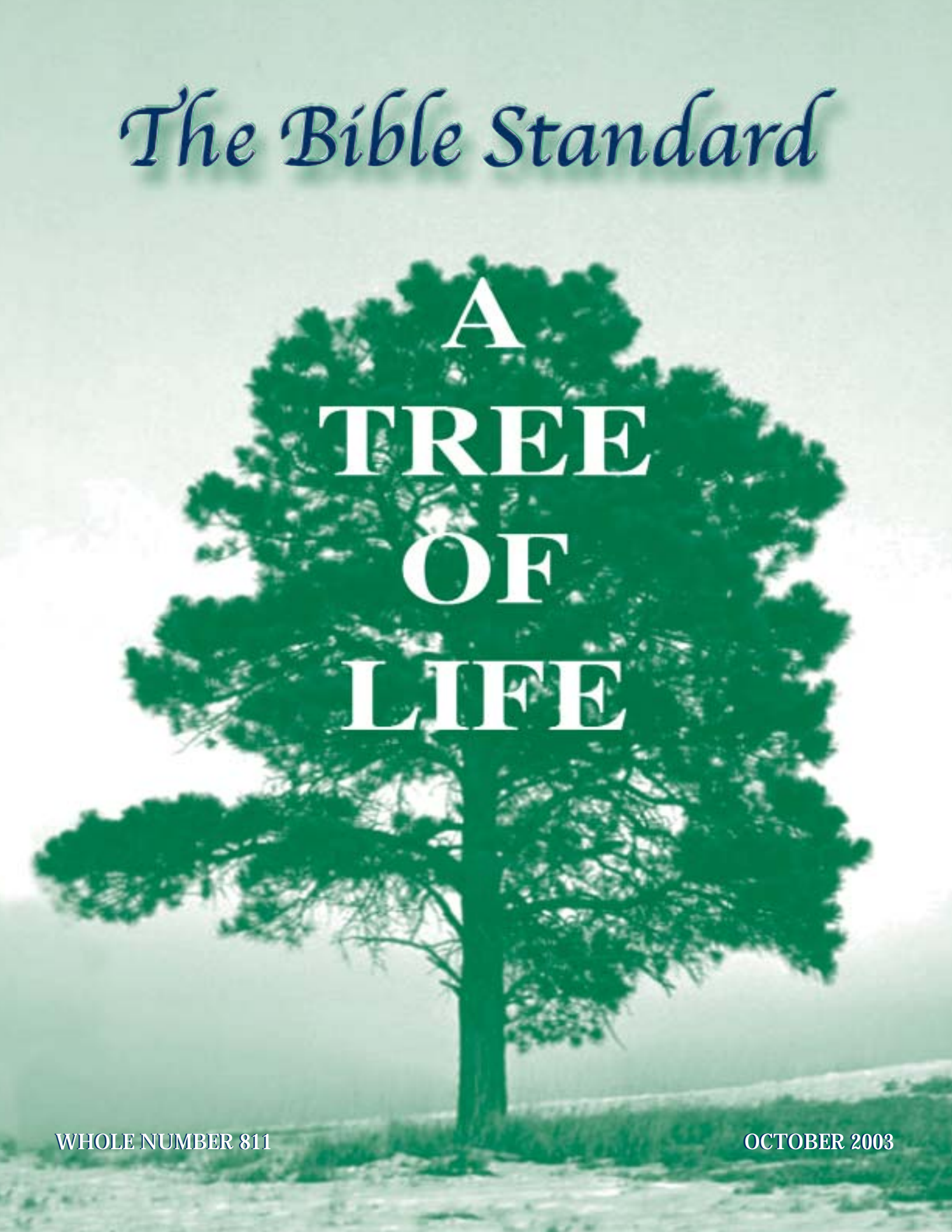


The Bible Standard



A TREE OF LIFE

WHOLE NUMBER 811

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A Tree of Life

The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

Prov. 15: 4

(New International Version)

Psalm 15

1. Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?
who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
2. He that walketh uprightly, and worketh
righteousness, and speaketh the truth in
his heart.
3. He that backbiteth not with his tongue,
nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor
taketh up a reproach against his
neighbour.
4. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned;
but he honoureth them that fear the
Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt,
and changeth not.
5. He that putteth not out his money to
usury, nor taketh reward against the
innocent. He that doeth these things shall
never be moved.

THE SPOKEN WORD is a power for good or ill. Great oratory can move crowds to tears or tantrums. At the site of the recent World Trade Organization summit in Cancun, Mexico, a single individual by his angry words urged a crowd to storm the security fence and attack the police. His tone quickly changed at the death of one of the protesters and he pleaded frantically with the mob to retreat in peace. Incitement to riot is one use of rhetoric and oratory, but it has also been used many times to arouse the hearers to noble actions and high thoughts.

If we aspire to be effective Christians, we must be careful how and of what we speak. The Christian's speech should always be "seasoned with salt," constructive and preservative of holy thoughts in its effect (Col. 4: 6). The praising heart will show itself in lips of praise — our words will be gracious and unctuous.

