

EVIL SPEAKING AND HATRED

MANY who speak evil of others say, "The Lord be glorified": sometimes they even profess love for those whom they defame, and manifest that they know not what spirit they are of. The Scriptures declare, "Love worketh no ill to the neighbor." If we injure our neighbor in either word or act or thought there must have been a motive or cause behind and it must have been a bad motive or cause, unless we did it ignorantly. And surely we are responsible for the avoidance of ignorance, by the exercise of alertness in the knowledge and practice of the Divine regulations.

In a general sense, therefore, we may conclude that evil words and evil deeds represent some wrong condition, either of head or heart. Hatred is classified as a part of the spirit of the Adversary of God, and properly enough every child of God should flee from anything akin to it and should feel horrified at the bare suggestion that he possessed anything of this un-Christlike character. However, it behooves all to remember the Scriptural declaration that the human mind is deceitful – not necessarily hypocritical, but, as the Apostle suggests, it often deceives itself. All who are seeking to put off all the works of the flesh and the devil should pray the Lord in the language of the Psalmist, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from sins of presumption." (Psa. 19:12,13.) Each one of the Lord's footstep followers should daily, yea, hourly, keep watch over his thoughts and words and deeds and the *underlying motives connected therewith*. This the Apostle terms judging ourselves. He assures us that those who so scrutinize, criticize, themselves should seek to bring the very thoughts of their minds into captivity to the will of God in Christ. These are the very ones who will not need to pass through the trying experiences which will come upon others more careless – less zealous to know and to do the will of the Father.

We have already considered the Apostle's declaration that there is a two-fold work for us to do – certain characteristics we are to put off, because they belong to the Old Man and his depraved affections and desires. And we are to put on the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit. To whatever extent we put off the one we are prepared or privileged to put on the other. Only as we put off anger, malice, envy, strife, etc., may we put on meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love.

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD

While emphasizing the foregoing thoughts to the fullest extent we wish to guard some against the misunderstanding of what constitutes evil-speaking. Our cue or guide on the subject must be measured by the Scriptural injunctions and examples. Some fail to get the proper thought on the subject of evil-speaking and appear to get the impression that any kind of criticism and any kind of objection to the belief of another is evil-speaking. This is not the right thought. According to this thought our Lord and the apostles did evil-speaking. Whoever has this conception should re-adjust his ideas so that they may conform to the Scriptural lines.

To tell that a certain brother now disbelieves what he formerly believed is not evil-speaking, if it be true. St. Paul spoke quite freely of false doctrines and mentioned particularly the names of some of those whose perverse teachings had been injurious to the Cause, "overthrowing the faith of some." Our Lord Jesus criticized the misconduct of some in his day. He called attention to some as being hypocritical in that they did not practice their own teaching. But neither the Lord nor the Apostles made personal attacks, slandering others. To tell fairly what another believes and to show that it is wrong is far from evil-speaking. It is speaking the Truth, which should always be spoken in love. In many instances it is a duty so to speak.

In a recent issue we published Brother Wilcox's letter to Brother McPhail, because it seemed to us that in a kind way, without attempting in any degree to slander Brother McPhail's character or to say an evil word against him personally, Brother Wilcox criticized some of Brother McPhail's doctrines and endeavored to show their fallacy and that some of them were sophistry and not logic. This is what we frequently do with the presentations of our Presbyterian and Methodist brethren and with only the kindest intentions – to assist in opening the eyes of their understanding. A few dear friends were inclined to criticize Brother Wilcox, but we think without just cause.

On the other hand, let us say that we could have no sympathy with any harsh or unkind expression, either towards brethren or the world. If some who once rejoiced in the light have become more or less blinded to it, that is a cause why we should have sympathy for them – not a sympathy which would lead us to give them encouragement in their wrong course, but a sympathy which would incline us to pity them and to be ready in any possible manner to assist them back to the right way. Even when they misrepresent us we should, so far as possible, attribute this to their blindness and pray for them, rather than smite them in return. "Let no man render evil for evil to any man, but contrariwise – do good to those who evilly entreat you."

