



A Soft Answer

October 7, 2018

Yes, it is an election year, and once again politicians are bludgeoning us with mean hearted, disrespectful and outright hate-filled things said about each other. Attacking each other's character with hate filled accusations. What a terrible example we see from our "leaders", but though they may be leading our country, they are not the example for members of the Lord's body, the Lord Jesus Christ is, even now, leading us in paths of righteousness. We who are Christ's MUST not fall into the pattern of modern-day political trash talking. We must not imitate them, but God. Paul said this of himself, "*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ*" (1 Cor. 11:1). In Acts 23 Paul by command of Ananias, was struck on the mouth for speaking contrary to the Jews and he responded to Ananias saying, "*God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?*" (v.3) But Paul didn't realize he was high priest, and quickly apologized and quoted the law, "*You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people*" (v.5; Exo. 22:28).

It was Paul who told the church at Corinth, "*For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you, imitate me. 17 For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church*" (1 Cor. 4:15-17). We who are Christ's have a Father in heaven, who came down to this old sinful world to show us the "Way". He did so in the Son, Jesus (John 1:14) who was the perfect example for all. Of Him we are told Jesus, "*...was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:15b). Of Jesus Isaiah wrote, "*He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth*" (Isa. 53:7). Even though the officials at that time, lied, oppressed, and even afflicted our Lord, He didn't play their game, didn't spit-out mean things about them, even though they were without doubt in the wrong. Paul, like all of us, can learn from the Master's example and testimony how we should speak, and respond to the world around us. Like Jesus, we must act in love, and with control over every word that comes from our mouths. We are warned by the Lord that what we say will be remembered on the Day of the Lord. Jesus said, "*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment*" (Matt. 12:36). We cannot get caught up in the slinging of mud, true or not true, when we talk about our leaders in this country, or any other person for that matter.

Paul said, "*speaking the truth in love*" (Eph. 4:15), that's the advice that comes to us through inspiration. We cannot make railing accusations with mean spirited words, and expect the other side to hear us, let alone accept us. Truth must be spoken but tempered with love so that one may receive it and be changed by it. We have heard, "He started it!" But what if the other side is spitting out mean words at us? Solomon said, "*A soft answer turns away wrath...*" (Prov. 15:1a). In the same chapter Solomon says, "*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*" (v.4). Other translations use words like "*soothing tongue*" (NASB), "*gentle tongue*" (ESV) and the Contemporary English Version has, "*Kind words are good medicine*". The Hebrew word that is translated in all these ways is (mar-pay') and literally

means “healing”. Used in Proverbs 12 and 18b Solomon again writes, “...*But the tongue of the wise promotes health.*”

John taught (1 John 4:20), “*If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*” Concerning the tongue James says, “*It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the [f]similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so*” (James 3:8-10). Similitude means, “likeness”, therefore, it is sin to curse others because all are made in the likeness of God. “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” We all sin and fall short (Rom. 3:23) because we’re not God, but we can be godly, because out of His love He gave us who have believed and obeyed Him, the Spirit of Truth (1 John 4:6). Now if the God of Creation loves them, we also must do the same. Luke recorded Jesus saying, “*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks*” (Luke 6:45). If we’re looking into the mirror of our soul, that is God’s word, we’ll know what’s in our hearts, the love of God or the evil of the Devil, by what comes out of our mouths in times of trial. If it’s imitating those of the world around us then Paul’s advice, “*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, [a]clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you*” (Eph. 4:31-32).

Let’s be the lights (Matt. 5:14) that are reflective of the Lord, and not this old sinful world, not reflecting evil, but good. “*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary [h]edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers*” (Eph. 4:29). Let’s not tear others down with our words but build them up that they may see the goodness of God in us. The Psalmist give good advice as to how we should use our words saying, “*Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! 2 Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works! 3 Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord! 4 Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face evermore!*” (Psalm 105:1-5). Sound advice for us all.

Remember that we can say things that help others or tear them down. God has every reason to tear us down, but what did He do? Loved us, gave us His Son, His Word of life, and hope. Shouldn’t we be doing the same for the lost, hungry souls? From experience I know I needed it, and was beyond words, when I finally received it.

Speaking the word of the Lord, concerning the Great Day of God, Malachi said, “*For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,’ Says the Lord of hosts, ‘That will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; And you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves’” (Malachi 4:1-2). Jesus will “*arise with healing in His wings*” coming to all who fear His name, and they will grow strong spiritually.*

Always remember, “*...whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him*” (Col. 3:17).

God Bless you
In Love
Dave Scarpino