It is declared of the remarkable Master, Christ, that no one spoke as He. If only we had a recording of that voice! For those who walked and lived alongside Him, to be in His presence must have been bliss. He spoke of profound things in simple, beautiful language, enthralling his hearers, warming their hearts, and lifting their thoughts to heaven above. Such powers of persuasion frightened the Jewish and Roman authorities. Had Christ's intention been to incite revolt, He could have done it; but His Kingdom was not of this world. So He taught those whose hearts and minds fitted them for the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God. They were the humble and meek, tractable and teachable, distressed over their own sinful condition and yearning for the friendship and fellowship of God. Such would inherit the earth (Matt. 5: 5).

Weighing our Words

The words we use and the manner in which we speak them may bring great benefit or cause much injury. From the same mouth may come insults or compliments, truth or lies. Of course, the organ of speech — the tongue — is not at fault, for it is merely an instrument of the mind. And it is what lodges in the mind that finds expression in words.

Beautiful speech is seldom heard in our modern world. What we do hear more frequently than ever is swearing and profanity, much of which is an expression of anger, though often a sign of limited vocabulary. Not that educated people do not swear: it is not the education that counts, but the character. Nobility of intention endeavors to lift the spirit, to edify and encourage, as well as to inform. All too often

"Lift up a standard for the people" — Isa. 62: 10

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today, the trend is otherwise. We are subjected to political harangue, and radio and television advertising that runs down political opponents. Words win or wear down. Much talking results in diminished attention, requiring the “volume” to be turned up. And so we find more examples of the outrageous in speech (and behavior) thrust upon us in an effort to stand out from the competition.

“E-Speech”

The tongue stands for the power of speech, however expressed. In the technology-rich environment in which many of us live, we are used to dispatching letters, photographs, and complicated documents at blistering speed across the world by e-mail or fax machines. The ability to capture data through photocopiers and to replicate it with the push of a button, we take for granted.

In the day in which the Apostle James wrote, most communication was oral. The art and science of mass printing was centuries in the future. Knots of people would gather to hear orators, philosophers, and teachers expound in public places or in theatres. The letters penned by James and the other Apostles would be read aloud to each congregation and then passed on to another. We cannot imagine the inconvenience of such a system.

To Write Can be Wrong

The ease with which we can dispatch our written thoughts is often matched by the quick and frivolous attention we give to what we write. Many individuals have regretted firing off an angry e-mail to a boss or colleague, only to discover that they have landed themselves in trouble, or even wound up losing their job.

The “grape-vine,” a chatty network which is as old as the hills and the grapes which grow on them, is now, in its electronic version of e-mail, more dangerous than ever. Rumors and innuendo are often transmitted through this medium, causing much, irreversible damage to reputations and feelings. As Christians, we ought to be very careful how we use such facilities.

During the Second World War there was a saying that “loose lips sink ships” — careless chatter about troop movements and locations could tip off the enemy and result in attack. Secrecy was the watchword. And in our particular type of warfare we need to be doubly careful. *Our Christian witness is only as good as the words we utter* — if our words are frivolous, cynical, uncomplimentary, we alienate those to whom we would minister.

Apparently the church to whom James addressed his rebuke had a particular difficulty along this line. Perhaps the brethren were contentious, bickering, backbiting, overly defensive. Whatever it was, the Apostle saw the need to address it. In addressing it for them, he has given us valuable exhortation and reproof.

We Are What We Think

Jesus said that it is not what we eat for our body that is the most important, but the kind of thoughts to which we give expression (Matt. 15: 11). That is, we must guard our *mind*. We must be aware that the thoughts we harbor will at some time find expression through our mouth, and often at the most embarrassing moment. Many a friendly or spousal relationship has been damaged — or ruined — by angry or resentful thoughts rashly voiced.

Our character, as well as our personality, will be judged by the things we say. It will not take long for our audience to determine from our conversation what type of person we are. They will soon discover if we are an egotistical, self-centered, bigoted, or angry person.

Hypocrites

Jesus encouraged His followers to speak forthrightly, without embellishment and duplicity — to let our no be no, and our yes be yes (Matt. 5: 37). This should be our credo. With the mask of an actor there are many who can trick the unsuspecting victim with a believable “scam,” extorting money and possessions, apparently with a clear conscience. We encounter such deception at all levels of society, religious and secular. The breathtaking corporate frauds of the past year or so have plumbed new depths of deception.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been left without their savings and their pensions due to misappropriation of their funds by the companies for which they worked. This web of deceit was woven by false financial statements and fake assurances by officers or corporate directors, some of whom benefitted financially from their fraud.

Liars-in-Law

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof” (Prov. 18: 21). This conjures up the idea of a trial, with a witness for the prosecution and a witness for the defense. There were safeguards in Israel, in that two or three witnesses were required in order for a charge to hold, especially in connection with a capital crime, for which the death penalty could be meted out. It was especially serious for one to bring an untrue accusation against another (“bearing false witness”).