Let us remember that the final test of character is love for God and the brethren, yea, and for our enemies – not in word merely, but in deed and in Truth – out of a pure heart. If, as we have endeavored to set forth, we are now going deeper and deeper into the testing time, "The hour of temptation that shall try all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth," and if we see many falling from their steadfastness, let us not rail at them, nor even feel unkindly, but contrariwise, let us think of ourselves and take heed to our own steps, that they shall be in the footprints of Jesus. Let us remember that the Adversary is trying some in one direction and

others in another. Let us remember that we ourselves must be tested by the "fire that shall try every man's work of what sort it is." – I Cor. 3:13.

If the Adversary could stir us up to anger, malice, hatred and strife, even in a good cause – even against Satan or those whom he is using to some extent as his servants (Rom. 6:16) – he would thus be poisoning our hearts and separating us proportionately from the Lord and his Spirit. We cannot be too careful along these lines!

It is our conviction that God brought to our attention at the proper time the advisability of the Vow which we suggested and which we believe is helping so many of the saints in many ways. Constantly we hear from those who have taken the Vow that they are blessed. Some tell us that the daily repetition of the Vow is assistful – reminding them of the necessity of guarding their every word and act; others, that their own interest in the harvest work and in all the dear co-laborers has been greatly blessed as a result of their taking the Vow; others assure us that they have been specially blessed by being reminded of and guarded against Spiritism and Occultism; still others write us freely that they needed and were greatly blessed by the precautions suggested by the Vow in respect to conduct toward the opposite sex.

We have not set forth the Vow as a test of Christian brotherhood! God forbid! We would have no right so to do! If it were a Divine *command* it would not be a vow at all; for a vow is a voluntary agreement or restriction or sacrifice made for our own assistance, or for what we believe would be to the Lord's glory. At very most the suggested Vow set forth with emphasis for our daily consideration and practice some of those features of our Consecration Vow (our Baptismal Vow) which previously had been less perspicuous to many – features nevertheless which are everyone of them included in our Consecration Vow of

faithfulness to the Lord and the interests of his Cause and to the avoidance of sin, even unto death.

Assuredly that Vow was brought to the attention of the Church by the Lord's providence at this very time; in order to awaken his people and draw them very near to himself and make them very careful, very circumspect as respects every word, deed and thought. Surely the drawing very close to the Lord, which has already been effected in many hearts by the Vow, and the staying very close to the Lord, which is assisted by the daily repetition of the Vow, is having a grand effect in many hearts. We believe that many others of the Lord's consecrated ones will yet see [R4524 : page 360] that they are missing a blessing by delaying thus to bind their sacrifice with cords to the altar.

But let no one think of the Vow as a charm or fetish. Its blessing comes through its keeping us close, "under the shadow of the Almighty," where the Wicked One cannot touch us. And let us add a word of warning here by suggesting that those who have taken the Vow, if they become careless of its provisions, would really thereby become more reprehensible in the Lord's sight than if they had never taken it. "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord (for aid). I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people." – Psa. 116:13,14.

Another word of caution: While cautioning those who have not taken the Vow to beware not to oppose it – not to interfere with this step of consecration on the part of others – we would also caution those who have taken the Vow that they be not boastful and that they allow no feeling of self-righteousness to spring up in their hearts as a result. We can readily see how the Adversary might tempt some along this very line. "Be not high-minded, but fear." (Rom. 11:20.) Let none attempt to force the Vow upon others, but accord all the full right of his own conscience. Let us commend the Vow by our loving moderation. Let us remember

that *humility* is the first of the graces and will have much to do with our standing the tests now multiplying in so many ways upon all who have named the name of Christ. As the testing begins with the Church and proceeds to the world, so apparently in the Church the testing comes first upon those in prominent positions. And these need to be the more watchful, the more prayerful, the more earnest, that they may be able to stand. [R4525 : page 360]

The Adversary's attempts are various. Some he beguiles with flattery, pride and ambition; others he would vanquish with despondency mingled with humility; others he attracts with the pleasures of the present life; others with ease and popularity; others with misdirected energy, which gradually leads them away from the narrow way. Some are seduced through too great a reverence of human teachings, human authority, subserviency to creeds and theories; while temptation comes to others along the line of disloyalty to God and to the leadings of his providence. Let us each remember that love for God means loyalty to him and to his Word, and to every leading of his providence and grace, and loyalty to the brethren. A little while and our trials will be ended. A little while and we shall see His face, if we are faithful.

