

# Faultfinding

## Transforming Truths

### Article - 6



# **FAULTFINDING**

## **"GREAT EVILS OF EVIL SPEAKING AND JUDGING."**

***"Speak not evil, one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are thou that judgest another,..."*** (James 4:11, 12)

## **FAULTFINDING AND JUDGING**

This text, my friends, shows the kind of adverse speaking that is here condemned. It is not so much the abusive and scandalous language that is here condemned as it is the love of faultfinding and judging. The faultfinding and judging spirit is utterly un-Christian, as well as un-Scriptural, and he who is guilty of these things is guilty of disobeying God's word from the beginning to the end. What does it mean? It means that he who is guilty of these things has been paying an amount of attention to the conduct of others that would have been better bestowed upon his own; it means also that he has been paying attention, not in order to help, but in order to criticize, and to criticize unfavorably. It shows, more-over, that the selfappointed faultfinder or judge -- I say selfappointed, because God never appointed him -- has a very inadequate estimate of his own frailties and shortcomings; for if he knew how worthy of blame he himself was, he would be less ready to deal out blame to others. Faultfinding, or judging, is a sure sign that he who' is addicted to it, is ignorant of the immensity of his own shortcomings.

No one who knows himself, who sees himself as he really is in the looking glass of God's Word, and sees his own weaknesses and imperfections and shortcomings, will be eager to be severe upon the faults of others, or to use the functions which require full authority and perfect knowledge for their fair, just, impartial and full performance. To find fault, or judge, is to betray in one's self an amount of self-ignorance. The faultfinder, or judge, it matters not who he is, is an ignorant person; he is a self-complaisant person; he is a self righteous per-son. Just let me call your attention to a little illustration. You remember the account of the Pharisee. "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men; I am so good, and other men are so bad; because, Lord, you don't know this, I thought I would come and tell you about it." Now it would not have been so bad, my friends, to tell how good he was, if he had only let other people alone. But he would not let other people alone; he had to tell God how bad other people were. He could not even let that poor Publican, whose heart was breaking, alone; he had to give him a dig. "I am not like this Publican." Our Lord knew as well as he that he was not like the Publican, but our Lord knew the Publican was a thousand times better man than he. You know that our Lord compared the Pharisee to a whited sepulchre, and you could not give a man a worse character than that. What is more obnoxious than a corpse in a state of putrefaction? Open the sepulchre door, look in and see it full of dead men's bones. That is what that man was morally, and yet he was thanking God he was so good! Now, my friends, had he seen himself as he really was, do you think he would have made a prayer like that? No, he would have made a prayer more like the poor Publican, "God he merciful to me a sinner." It does not make any difference who the faultfinder or judge is, he puts himself in the place of that blind Pharisee.

Faultfinding, or judging, my friends, betrays an ignorance of human nature, which would certainly be corrected by a little more self-inspection, and that generosity toward others which a thorough knowledge of one's self always excites in a just mind; but over and above all of these, faultfinding and judging is an invasion(attack) of the Divine prerogative ( special priviledge of a ruler) ; it is an invasion of the prerogative of God; it is not merely a transgression of the royal law of love which says, "Speak evil of no man," "Judge not," "Cover a multitude of sins," "Love your

neighbor as yourself " -- I say it is not simply a transgression of the royal law of love that tells us these things, but it is the setting of one's self above the law, as if it were a mistake, as if it did not apply to one's self; it is a climbing up into that judgment seat on which God alone has the right to sit, and the publishing of judgment which he alone has the right to pronounce. This is the aspect of it, or the view of it, on which the Apostle lays the most stress. "He that speaks evil against his brother, and judges his brother, speaks evil against the law, and judges the law." The Apostle gives us to understand that this conduct is no less a presumption than for a man to quit his station as God's subject, who ought to be a doer of the law, and to usurp the place of a lawgiver or judge, whose office is to determine what ought to be commanded, prescribe to men their conduct, to call men to account for it, and to pass sentence on the guilty.

To what law does the Apostle refer when he says, "He that speaks evil against his brother, speaks evil against the law" -- and so on? Well, the Apostle calls it the law of liberty, the perfect law, the royal law, the law of love. No one who knows the law of love, and has at all grasped its meaning and scope, can suppose for a moment that the observance of it is consistent with faultfinding. What does the law of love say? I might call your attention to many things, but I will call your attention to one thing. The law of love says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Now the question is, if I love my neighbor as myself, it means this, that I will take just as much interest in his welfare as in my own; I will rejoice just as much in his prosperity as in my own. And I will be just as sincerely grieved at his calamities as at my own; and I will love his good name and reputation just as much as my own. Now if a man loves his neighbor just as much as himself, how many faults would he find against him? How many severe judgments would he pass against him? Not a single one.