This law was violated when Jesus was brought before the council for judgment. The judges were hard pressed to find a credible witness and so engineered a sham testimony in order to achieve their goal — the execution of Jesus. To ensure that their will was not thwarted at the last minute, when He was before Pilate the crowd was urged to call for His death. Whoever the persons were who raised their voices in clamoring for Barabbas to be freed and for Jesus to be condemned, they incurred a mighty judgment against themselves. And yet, as flagrant as their sin was, they were forgiven by our Lord on the cross (Luke 23: 33, 34).



Perhaps some of our Christian brethren would consign such individuals to eternal torment. But here is yet another falsehood, a testimony against the character of God, a stain on His justice — that He would condemn to everlasting conscious punishment those deemed as wicked. This lie comes from the lips of the Adversary, singled out by Jesus as the “father of lies” (John 8: 44; *see box below*).

As the “god of this world,” Satan has duped mankind with errors regarding God’s character and His Plan of salvation — errors mixed with just enough truth to appear credible (2 Cor. 4: 4). Just as he manipulated Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, establishing the pattern of his dealings with mankind, misrepresenting God’s motives and His instructions to them, so he has continued to undermine the message of the Gospel in order to deflect man’s attention from God and the process of salvation.

Words of Life

Jesus said of Himself that He came to “seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19: 10). His ministry was at first confined to the Jews, because they were the chosen people of God, to whom belonged the ancient promises of God. But in a wider sense the “lost” included the Gentiles, referred to by our Lord as the “other sheep” (John 10: 16).

Jesus’ death on the cross was not meant to redeem the Jewish people only, nor a relatively small number of future Christians, but rather it included all — not all in the sense of universal salvation *to life*, but rather a universal *opportunity to gain life*. This universal opportunity has not yet been made available, but is a feature of God’s Plan which awaits His Kingdom on earth. This is spoken of by many of the holy prophets and is addressed in a number of Scriptures. Under another term it is “restitution” — restoration to a lost estate, the condition of righteous perfection lost by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Harking back to the prophetic writers, with whom his audience would have been familiar, the Apostle Peter, in Acts 3: 19-21 (NIV), preached about this coming age under the term “times of refreshing”. And the prophet Isaiah (chapter 35), plainly speaks of a time yet to come which will affect the whole world. This coming Kingdom of God *on earth* was lost sight of through most of the church’s history. God has been calling out of mankind an elect class, the “little flock” (Luke 12: 32), for whom He has reserved a heavenly reward. But this was not intended for the majority of mankind.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth” (Matt. 6: 10), He touched on the very point that many Christians have forgotten. In this simple but profound prayer, repeated so often in Christendom, we have the plain declaration of God’s intention, affirmed by the Master Himself. For how could God’s will be done on earth unless *man on earth does God’s will*? And how can man do God’s will except he be regenerated, converted, reformed? God’s Kingdom will do this. Under Christ, as the Mediator of that Kingdom, mankind will be raised from the dead and taught the will and ways of God. Their obedience (or lack of it) to that righteous order of affairs will determine their future.

Phil. 2: 10, 11 says in part: “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” In that day, the declaration of God’s saving power through Christ will be in every mouth. The knowledge of God will permeate all levels of society (Hab. 2: 14). God will have demonstrated His great love and compassion for all, Christ’s name will be honored and all humanity will join in singing the ultimate Hallelujah Chorus.

* * *

WHAT’S IN A WORD?

HELL IS HARDLY a topic that most people spend much time discussing. It does not make for good party conversation. And yet the word figures frequently in modern speech. Film characters use it frequently, and it is sprinkled liberally as a profanity through daily life. But it is safe to say that most people have little understanding of what the word really means.

Over the centuries, the word “hell” has been weighted down with a philosophy that the Scriptures do not support. Bible translations are just that — translations. They attempt to represent in the language of the reader the original language of the Scriptures. But translators are influenced by the philosophies or doctrines they hold. The word translated “hell” appears in the Old Testament as *sheol*, and refers to the hidden place of death — the grave. In the grave one is hidden from view and from life. In the New Testament, the Greek word so translated is *hades* or *gehenna*. Again the meaning is that of unconscious death or extinction.

The doctrine of the immortal soul — and its accompanying belief, the consciousness of the dead — has required Christians throughout the centuries to accept that the dead are not really dead. This belief makes a mockery of the Scriptural teaching of the resurrection, by which the dead are made alive. Eternal life is the gift of God. It is granted only to those who prove themselves worthy of it. It is not a natural quality of human existence. The idea of eternal suffering in the fires of hell withers on the vine once we understand the doctrine of the resurrection correctly. (See our booklet, *What is the Soul?*, free on request.)

