

The Deadly Enemy Of Christian Fellowship By Luke Rader

Classic Christian Writings:

We are rapidly approaching the time when "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

None of us for a moment would think of taking a dagger and going among our brethren, slashing, cutting, and stabbing whoever of them crossed our path, yet the harm so inflicted upon them would not be nearly as damaging as that which our tongues constantly inflict upon each other.

Here you will be inclined to lay this article down, and sidestep facing this fault in your own life. Don't do it. Face the issue. There is too much at stake in the careless use of our tongues. Dodging the issue is dangerous and costly both to ourselves and to others.

In one church, some years ago, over three hundred people withdrew their fellowship because of a falsehood circulated by one woman. Only God can estimate the damage done, first to His work in the church, and second to those who withdrew; for as far as can be learned all but about fifty have cooled off, backslidden and some even gone back into outbroken sin. True, they should have investigated the story before believing it, but when reputable people repeat a tale, even a lie takes on the respectable clothing of truth. The more favor and honor God showers upon us, the more weight our words bear.

With us Christians, what we could do as slaves of sin, we dare not do as kings and priests of God, lest we divide Christ's Body, harm Christ's prestige, and mar Christ's plan.

We need to be especially on guard against evil speaking when we are going through a hard testing, a time of chastening, for then it is easy for discouragement, resentment, and bitterness to get into our souls. In such times of heaviness, everything seems dark, faith is hard to grasp, and our bitterness may flare out to defile many. By such careless unbridling of our tongues in backbiting, we leave our proper place of trust and fellowship with God as priests in the Holy Place.

Evil speaking and criticism are sure evidences of conceit and pride in our hearts. They spring from an assumption of superiority and mastery which exalts us to the position of judging others. As James puts it, "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" (James 4:11).

Any careless talk, any bitterness hinders the Holy Ghost and His work. Paul says: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:30-32).

Our unguarded talk not only embarrasses the Holy Ghost and hinders His work, but it denies the very love He is endeavoring to produce in us.

Evil speaking (criticism, gossip, scandal mongering, backbiting) works more ill to our neighbors than all other things combined, dishonors God, grieves the Holy Ghost, and brings disrepute to the name of Christ. It does no good to us, to others or to God; it is evil and no good is in it.

Evil speaking and criticism not only work ill to others and grieve the Holy Ghost, but also do us infinite harm. We are in a battle. In war, the watchword is "Watch." "Be on your guard constantly." One of the most effective tricks in fencing or boxing is to get the opponent's attention on something else for a second, and then strike him. This is also one of Satan's favorite devices. While watching others' faults, our own are forgotten, to Satan's delight.

Christ's most stinging irony is: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote (splinter) that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam (4 x 12 plank) that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:1-5).

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When our brethren offend us, instead of backbiting them, we do as we are commanded: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and he alone; if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:15-17).

Paul sums the matter up in this glorious promise: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect, in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20,21).

From Reality.