The faultfinder or judge, who loves to take a microscopic view of the faults of others, usually does all he can to cover and conceal his own faults; but if he had the love of God in his heart as he should have, he would be just as eager to cover the faults of others as his own. Men do not ordinarily censure themselves with rigor and severity. Men are not very forward in condemning themselves for the things they do. Have you ever noticed how tender we are toward our darling selves? But I say, my friends, that if we loved our neighbors just as our-selves, we would be just as backward in pronouncing severe judgment against them as against ourselves, and we would be just as backward in speaking evil against them as against ourselves. But the fact is, we should be far more backward about pronouncing evil judgment against others than against ourselves. Why? The reason is this: we are well acquainted with the motives and principles from whence all our actions flow; we are well acquainted with our own motives and intentions in all that we speak or do; but the case is entirely different when we undertake to judge others. We cannot know, we cannot read, the hearts of others. The heart being the hidden man, is known only to God, before whom all things are naked and open, and to a man's own self, and that is one great reason why we are told that we must not judge one another.

While the Bible tells me I must in a way judge myself, it just as plainly tells me I must not judge you, and that you must not judge me. The Bible tells me that I must be severe in a way toward myself, but it just as plainly tells me that I must be kind and loving and lenient toward you. Our Lord knew that our natural tendency would be to be kind and loving and lenient toward our darling selves, and to be harsh and severe toward others. And if we have gotten beyond that, we can thank the Lord for it, because that is the natural way, or the way of fallen human nature.

Moreover, inordinate self-love has too often a great influence upon the judgment which men pass upon themselves, and the corruption of their wills and affections upon the judgment which they pass on others, so that they seldom judge aright; nine times out of ten they are wrong; as he who has the jaundice, with objects ever so white, judges them yellow; so the eye of the mind affected with the corruption of the heart, puts another color on that which, is most candidly spoken or done. Frequently men are found fault with and judged for what it is their duty to do; frequently men are

condemned for the very things for which they should be commended. But now, as I said before, my friends, if we have the love of God in our hearts, we would be just as backward in pronouncing severe judgment against others as against I ourselves; and there are great reasons why we should be more so, aside from the consideration I have already mentioned, namely, that we know our own motives, our own intentions, our own principles, but we do not know those of others.

The question might be asked, my friends, if a man with the love of God in his heart knows anything to the detriment of others, what is he to do with it. Is he to hold it secret, or is he to publish it abroad? Is he to keep it to himself, or is he to tell it to others? Now I will answer that question, my friends, with two texts of Scripture. The Apostle Peter (1 Peter 4:10) says, "Above all things, have fervent love among yourselves." And he gives this reason for its necessity: "That love will cover a multitude of sins." Now the Apostle knew there would be a multitude of sins inside the Church to cover -- not outside, but in the Church. He knew the members of the Church would all have their weaknesses and shortcomings and imperfections, and that there would be great need .for the exercise of this sin-covering love. He knew also that those who have the love of God in their hearts would be ready to cover; and you usually find it the case that persons who do the uncovering have little or no love. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred the man with the love of God in his heart covers the faults of others; he will never uncover them unless the necessity be urgent, and the utility be great. A man never makes himself great by making another less.

But the question might be asked, suppose it is absolutely necessary to uncover a man's faults, then what must one do? Well, our Lord tells us what to do. This Bible, my friends, is a perfect rule book; we have a rule for everything here. In the 18th chapter of Matthew, beginning at the 15th verse (Matthew 18:15), our Lord says, "Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell everybody about it; tell this one, and that one, and the other one, and if you cannot tell as many as you would like to have know it, write to a good many about it. Be sure and get the word circulated. Don't stop until you think everybody knows it." Is that what our Lord says? No, but that is what some people do -- people who profess to be Christians, too. Well, if our Lord does not tell us to do that, what does He tell us to do? "Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him" -- do not send for him to come and see you, you go and see him. "Tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Do not say in a crowd, "I have a crow to pick with you," and be-gin picking it. There are only two who are to know any-thing about the picking, and if more than two know about the picking, somebody has broken the Bible rule. "And if he hear thee," then what, "Then thou hast gained thy cause; thou hast gained satisfaction; thou hast gotten a victory over thy brother; thou hast gotten him to get down on his knees and apologize to you and tell you what a bad man he is, and what a good man you are." Is that it? No, that is not it. Well, if we are not to gain our cause, or gain satisfaction, what is the good of bothering with it, Well, my friends, our Lord tells us to go and gain something a thousand times better than our cause. What are we to gain? "GAIN THY BROTHER." Well, what is meant by gaining the brother? Why it means that the brother trespassing against you has gotten himself into trouble, and you want to try to get him out of it. That is what it means. It is difficult for people to see that the offender inflicts a worse blow upon himself than upon the offended, but that is always the case. It is always the offender that gets himself into trouble.