THEY HAD A WAY WITH WORDS

Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

"We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." These eloquent words spoken at Gettysburg demonstrate Lincoln's commitment to the ideal of democracy and preservation of the Union. He became president just before the American Civil War. A man of great personal integrity ("honest Abe"), he championed the abolition of slavery, inspiring his hearers with such words as: "In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free."
(www.members.aol.com/RVSNorton/Lincoln2.html)
(www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/al16.html)



Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

"We shall fight on the beaches. We shall fight on the landing grounds. We shall fight in the fields, and in the streets, . . . We shall never surrender!" These stirring words demonstrate the power of oratory which marked Churchill's leadership of Britain during World War II. Soldier, politician, writer, he struggled with a speech impediment before becoming the masterful speaker the world remembers. "He has carefully chosen the terms in which to assail Mussolini as hyena or to twit the Huns with giving out 'the low, dull, whining note of fear.'" (*Lord of Language: Churchill's Oratory in World War II* by Hamilton Fyfe)



Adolf Hitler (1889-1945)

"The task with which we are faced is the hardest which has fallen to German statesmen within the memory of man. But we are all filled with unbounded confidence, for we believe in our people and their imperishable virtues." Thus Hitler addressed the German nation in February 1933. Having joined the National Party (the Nazis) in 1919, at a time of great political, social, and economic upheaval in Germany his powerful rhetoric enabled him to build the party and his own influence, and he eventually became Chancellor in 1933. It was primarily through his oratory that Hitler whipped the defeated and divided Germans into a frenzy of conquest. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica 1994-2000*)



George Whitefield (1714-1770)

"Come, ye dead, Christless, unconverted sinner . . . So art thou bound hand and foot with thy corruptions; . . . till that same Jesus who cried 'Lazarus, come forth,' also quicken you." Such were the uncompromising terms of Whitefield's preaching. With the Wesley brothers he strongly influenced a religious revival in Britain and America, and was associated with the early Methodist movement. Benjamin Franklin wrote of Whitefield: "It was a matter of speculation to me . . . to observe the extraordinary influence of his oratory on his hearers, . . . It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants . . . as if all the world were growing religious."
(www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/3505/Whitefield.html)



Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)

"I have a dream — I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed." King's powerful words from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 show his ability to arouse the growing civil rights movement. Inspired by Gandhi's philosophy of change through non-violence, he advocated achieving civil rights by peaceful means. King became prominent when, in 1955, he supported Rosa Parks in her refusal to give up her seat to a white person. He led the resulting boycott of Montgomery's bus system with impassioned speeches promoting non-violent protest, achieving success in 13 months.

(www.netstate.com/states/peop/people/ga_mlk.htm; www.mecca.org/~crights/dreamp.html)



“NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN”

— John 7: 46 —

HOW WONDERFUL are God’s dealings with us, and yet how reasonable. His appeal is, “Come now, and let us reason together . . . though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1: 18). He shows us how He had prepared for this: He Himself provided His own Son as the sacrifice for sins; our Lord Jesus has already died, the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God, and God can be just when He receives us — just in His dealings with us, because the justice element of His Law had been fully met on our behalf.

He gives us a glimpse of the blessings He proposes to bring to the world of mankind, points us to the Lamb of God, whose sacrifice takes away the sin of the world, and invites all those who have love and sympathy and appreciation to come now and accept not only life eternal but favor upon favor in the glorious Kingdom which is to bless the world in the great uplift of restitution, “which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3: 19-23).

This message comes to us through the Son of God, of whom our text declares, “Never man spake like this man.” No wonder the Apostles said to Him when some were forsaking Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”

Others may indeed think that they have eternal life in themselves — they may persuade themselves that by some inherent, immortal principle they will live forever; that when they die it will merely be the *appearance* of dying, and actually they will become in that moment more alive than ever. At best this is a very difficult thought, and few are able to so hypnotize their own judgment so as to believe it.

On the contrary, hearkening to the voice that spoke as never man spoke, we hear His declaration that our hope is in Him, as the “resurrection and the life” (John 11: 25). We hear Jesus telling us that the hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth (John 5: 28, 29).

This is reasonable. We can reason together with God when we accept the voice of His Son and reject the voices of the “dark ages.” From this standpoint — that a resurrection has been provided through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus — the whole matter of death and eternal life is clarified. We see the condemnation through Adam, and how death is justly reigning throughout the whole world of mankind ever since. We see the death of Christ, the Just for the unjust; that He has bought us with His precious blood, that He has paid our ransom price, and that as a result, in God’s due time, all shall come forth from the power of the tomb.

We see the keys of death and of the grave in the hands of the One who has purchased all; we rejoice in the procla-

mation of the coming blessing to all the families of the earth, through a release from the power of sin and Satan and death. We listen still more intently to the voice of Him that speaks as no one else can, and hear Him assure us that there are two resurrections — one a life resurrection, the other a judgment resurrection.

