test – the real proof of our divine relationship. He points out that those who had received gifts of God before they had come into a proper relationship to God might become sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, and thus become "nothing," if they lose the love, if they lose the spirit of Christ; for "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

It is well for the Lord's people to take particular note of these divine instructions from two of the chiefest of the Apostles, and to remember that valuable tho they be, neither *oratory* nor *knowledge* are to be considered amongst the "brethren" as sure proofs of their being in the right way, nor that their influence might not be injurious instead of helpful. The *leading* characteristic to be looked for in everyone

accepted as a servant of the Church, to minister in holy things, should be first of all the spirit of love. We do not mean to say that knowledge and ability should be entirely ignored, but we do mean to say that these should be considered of secondary and not of primary importance, as is always the tendency. Look out from among yourselves holy men, full of the holy spirit, that they may have the charge of the spiritual interests of the different companies of the Lord's people. And for a divine explanation of how this holy spirit will manifest itself, of the qualities therefore that are to be looked for in the servants of the Church, see 1 Cor. 13:4-8; also 1 Pet. 1:22,23; 2 Pet. 1:1-13. For their own good, as well as for the good of the Church, all who, having other qualifications, give evidence of being puffed up and of desiring to lord it over God's heritage, the Church, or who manifest envy, strife, bitterness, evil-speaking – these should be passed by, as giving evidence of having the wrong spirit that cometh not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. They are unsafe teachers, and are likely to do more harm than good, with whatever knowledge they may possess.

Continuing, the Apostle leaves no doubt respecting his meaning, for he distinctly outlines the course and fruitage of heavenly wisdom, saying, – "The wisdom that is from above is first pure" – (truthful, honest, sincere, not put on, not used as a garment of light to deceive and to cover up selfishness, malice, hatred, strife; it makes no compromises with sin, impurity, in any shape or form.) It is "peaceable." (So far from being a quarrelsome, bickering disposition, the "new mind" desires peace – it will contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints, but it will not contend simply from a love of contention, a love of strife; on the contrary, the new mind is peaceably inclined, would prefer, so far as possible, to yield a non-essential point in a controversy; it loves its opponents and sympathizes with their difficulties.) It is "gentle" (not rude nor coarse, not rough, in action or word or tone; and if the earthen vessel through which it speaks have these rudenesses by nature ingrained, the "new nature" regrets them, strives against them, and seeks to conquer them; and where they do injury **[R2446 : page 75]** to others is ready, willing,

glad to apologize, and to remove the smart). It is "easy to be entreated" (easy of approach, not haughty, not disdainful, not hard or cruel; yet it is firm on matters of principle – principles cannot be bended or modified; they belong to God. But while affirming the principles, this spirit of wisdom points out its own willingness to moderation, by acknowledging any good features in its opponent, and by pointing out the reason why no modification is possible in relation to divine laws and principles). It is "full of mercy and good fruits." (It delights in all things prompted by love and kindness; it takes pleasure in doing for others; it takes pleasure, not only in showing mercy to dumb animals under its [R2447 : page 75] care, but it especially delights in mercy in dealing with brethren in respect to their faults. It is merciful also in the family, – not over-exacting, but generous, kind, benevolent. It is generous also with opponents, and those who are contentious, – not wishing to push a victory, even for the truth, to such a point as would be injurious, hurtful, unmerciful to the antagonist.) It is "without partiality." (It loves the good, the true, where these are found; and opposes the untrue, the impure and the unholy, whether found amongst friends or enemies. Its justice is of the strictest kind, tempered with mercy; it will not approve a fault in a brother, because he is a brother, but would reprove the same with gentleness and meekness, remembering the liability of all to the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil. It will not fail to see a virtue in an enemy, nor hesitate to acknowledge it. Truth is its standard, not prejudice, not partyism, not sectarianism.) It is "without hypocrisy." (It is thoroughly candid; it needs not to feign love, because it is love; it needs not to put on a kindly exterior and to smother feelings of wrath and envy and strife, for it is without envy, without strife. Such works of the flesh and of the devil have, by the grace of God, been seen to be earthly, sensual, devilish, and have been repudiated, and the heart has been justified, cleansed, sanctified to God, renewed in thought, intention, will, and is now full of the treasure of the holy spirit.)

With these thoughts before our minds, let us all, dear readers, more earnestly than ever, guard against the old nature, and its insidious

attempts to gain control over our tongues. Let us, more and more, seek to appreciate, in ourselves and in others, this heavenly wisdom, whose operation is so forcefully presented by the Apostle. The more important our members, the more influential, the more earnestly ought we to strive to keep them in full subjection to the Lord, as *his* servants. Our feet are useful members, consecrated to the Lord; we may use them in many errands of mercy, to the glory of his name and to the profit of his people. Our hands are likewise useful, if thoroughly consecrated to the Lord's service. Our ears are also useful in his service, to hear for him, to refuse to hear the evil, and thus to approve evil, and to set a good example to others. Our eyes are a great blessing from the Lord, and they also are to be kept from evil, from the lust of the eye and the pride of life, and are to be instruments or servants of righteousness, in seeing the good, in appreciating the good, and in assisting the good, and in helping us to know the will of our God.

But of all our members the most influential is the tongue. The tongue's influence exceeds that of all our other members combined: to control it, therefore, in the Lord's service, is the most important work of the Lord's people in respect to their mortal bodies and the service of these rendered to the Lord. A few words of love, kindness, helpfulness, – how often have such changed the entire course of a human life! – nay; how much they have had to do with moulding the destiny of nations! And how often have evil words, unkind words, slanderous words, done gross injustice, assassinated reputations, etc.! – or, as the Apostle declares, "set on fire the course of nature" – awakening passions, strifes, enmities, at first unthought of. No wonder he declares such tongues "set on fire of *Gehenna*" – the Second Death!

The public servants of the Church are to some extent specially its "*tongues*," and what an influence they wield for good or for evil, in the blessing and upbuilding of the Lord's people, or for their injury – cursing! How necessary that all the tongue-servants of the Lord's Body be such, and such only, as are of his spirit! Their influence not

only extends to those who are in the Church, but in considerable measure they are mouthpieces heard outside. And the same principle applies to every individual member of the Church, in his use of his member, his tongue. He may use it wisely or unwisely, with heavenly wisdom or with earthly wisdom. He may use it for strife, and tearing down the faith and character of the brethren, in overthrowing love and confidence, or he may use it in building up these graces of the spirit. How many have proved the truth of the Apostle's words, that the tongue has great possibilities, either for defiling the whole body, the Church, and setting on fire the course of nature, by stirring up the evil poisons and propensities of the fallen nature! How few amongst the Lord's people have conquered the tongue to the extent of bringing it into subjection to the will of God, that they may minister good, and only good, to all with whom they come in contact! Let us, dearly beloved, be fully resolved that by divine grace (promised to assist us) the present year shall witness great progress in our control of this most important member of our [R2447 : page 76] bodies, bringing the same into full subjection and obedience and service to the King of kings and Lord of lords – to him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

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"LO, I AM WITH THEE!"

The "Lord of the harvest" be near thee,
To comfort, and strengthen, and aid;
His "presence" be with thee to cheer thee,
In sickness, and sorrow, and shade!

May he lead thee to heights of ambition:
To *service* for great and for small;
The "fire" of the Christ-life within thee,
Consuming the sacrifice all.

– J. W. WATTS.