Let me give you one little illustration. Take the case of the Apostle Paul. You remember when he was going down to Damascus to persecute the Christians, how he was apprehended by our Lord, and our Lord said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me, It is hard for those whom you are persecuting." Is that it? "It is hard for Stephen, and it is hard for those other men." Is that it? No. "Saul, it is hard for you." So it is hard for every faultfinder and judge; he does not know he is hurting himself, but he is. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Paul might have answered, "Well, what do you mean, Lord," "I mean this, that you or anyone else who undertakes to persecute any of my followers, are simply like a stupid yoked ox, kicking

against the sharp pricks; when the ox kicks against the sharp pricks, it does not hurt the pricks, but it hurts the ox. And you or anybody else who persecutes my followers, put yourself in the place of that stupid ox."

Now, He says, "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone, and if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Then He goes on to say, that if he will not hear, then take with you one or two others, that they may try to restore him; and if he will not hear the one or two others, tell it to the congregation, that they may restore him.

But now, my friends, supposing that men will not follow this Bible rule, supposing they will not follow our Lord's plan of redress for grievances, then what? They constitute themselves transgressors, and should be treated as disorderly persons. You will usually find it the case, my friends -- I have found it so -- that those who are not willing to follow the Bible rule, are very apt to distort, exaggerate and misrepresent matters, place them in a false light, with a view to injuring the brother, and therefore they should be stopped in their bad work by those who believe in following Bible rules, by refusing to listen to them, and by reproving them for their wrong-doing.

You will usually find it to be the case also, that those who speak evil against a brother, or judge a brother, pre-tend to be very much in love with the brother. "Oh, I love Brother So-and-So very much. Yes, I do. Yes, I love him." My friends, that is not the case; love does not act in that way. They neither love the brother nor the Lord as they should. If they loved the Lord they would be ready to do what the Lord tells them to do. What does the Lord say? "If you love me, you will keep my commandments; if you love me, you will do what I tell you; I have told you to speak evil against no man, and if you love me, you will not speak evil against anyone. I have told you not to judge; if you love me you will not judge. I have told you if you have anything against a brother to go to him alone, and if you are not willing to do these things it proves that you do not love me, it matters not how much you may profess." If they loved their brother, they would not be swift to bear, anxious to speak, or eager to believe false reports concerning him, but they would be ready to do just what the Bible says, namely, COVER A MULTITUDE OF SIN€.

Another thing, my friends: You will find that those who speak evil of a brother, or judge a brother, make the fault much larger than it is. They represent a mole hill as big as a mountain, and they can never aggravate an-other's faults enough. It puts me in mind of this: you have seen boys making soap bubbles. I used to make them when I was a boy. They make very large bubbles out of a mere speck of water. A speck of water would represent the fault to begin with, but before the fault-finder gets through with it, it gets as big as the boy's bubble -- and usually full of air.

It puts me in mind of another thing: you have seen those spy glasses that have a big end and a little end. When they want to see the faults of others they put the little end to their eye: "Oh, such horrid things! My! if they could only see themselves as I do, wouldn't they do better? Oh, my! I cannot let that pass. I am going to tell others about it. I will tell myself; if I don't tell myself, I will be sure to tell others anyhow!" When they want to see their own faults, they turn the big end of the glass to their eyes, and say: "Oh, those things don't amount to anything; I am going, to dismiss them from my mind entirely; I am not going to think about them any more."

It puts me in mind of a story I heard when I was a boy, about two Irishmen. They were out in the hills together, and one says to the other,

"Pat, do you see that pig way over yonder?"

"Where?"

"Why, over on the hill yonder; don't you see it,"

"Oh, yes," he says, "but I can hardly see it."