We hear Him tell us that only those who through faith and obedience attain a standing with God under the cover of the precious sacrifice will be counted as the good, the justified, and only they will share in the life resurrection, because only they will have passed their trial and be counted worthy of life. This is His church, His “little flock” (Luke 12: 32). All others will come forth to the judgment resurrection to be disciplined under the Kingdom, to receive stripes in proportion to the wilfulness in which they have co-operated in their own downfall into mental and moral depravity. They will be helped by the discipline, corrected in righteousness, and brought step by step out of the sin-and-death conditions, by the resurrection power of Jesus, to full perfection — all that was lost in Adam.

Wonderful words of life — tell them over again, think them over again, rejoice in them more and more — let them fill our hearts and be in our mouths as a new song of the loving-kindness of our God, whose tender mercies are over all His works.

Of these words, which the Master spoke as never man spoke, the Apostle further declares that He taught of our salvation. He says that this salvation began to be spoken by our Lord and was confirmed by all who heard it (Heb. 2: 3). Not only was there no inherent eternal life in our race, and no hope for attaining any except through Jesus, but all of the promises of the past would have been powerless without His work of atonement. And not until He came was it known how the redemption was to be accomplished.

True, God had provided various types and shadows in the numerous sacrifices of the past that illustrated the fact that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin, but they could not be understood until the anti-type had come. Only then did Jesus bring life and immortality to light — life for the world, eternal life to be conferred during the Millennial age, and immortality for His Church, His Bride, His joint-heirs.

These doctrines were never previously understood; they were faintly seen and vaguely described, but it remained for the Savior to make real the salvation which God had provided through Him. Thank God that our hearts have made our lips tell forth more and more the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light!

— *Selected*

SAY THAT AGAIN

- Anyone who has watched the old cowboy films will be familiar with the expression, “forked tongue,” usually an accusation made by the Indian to the white man. Its meaning is plain: you say one thing to me, but say something else behind my back, you do not speak plainly — in short, you lie. The fault is an ancient one. The Greeks called it *hypocrisy*. In 1 Tim. 3: 8, the Apostle Paul says that those elected to be deacons in the church should not be “doubletongued” — they were to be honest and upright in speech, as good moral teachers ought to be.
- At Pentecost, the assembled church received the Holy Spirit. It was manifested in their ability to “speak with tongues.” From the context, we know this meant foreign languages (Acts 2: 4-12). Interestingly, the visible indication of the Holy Spirit was a cloven “tongue” of fire (v. 3). The practice of *glossolalia*, or present-day speaking in tongues, usually ignores the fact that this gift of the Spirit was given to enable the spreading of the Gospel message throughout the Greek and Roman world, by means of *real* languages, understood by others.
- It appears that some can now literally speak with two tongues. A practice which is gaining popularity in the United States is that of tongue-splitting. The tongue is surgically divided in the middle, about two inches from the tip. The patient has to learn to speak all over again, but retains a permanent lisp. Strange what some will do to be in fashion. . . .

of interest . . .

An eye gel has been developed which may reverse the deterioration in sight associated with aging. Scientists in the United States first demonstrated in the late 1980s that replacing the contents of an aging monkey’s lens with silicone oil could restore its ability to focus. But since silicone oil has the potential to leak, it was not practical for use in humans. Now scientists at the Australian Government’s Multi-national Vision Co-operative Research Centre (Vision CRC) have developed an alternative to silicone oil. It has already been tested successfully on rabbits, according to *New Scientist* magazine, and there are plans to test it on monkeys before possible human trials.

Implanting the gel in humans would be very similar to current cataract surgery, except that the lens is not replaced. Instead, after making a small incision in the cornea, a doctor cuts a tiny hole in the lens capsule and removes the contents. The gel has the consistency of thick oil, and is pumped in; a burst of UV or visible light transforms it into jelly. The procedure would take about 15 minutes and would also offer an alternative to surgery for people with cataracts. The scientists at Vision CRC hope to begin human trials by the end of next year.

* * *

Some American Jewish leaders and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) have voiced objections over a new movie by actor and Oscar-winning director Mel Gibson that depicts the last 12 hours of Jesus’ life, saying it is “dangerous” because it portrays Jews in a negative way. Some of the ADL’s concerns are that the movie, entitled “The Passion,” depicts Jewish authorities and the Jewish “mob” as forcing the decision to torture and execute Jesus, thus assuming responsibility for the crucifixion, and that the film relies on historical errors, chief among them its depiction of the Jewish high priest as controlling Pontius Pilate.

Gibson has been listening to the concerns and has slightly altered the film to show more “sympathetic” Jewish characters who do not call for the execution of Jesus; he has strongly denied any personal anti-Semitism. His own religious beliefs are based on a conservative traditionalist Catholic Church, which rejects the Pope’s second Vatican Council edict that sought to clear Jews of responsibility for Jesus’ death and repair relations between Jews and Catholics. The film, which has received endorsements from senior Vatican officials, was filmed entirely in Greek, Latin, and Aramaic, and is due for release in 2004.

— *Selections from the British Broadcasting Corporation*



“SPEAKING WITH TONGUES”

Q What is the “gift” of “speaking with tongues,” and should Christians desire this gift?