"Yes, but when you put this glass to your eye, it brings it so close that you can plainly hear it grunt."

So when the faultfinder or judge, my friends, gets a microscopic view of the faults of others, it so enlarges them that the faults themselves talk -- that is, in his mind.

Now, then, my friends, if with full knowledge of the royal law of love, the faultfinder or judge still persists in framing and expressing unwisely opinions against others, then he is setting himself up against the law, and above the law, as if it were a mistake, as if it did not apply to one's self; he is by his actions condemning the law as if it were a bad law, and could not apply to him.

Here is the position taken by the faultfinder or judge -- and I am sure there is not anyone here today who would like to take that position: "This book contains wonderful rules for my brother; these rules are good for my brother, and I am determined to see that he keeps these rules, too; I am going to see that he toes the mark. Of course, it is different with me; I am above these rules, you know; the Bible tells me not to judge, but I am going to judge anyhow; the Bible has told me not to speak evil against anyone, but I am going to speak evil anyhow; the Bible tells me to cover a multitude of sins, but not a sin will I cover, but I am going to do a good deal of uncovering. The Bible tells me to love my neighbor as myself; you just catch me loving anybody as well as my darling self." That is the position, my friends, taken by the faultfinder or judge. It does away with the Bible. It is a literal throwing away of the Bible.

Faultfinding, or judging, my friends, brings another fail in its train. Indulging in the habit of prying into the acts or motives of others, leaves the faultfinder, or judge, little time, and less liking for searching into his own acts and motives. If he would frequently and seriously consider himself, he would be less ready to deal out blame to others; and the more constantly he busies himself about the supposed shortcomings, or delinquencies of others, the less likely he is to investigate and realize his own grievous faults

Another argument the Apostle uses is this: that we are, for the most part, very unfit and unqualified judges of one another. That is, we lack the necessary qualifications. What qualifications should we have, my friends, Suppose I undertook to judge you, or you undertook to judge me, what qualifications should we have? Let me mention three. First, full authority from God so to do. We must know that God has told us to judge one another, and we must be able to give the book and chapter and verse that says so. That is the first qualification. The second qualification is, omniscience -- perfect knowledge. We must know all about the acts of others, we must know all about their motives, their intentions, their principles, the secret workings of their hearts. The third qualification is, we ourselves must be absolutely free from sin. Our lives and characters must be blameless, perfect, and our hearts must be overflowing with love for those whom we judge. Now, my friends, how many of those qualifications have we? Let us consider this a moment. I am going to ask some questions. Bro X, I want to ask you a question. I want Bro X to give me the book and chapter and verse where it says that God wants us to judge one another; where it says that God does not know how to attend to His own affairs, and would like to have us help Him out a little!

BRO X: I cannot do it.

BRO (SPEAKER): Have you been studying your Bible?

BRO X: It is not in my Bible.

BRO (SPEAKER) (Continuing): He says it is not in his Bible. Perhaps you do not have the question. I will state it again. I want someone to give me the book and chapter and verse where it says that we are to judge one another; where it says that God does not know how to attend to His own affairs, and would like to have you and me help Him out a little! Well, if you do not give me a text, I will conclude that we have not the first qualification.

The second qualification, my friends, is omniscience. Do we know all about the hearts of others? Do we know all about their motives, their intentions, their principles? No, we do not know our own hearts half of the time. You know it says when our Lord comes to the earth, He will judge the people righteously -- implying that there has been a great deal of unrighteous judging done here on earth. Do you not know, my friends, that the judges of these courts cannot judge the people righteously? Why? Because they do not know enough. There is not a man living who knows enough to judge another at the present time. Many a man has been punished for the crime of another; many a man has been severely punished who would have gone free if our Lord had been judging him; and many a man perhaps has gone free who would have received a severe penalty if our Lord had been judging him. It is not because these men were not sincere, it is simply because they do not know enough. When our Lord comes to the earth, He will know enough; He will be omniscient; He will be able to look at the hearts; He will know who is to blame, how much to blame, and what penalty to attach. And is not that one more reason, my friends, we are told not to judge one another? He says, "Judge nothing before the time." And I am just as sure as I am alive, dear friends, that the man who judges before the time, will not judge when the time comes. "Judge nothing before the time." Keep down from the judgment seat a little longer, then after a little while it will be easy to get up there. The Lord will say, "Get up on there." But if you want to get on that judgment seat in the millennial age, you want to keep down now.