A Speaking in tongues, also called *glossolalia* — from the Greek words *glossa* (tongue) and *lalia* (speech) — was a common practice in the early Church. The miraculous power to speak in other “tongues” was given by God to the early Church. The New Testament records a number of accounts of various ones receiving and using this “gift.” In 1 Cor. 12, 13, and 14, the Apostle Paul indicates that the possession and use of this “gift” was considered very important.

The New Testament records the first marked case of speaking in tongues as taking place on the day of Pentecost, 10 days after Jesus’ ascension, when the waiting disciples were baptized with the holy spirit. It resulted in Jews of many lands hearing the Gospel in *their own languages* (Acts 2: 1-11).

A supplementary baptism with the holy spirit upon the Church occurred 3½ years later in Caesarea, when the first Gentiles — Cornelius and his household — were received into the Body of Christ (Acts 10: 44-47; 11: 15).

Other manifestations of “speaking with tongues” came upon the early Church, but *only through the laying on of hands by one or more of the twelve Apostles* (Acts 8: 14-18; 19: 6).

The gift of tongues is listed with other gifts of the spirit in 1 Cor. 12: 4-11 (compare vs. 28-30) and is referred to also in 1 Cor. 13 and 14, where the Apostle explains its inferiority to the grace of charity (unselfish love) and to the gift of prophecy (especially the ability to publically expound various features of God’s Word — past, present, and future).

History records that the gifts of the spirit died out in the early Church shortly after the last of the Apostles — who alone could bestow the gifts — fell asleep in death.

1 Cor. 13: 8 reads, “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; *whether there be tongues, they shall cease*; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.”

The Purposes for the “Gifts” of the Spirit

Why would these “gifts,” and by implication all the other gifts of the spirit cease to operate? We answer:

because the purpose for the bestowal and use of these “gifts” would be fully accomplished and they would therefore no longer be needed. The two purposes for the gifts were:

- To enable the early Church to gain recognition in the world and mark her out as being special — especially to attract the attention of those unbelievers from among Jews and Gentiles, whom God was drawing to Jesus (1 Cor. 14: 22; John 6: 44).
- To be used to edify the early Church until the New Testament writings would be complete and added to the Old Testament. The Scriptures in their completeness would then be sufficient for the Christian (2 Tim. 3: 15-17).

Modern-Day Speaking in Tongues

If the gifts of the spirit ceased shortly after the Apostles fell asleep and are not for our day, how can we account for the present-day speaking with tongues?

We do not desire to question the sincerity of those who believe that tongues-speaking exists today, or who are seeking or claim to possess the gift of speaking with tongues. However, we believe that they are laboring under a delusion — one that could be even potentially dangerous.

Two possible explanations for modern-day “tongues-speaking” are:

- *A faked imitation.* Some have engaged in acting, or pretending to speak in tongues to impress, or trick others. Some of these have later been exposed.
- *Psychological tongues-speaking.* This can be brought about by emotional ecstasy, in which one loses temporarily to some extent his self-consciousness and his power of fully rational thought and self-control. This often occurs in a group setting, in which a great deal of excitement has been generated.

The speaking in tongues today is markedly inferior to the Apostolic gift. It consists largely of unintelligible gibberish, rather than a genuine foreign language, whereas the true gift of speaking with tongues was of a real foreign language.

As Christians seeking to discern the will of the Lord, and in light of the above considerations, we strongly recommend against any seeking this gift. (For a more detailed study of this subject, we offer an 80-page booklet, *The Gift Of Tongues*, free on request.)

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

Q If the miraculous “gifts” of the spirit — like speaking in tongues — ceased forever when the twelve Apostles and those upon whom they had conferred these gifts died, how have consecrated Christians since had the assurance that they possess the holy spirit and are children of God?

A Rom. 8: 16 reads, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Aside from the miraculous gifts given only to the early Church, the Bible teaches that there are seven elements that make up the full witness of the spirit.

These seven have, throughout the Gospel Age, assured God’s people that they were in His family, and they continue to assure God’s non-spirit-begotten people of the present time that they belong to His family. These seven, including a few proof Scriptures for each, are:

- (1) *An appreciative understanding of the deep things of God’s Word* (Mark 4: 10-12; John 7: 17).
- (2) *Heavenly aspirations, or those relating to perfect human hopes* (Matt. 6: 33; Rom. 6: 4, 5; Col. 3: 1-4).
- (3) *Divinely given opportunities for service* (Matt. 25: 14-30; John 4: 34-38; Rom. 12: 1).
- (4) *Growth in Christlikeness* (Rom. 8: 9, 29; Gal. 5: 22, 23; 2 Pet. 1: 5-11).
- (5) *Persecution for Christ’s sake* (Matt. 5: 10-12, 44, 45; 2 Tim. 3: 12; 1 Pet. 4: 14, 16, 19).
- (6) *Chastisements for faults* (Psa. 119: 67; Prov. 3: 11, 12; Heb. 12: 5-13).
- (7) *Trials amid temptations to disobey God’s will, to test our progress or lack of progress* (Deut. 8: 2; 13: 3; 1 Pet. 4: 12). (See our book, *Christ-Spirit-Covenants*, pp. 627-654, for details; available from us for \$2.50.)