Suppose our Heavenly Father would say to everyone here this morning, "I want you to judge Brother McPhail, and I want you to judge him righteously; to the one who judges him righteously, I will give a high place in the Kingdom; I will make him high in the resurrection, and I will put him close to the Lord. But the one who judges aim wrongly, unrighteously, I will send him to the second death." How many of you would want to under-take the job on those conditions? Not a single one. You could not get one out of ten thousand who would be insane enough to attempt it. Then if we cannot undertake it under conditions of that kind, because we would fail, we had better keep our hands off altogether.

Now the third qualification, are we absolutely perfect, How many of us would like to throw stones this morning, my friends? That passage is said to be spurious, but it is in harmony with the rest anyway, and so I will quote it: "Let him that is without sin first cast a stone." I presume, my friends, there are not very many here who would want to cast a stone; our lives are not perfect, they are very imperfect. Therefore, you see, we have not the third qualification. We have not a single qualification. Wonderful judges we would be! Is it any wonder the Apostle says, roman 14.4 "Who art thou?" "Who are you that judges another man's servant?" It is presumption; you don't know enough. The Lord has told you not to judge, anyhow. He says, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy; who art thou that judgest another?" The Apostle gives us to understand that while God has promised the kingdom to Christ and the saints during the millennial age, he positively refuses any man to usurp that function at the present time, and I am sure that the person who does it will get himself into trouble. "Who art thou that judgest another," Give the book and chapter and verse; you profess to be a Christian; use your book of rules before you judge. Can you find it in the Bible? Since we must all give account to the great lawgiver and omniscient Judge, we should consider, my friends, that our proper business is to look well into ourselves, to attend to our own characters, and conduct, in order that we may be able to pass successfully his scrutinizing gaze. That is our proper business, my

friends, and if we attend to that as we should, we shall neither have the heart nor the time to inquire much into the shortcomings or failings of others. The Apostle Paul says, "I fight not as one that beateth the air." Whom did he fight, Did he fight himself, or others? Which was it, Why, he says, "I keep under my body, and keep it in subjection, lest after preaching to others, I myself might become a castaway." The Apostle gives us to understand that his body was his enemy, and there is where he had to do his fighting; and there is where you and I have to do our fighting; and if we are ever to reach the goal of the prize, we had better get down to business and fight -- fight the right fight. The man who quits fighting himself and begins fighting others, has quit the good fight, and begun a bad fight that God never told him to engage in at all.

Another thing, my friends. The faultfinder, he who judges others, thereby lays a foundation for his own judgment. Do you not know, dear friends, that our Heavenly Father will treat us just as we treat others, Do you know that He will be just as kind and loving to us as we are to others, and He will be just as harsh and severe to us as we are to others. We read in His word, "Blessed are the merciful." Why are the merciful blessed? "For they shall obtain mercy." But will not the unmerciful person obtain mercy? No, my friends, God has no mercy for the unmerciful person. Read the parable of the unmerciful servant. Listen to what James says, "He shall have judgment without mercy, who showed no mercy." God has no mercy for you if you have it not for others. And so our Lord says, "Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure you mete, it will be measured to you again." You are going to get what you give. God is not going to give you some-thing different from what you give, but He is going to give exactly what you give; and surely if it is right for us to speak evil of others, or try to injure others, then it is right for God to exercise His judgment against us.

"Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" If you could attend to your brother's mote, and your own beam at the same time, it would not be so bad, but in your anxiety over your brother's mote, you neglect your beam; you forget you have a beam, and as it is of a great deal more importance to get rid of a beam .than it is of a mote, you are neglecting the most important thing. And how unreasonable, how unchristian, it is for you, whose first duty it is to begin at yourself, to spy out' and take a microscopic view of the faults of others, and to deal with them with severity, and, as usual with faultfinders and judges, to take no account of, and to excuse and cover and to indulge in much greater crimes yourself! "Thou hypocrite, first take out the beam that is in thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote that is in thy brother's eye." What is it but the greatest hypocrisy, or a pretense of zeal against sin? If you would attempt to do anything of this kind with good judgment, and decency, and authority, in the first place begin at home, and by the time you get through with yourself, you will have had so much practice in the rectifying and remedying of faults and defects, that you will have become proficient in the art.

What does our Lord intend to teach us? I have just one little illustration:

- ❖ If you would help to make the wrong things right, Begin at home; there lies a lifetime toil.
- ❖ Weed your own garden fair for all men's sight, Before you plan to till another's soil.
- ❖ Do not talk about the weeds in other people's garden, while your own is full of them.
- ❖ Fix up your own garden, get all the weeds out of it, And when they pass, they will say, "Oh, what a nice garden! I am ashamed of mine; I will have to go and fix up my garden, too."

Now, what does our Lord intend to teach us by this illustration? What is a mote? A mote is a particle of dust, a speck, a spot; anything proverbially small. What is a beam? Is that something

small, toot I think our Bro compared it to one of these tent poles. Well, it could be bigger than one of these tent poles. Now, why did our Lord give us this illustration? Our Lord's words are purposely hyperbolic, or exaggerated, in order that the dullest perception might be able to discern his meaning, which is, that the faultfinder, or judge, has faults a thousand times larger than those he is making so much ado about in his brother. Here is the point, my friends: there is a brother down there; he has something in his eye; and I just wish he would come up here so I could take it out. "I have been looking at you, brother, and you don't know how it is bothering me. I just wish you would come up here, and let me take that out, won't you?" Perhaps I have got five or six hundred pounds of wood, or some other material, in this eye of mine, that I am paying no attention to. That is the illustration, my friends. Is it any wonder that the Lord called them hypocrites? No. Our Lord often gives us illustrations of this kind. Do you remember how He talked about their straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel? Now people tell me that a gnat is the easiest thing in the world to swallow. Of course, I never tried it, but that is what they tell me. But here is a party who could not swallow his brother's gnat, but has no trouble whatever in swallowing his own great big, crooked camel, that went over as easy as an oyster.

We have seen that it is wrong to speak evil of or judge a brother, but now the question is, Would there be any-thing wrong in listening to evil speaking, or judging, and slander, and things of that kind? Yes. You know the receiver of stolen goods is just as obnoxious to the law as the person who takes them away; and the Bible clearly teaches us that the one who listens to evil speaking, without protest, is just as guilty in God's sight, as if he originated it, and the same penalty is attached. Let me call your attention to an illustration. I would like, if I had time this morning, to read a little quotation from the Watch Tower on this point. You will find it in the July 15, 1905, issue, and I advise you all to read that, because I cannot stop to quote it.

*"And let us note, too, that those who hear slanders and thus encourage slanderers in their wrong course, are PARTAKERS OF THEIR EVIL DEEDS; guilty partners in the violation of the Master's commands. God's true people should refuse to listen to slanders and should point the offender to the Lord's Word and the ONLY method therein authorized. 'Are we wiser than God?' Experience teaches us that we cannot trust to our own judgments and are on safe ground only when following the voice of the Shepherd implicitly.*

## **RATHER REPROVE THEM IN LOVE**

*"If any Brother or Sister begins to you an evil report of others, stop him at once, kindly, but firmly. 'Have NO fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather REPROVE them.' Refuse to have any share in this violation of the Master's commands, which does great mischief in the Church. Supposing the Brother or Sister to be only a 'babe' in spiritual matters, call attention to the Lord's ruling on the subject. (Matthew 18:15 and 1 Timothy 5:19.) If the conversation is not directed to you but merely in your hearing, promptly show your disapproval by withdrawing.*

*"If, after having his attention called to the Master's command on this subject, the slanderer still persists in 'evil-speaking,' 'backbiting' and telling you his 'evil surmisings,' reprove him more sharply, saying as you go, 'I cannot, must not hear you; for if I did, I would be as criminal in the matter as you are -- violating the Lord's command. And even if I were to hear your story, I could not believe it; for the Christian who does not respect the Lord's Word and follow His plan of redress for grievances, shows so little of the Lord's spirit that his word cannot be trusted. He who twists and dodges the Lord's words would not hesitate to twist and misrepresent the words and deeds of fellow-disciples. If to*

*any extent you listen to such conversation or express 'sympathy' with it or with the gossip or slanderer, you are a partner in the sin and in all its consequences."*

Take the 15th Psalm. (Psalm 15;1,3) We read, "Who shall abide in Thy tabernacle, or who shall dwell in Thy holy hill!" Notice it does not say, "Who will get into the tabernacle!" or, "Who will get into the holy hill!" but, Who will stay in after he gets in? It is one thing getting in, and it is another thing staying in. Now who does He tell us will stay in? He says in the next verse, "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor." We see then, my friends, that neither backbiters, nor evil speaking, nor listening to evil speaking, is a small thing, and that the person who is guilty of these things, if he does not stop them, will not get into the kingdom.