Many regard as their “witness” of the spirit such things as their feelings of exuberance, habitual cheerfulness, audible voices speaking to them, “speaking with tongues,” dreams, visions, impressions, and imaginations. However, when sickness, pain, losses, disappointments, family troubles, hardships, necessities, persecutions, and other severe untoward experiences come, their “witness” often deserts them — and that at the times when they need it most! Not so with the sevenfold witness mentioned above. Instead of deserting us amid trials, it will keep our hearts and minds in perfect peace through Jesus Christ our Lord, assuring us that our interests are safe with God, that we have His holy spirit, and that He is continuing to deal with us as members of His family (Isa. 26: 3; Phil. 4: 7).

HONESTY IN SPEECH

Q In a world where dishonesty in speech is prevalent, how are Christians to regulate their speech? If we are prohibited from ever telling a “white lie” or “stretching the truth,” are we at a disadvantage?

A Dishonesty in speech is common today, and this condition may at times seem to work to our disadvantage as Christians. However, we need to first ask, What does God’s Word say?

In Isa. 63: 8, God says, “Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour.” If we are careful always to be truthful, we surely will not lie.

In Matt. 5: 37, Jesus said, “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” When we say something, it should be true, unless we let our hearers know that it is untrue. When we say either “yes” or “no,” people should be able to depend on our word, and there should be no need to add an oath to what we have said.

In reality, there is no such thing as a “white lie” — all lies are black or gray. Also, “stretching the truth” is an exaggeration, another form of lying. The Scriptures agree with this, for Eph. 4: 25 reads: “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.” Col. 3: 9 says, “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.”

The Scriptures say that eventually all those who have developed a lying disposition will have their end in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which represents the Second Death, eternal annihilation (Rev. 21: 8).

We should guard against some mistaken views of honesty, though. One view is that we are at liberty to speak anything that is true, simply because of its truthfulness. This is not just, especially if it would hurt someone needlessly. Similarly, it would not be wise to discuss truths too difficult for others to absorb. Silence or tactfulness at times needs to govern. Also, some feel bound to answer every question that someone may ask them, but again, there are no rules of honesty that require this. An exception to the above cases is that if by keeping back information, injury to others would result. The Golden Rule should govern all of our dealings with others at all times (Eccles. 3: 7; Matt. 7: 12).

Though honesty may occasionally work disadvantageously to us in our temporal affairs, in most cases the old adage “honesty is the best policy” will win out. And the advantage to our spiritual lives — in being pleasing to the Lord and growing in Christlikeness — is even far greater.

* * *

*“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable
in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer”*

— Psa. 19: 14 —

GOSSIP! HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO AVOID IT!

Newspaper headlines blaze it forth, magazines are devoted to it, TV chat shows tickle one’s ears with it, and chat rooms on the Internet pass on gossip at breathtaking speed. Many today are like the men of Athens who “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17: 21). We are almost force-fed with tittle-tattle we don’t want. How often do you say: “I wish I hadn’t heard that”?

Sometimes it seems that the art of good conversation has met its doom, and the intrusion of worldly babble into the lives of Christians is a threat against our very real desire for holy living. Old fashioned as this concept may sound in our brash and intemperate world, it is still the standard set before us. “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Pet. 3: 11).

The Conversational Approach

Ease in making “small talk” may be a useful social asset. It puts others at ease and can sometimes open the way for passing on some good news from God’s Word. Far from being critical killjoys, the Lord’s people have every reason to be cheerful and convey an impression of hope to any who will listen. But for us, indulging in gossip is not an option.

How can we make a distinction between wholesome conversation and gossip? The word “gossip” comes from Old English *godsibb* — godparent, and came to be associated with familiar friends, especially a woman’s female friends at the birth of a child, fond of light talk. Even today, gossip may be friendly, intimate communication of a harmless kind, which stimulates happy companionship.

But gossip is often malicious chatter or rumor about other people. In the home, in the work place, among neighbors, on social occasions, and even in church gatherings.

The Pitfalls

I say — Have you heard about . . . ? We are not by nature impervious to the dubious delights of gossip. It is so easy to be drawn in, perhaps without realizing it, feeling almost privileged to be the recipient of some item of scandal. But it is this old nature that we are trying to conquer! When we gave ourselves to God we resolved to live not according to worldly standards, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, learning what the perfect will of God means in our own lives (Rom. 12: 2).

The Lord’s people are not immune from temptation. We too may like to know everything — good and bad — about a favorite sports personality, actor or politician, and

may therefore find the gossip columns appealing. The worldly mind tells us we are naive if we do not keep up with “common knowledge.” Worse still is the inquisitive streak that may tempt us to pry into the private lives of our friends and personal acquaintances.