What is meant by taking up a reproach against a neighbor? Why, to receive, to admit, to endure, with-out opposition. When a man quietly permits evil speaking, judging or slandering, gives no cheek to it, he is just as guilty in God's sight as if he originated it, and the same penalty is attached to him. To take up a reproach against a man's neighbor is a transgression of the royal law of love. The royal law of love requires not only to do no hurt to my brother, but also to suffer no hurt to be done to him, which it is in my power to prevent or to remove. Consequently, when the good name of my brother is invaded by another, and I patiently bear the reproach, I make myself guilty; I am become as bad as the slanderer himself. To take up a reproach against a man's brother or neighbor, is a sure sign of an unloving disposition. If we have the love of God in our hearts, dear friends, we will not believe anything against a brother, until we have full proof that he is guilty, or until it has been proved against him in a Bible way.

Let me give you a little illustration, my friends: Take the earthly court. The office of the judge and jury is to do justice to all concerned. It is not love but justice; and in order that they may be able to do justice they must hear all the evidence, and carefully weigh it. Well, now, suppose we have a very important case, and the judge, after hearing one side of it, says to the jury,

"Well, I think these persons meant what they said, I think they were honest, I think they were sincere, don't you?"

"Yes."

"I think that they told the truth, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, we will just decide this case now. There is no use of bothering with the other side at all; we will just settle the matter at once."

What would you think, my friends, of any town that had a judge or jury of that kind? What would you think of the judge and jury? They would want to get rid of that judge and jury as soon as they could, and get an-other judge and another jury.

But what would you think, my friends, of the person who is aspiring to be a judge with Christ for a thousand years, who would be guilty of the same thing as that dishonest judge? How many judges of that kind is God going to have in His kingdom? A man that cannot be honest here with his brother, cannot get into the king-dom.

Sometimes you will find Christians who will receive evidence that worldly courts are too honorable to accept. It is hearsay(rumour) evidence. Here is a man who pre-tends to know something about the case.

The judge says, "Well, get up on the stand. What do you know?"

"I know a good deal."

"Well, tell us some of it."

"Well, So-and-so said that So-and-so did so-and-so, and So-and-so can prove that So-and-so did so-and-so, and So-and-so is willing to prove so-and-so."

"Well, we don't care anything about So-and-so. Tell us what you know."

"I told you, you know, that So-and-so said So-and-so did so-and-so, and So-and-so can prove so-and-so."

"Is that all you know! Get down off of there. You don't know anything."

And so, my friends, here sometimes you will find one brother or sister going to another and saying, "So-and-so said so-and-so said Brother So-and-so did so-and-so, and So-and-so can prove that So-and-so did so-and-so, and so-and-so is willing to prove that So-and-so did so-and-so -- and on it goes. How many judges of that kind is God going to have in His kingdom? Does our Lord judge a man before He hears him? Some people ask the question, " Well, supposing a brother high up in the truth should come and tell us something against a brother, wouldn't we believe it then!" No. If an angel from heaven would come and tell you, you have no right to receive it. Here is our book of rules, the Bible, dear friends; go by that, and you will come out all right

As stated before, my friends, if we have the love of God in our hearts, we will believe nothing to the detriment of another. We are not to listen to one part of the evidence; we will not receive the evidence of an enemy; we will not believe anything against a brother until he himself has acknowledged the wrong, or until it has been proved against him in a Bible way. And when forced to believe evil of another, we will accept the fact with manifest reluctance; we will take no pleasure in reporting it; we will make many excuses for it, and will spread the broad mantle of love over a multitude of sins.

You, perhaps, may have noticed how very backward loving parents are to receive evil reports concerning their children. Why? Because they love their children. You go and tell the mother of a fault of her absent son, and you have got to produce the clearest evidence before she will believe your report. She wants to know whether you yourself witnessed the things of which you speak, or whether the persons who informed you were unprejudiced, or whether there might not be some facts in connection with the case that would give it a different aspect; and whether, after all, it was not some-body else's boy rather than her boy. She will say "I don't believe my boy would do that; I won't believe that until I have to." But on the other hand you go and tell her about the noble conduct of her boy, some-thing good the boy has done, and instantly you will see the glad conviction beam in her eye, mantling all her features with sun and joy, and before you get very far with your talk, you will hear her tongue coming in like that (Bro. McPhail illustrating by rapidly moving his fingers) and if you get a word in edgewise after that, you will have to hurry, because she will get her first, second, third, fourth and fifth breath quickly about that time; she wants to tell you all about the good qualities of that boy: "I raised that boy; that is just like him. Why, that is only one of a hundred things I could tell you about him. Just wait until I tell you about that boy." Then she begins, and you say, "I am in a hurry today." "Well, don't you be in a hurry today, it will not take me more than three or four hours, and I will talk fast."