Gossip is dangerous for its victims

Once tainted by gossip, a person’s good name is forever questioned, and characters have been assassinated by scandal-mongers. This is not a new phenomenon. King David declared: “All that hate me whisper together against me . . . they devise my hurt” (Psa. 41: 7). Solomon says that “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Prov. 18: 21). In the New Testament, James speaks from experience of the power of the tongue: “A fire, a world of iniquity” (James 3: 6).

Corrupt communication harms those who spread it

What comes into our minds may defile us personally, so long as we harbor any unworthy thought. But if our tongues come into the matter a contagion is set into force which goes beyond our control.

As the Apostle Paul exhorts us: “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” (Eph. 4: 29).

Is there a tendency to relate incidents, make remarks which, while not necessarily sinful, tend to cause sprouts of evil to develop? The odd evil word may sow a seed that takes root and becomes a pernicious weed, hard to eradicate. “A whisperer separateth chief friends” (Prov. 16: 28).

The tongue may set on fire the course of nature and defile the whole body (James 3: 6). Even a facial expression may convey a suspicious thought, and the raised eyebrow can speak volumes. How vital it is for the Christian man and woman to guard the thoughts of the heart, that the voice and the features may reflect the inner purity that we strive for. As our Lord Jesus said: “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12: 34).

Must we, then, turn a deaf ear to evil-doing?

There are occasions when, to safeguard others, for the honor of the Christian congregation, and for the faithful defense of God’s Word, it is our duty to make known our disapproval of the wrong-doing of one in our midst.

There are three “Gates of Gold” to be passed before we bring such a report to general notice:

- Is it *true*?
- Is it *kind*?
- Is it *necessary*?

Failing these tests, let nothing be said.

* * *

*I say—
have you heard
about ... ?*

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At-a-glance

Germany: *Alteiningen*, October 17-19

Nigeria: *Danfodio Road Primary School, Aba*, Abia State, November 28-30

United Kingdom: *Sheffield*, October 25, 26

United States: *Illinois*, October 3-5; *Oklahoma*, November 7-9

Details

United States

Chicago, Illinois, October 3-5 (Friday-Sunday)

Site: Holiday Inn, 3405 Algonquin Road, Rolling Meadows, Illinois 60008; telephone: (847) 259-5000. *Rates and Reservations:* \$72.15 per room (\$65 + 11% tax), up to 4 per room. Reservations should be made direct with the hotel by *September 19*. Be sure to mention that you are attending the *LHMM Convention* to obtain the discount rate. A luncheon will be provided on Saturday, October 4.

Rolling Meadows is west of Chicago and 20 minutes from O'Hare International Airport; courtesy limousine is available. If you need limousine service from the airport, please give your arrival time and airline when making reservations. Make all other inquiries to the class secretary: Mrs. Audrey Hammer, 1702 Highland Ave., Arlington Heights, IL 60005.

Tulsa, Oklahoma, November 7-9 (Friday-Sunday)

Site: Sheraton Tulsa Hotel, 10918 E. 41st St., Tulsa Oklahoma 74146; telephone: (918) 627-5000. *Rates and Reservations:* \$70 (plus tax at 13%). Make enquiries to the class secretary: Mrs. Laverna Shaw, 1221 E. Forest Drive, Sand Springs, OK 74063.

SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS

Bro. Raymond Horn, a long-time servant of the Truth, died this past July. We are grateful for his life of service.

Carl Seebald

Chicago Convention, October 3-5

Ralph Herzig

Springfield, Massachusetts, December 7

Richard Blaine

Chicago Convention, October 3-5; Waycross, Georgia, December 14

Robert Herzig

New Haven, Connecticut, October 19

Jan Wojnar

Springfield, Massachusetts, October 5

John Detzler

Chicago Convention, October 3-5

Leon Snyder

Chicago Convention, October 3-5; Cincinnati, Ohio, October 12; Indianapolis, Indiana, October 14; West Frankfort, Illinois, October 15; Independence, Kansas, November 5; Mustang, Oklahoma, November 12; Tulsa, Oklahoma, November 16

Baron Duncan

Pittsfield, Massachusetts, November 16

Tom Cimbura

Chicago Convention, October 3-5; Chicago, October 25, 26

Don Lewis

Chicago Convention, October 3-5

James Shaw

Chicago Convention, October 3-5

Marek Piotrowski

Seattle, Washington, November 15, 16

Evangelists' Services

Robert Branconnier, New Haven, Connecticut, December 21

Jon Hanning, Beechgrove, Tennessee, November 15, 16

Dan Herzig, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, October 12; Auburn, Massachusetts, November 9

Walter Markiewicz, Riverside, California, October 25, 26

Harold Solomon, Boston, Massachusetts, October 26; Pittsfield, Massachusetts, December 14

Robert Steenrod, Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, October 19; Sand Ridge, West Virginia, December 13, 14

Edward Tomkiewicz, Muskegon, Michigan, November 1; Grand Rapids, Michigan, November 2

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