Now then, my friends, what is it that makes her so unwilling to believe what is said against him, and to receive without abatement or qualification, all that is uttered in his praise? It is love. Yes, that is love. Oh, some people say, that is the love of a mother. Yes, that is the love of a mother, and I am glad we have mothers of that kind. It would be rather an unnatural mother who would feel good when her child did bad, or feel bad when her child did good. But I want you to understand that that is the kind of love the Bible tells you and I to have. We are to have the love that would cover a multitude of sins. Do not imagine it is love to be eager to listen to the faults of others, or what is said about this one, or that one. That is not love. That is the kind that the Devil has.

Some years ago I had rheumatism; I have stiffness now. For three months I was on my bed, and could not get off; after I got off my bed, and began to walk a little, I got dropsy, and it swelled up my limbs. About that time, Bro. Russell asked me to take a trip east as far as Philadelphia, and then down to the Indianapolis convention. Now, my friends, there was not a single place I went but some brother or sister had an infallible cure for my disease. One sister would say: "Well, I am going down the street now, and I will get that; I am not going to have you that way." I would say, "Oh, no, never mind." But she would say, "Oh, no, I will not have you that way," and she would put on her hat, and down the street she would go. By the time I got to Allegheny, I must have had at least twenty infallible cures, which I had to throw away to take an infallible cure that Bro. Russell had. And when I got around to Indianapolis, I must have had at least fifteen more infallible cures. I could not begin to tell you what I had. I had electric belts -- it would make you laugh if I would tell you all, but I am not going to tell you all the things I had. Now, dear friends, there was love there. They got just as much credit from the Lord as if they had cured me a hundred times, and I appreciated it just as much as if they had cured me, and I thanked them just as greatly from the heart, as if they had.

Shortly after that, I had a fall right on the shin bone here, and that was worse than the rheumatism. In going around, when I would talk, I would have to get my feet up on a chair. I remember that when anything was wrong with this shin, how all these members got down to help, sympathize with it (illustrating with hands). There is an illustration of the body of Christ, dear friends. When one member suffers, what are the others to do? When one member suffers, they all suffer. Don't you think, dear friends, that there is something wrong with them if they are not suffering when one is suffering? Don't you think so? When one is honored, they all rejoice, my friends. There is no envying in the true body of Christ. What would you think, my friends, if when this member was sore there, another member would do that? (Illustrating by slapping his shin with his hand.) You would say there must be something wrong with that hand. My friends, don't you think there is something wrong with the brother or sister who will either speak evil against a brother, or listen to others when they are doing it? Don't you think there is something sadly wrong about them? What would you say? That is exactly the position, my friends. When one member suffers, all suffer with it.

I am not going to ask you to make me a promise, nor am I going to make you one, but were I going to ask you to make me a promise, it would be this: that you will never speak evil against another as long as you live; and more than that, that you will never listen to others while they are speaking evil of a brother, as long as you live, without a protest, without opposing it. And do you know the reason why I would want you to make that promise? It is because I am anxious for you to get into the kingdom. I presume it would surprise us if we knew how many the wrong use of the tongue kept out of the kingdom. The prophet says, "Who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?" Here is the answer: "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor." You see that neither the backbiter, nor the one that listens to the backbiter without protest will be permitted to get into the kingdom. I want to quote a text from the Scriptures, and close; and I never want you to forget this text of Scripture, nor where it is. 1 Peter 3:10: "For he that will love life, and see good days," -- well, who does not love life, my friends? and who would not love the life that God has promised in the future? And who does not love good days?

And who would not love the good days promised in the future? 'Well, what else does it say: "Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." Is it possible that life and good days depend on the proper use of the tongue? That is what Peter says. If you want to get into the kingdom, watch your tongue, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile."

Amen!!

*-PUT IN BAY CONVENTION, 1908  
(Bro M. L. McPhail)*

#### **SOMEONE ONCE SAID**

- Criticism does not change people; kindness and appreciation does.
  - How easy it is to judge others by their words and deeds, and ourselves by good motives and intentions.
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