

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

That I might by all means save some. I Cor. ix. 22.

Christ is called the Saviour because he came into the world to save sinners. He leaves in the world those whom he saves that they may carry his grace to others that they also may be saved.

Paul was anxious to know how he could gain the people, by the gospel, to Christ. He became all things to all men that he might by all means save some. To Christians who anxiously enquire by what means they can gain loved ones to the Saviour, how their children, friends and neighbors can be induced to hear the gospel and accept of the salvation it offers through Christ, it is a blessed satisfaction to learn that the Spirit of God points out Christian conversation, as a means of grace, although from its very simplicity it is apt to be unnoticed and unused for that noble purpose.

It is impossible to over-estimate the power of the tongue, either for good or for evil. The Psalmist calls it his glory and resolves to consecrate it to the divine service. It is man's noblest member and the helm of his character.

He who can effectually bridle his tongue is prepared to govern his spirit and take high rank among conquering heroes. The tongue sets on fire the course of nature and, if it be itself fired with a love of God it will kindle and spread around it the heavenly flame. How wise therefore the arrangement which makes religious conversation a means of grace. Hence the apostle charges the Colossians "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." (iv. 6) And the Ephesians "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." (iv. 29). Here the Holy Spirit declares Christian conversation both of use to satisfy the saints and to convey grace where it is not. And Christians are warned to guard their speech as not to corrupt others, but use such conversation as shall minister grace to those who are lost. It is not the profane speech of men, excited by passion or crazed with liquor, the apostle refers to, but the inadvertant conversations of Christians that corrupt the hearer. Of these we may notice:

1st. Speaking against an absent brother or sister. When we candidly compare our own hearts and lives with God's word, we find much to deplore and much to improve. Others will see more in us than we do. To exaggerate or dwell on these faults is unkind and unjust to us and injurious to all concerned. How much better to kindly tell us where they may see a wrong. The same is true if we so treat others. To speak evil of our brother is to speak evil of the law and judge the law. (Jas. iv. 11).

2nd. The use of ungarded exclamations is corrupting. We turn away in disgust from the man who takes the name of God in vain, whether

in anger or in jest. But such expressions as, "By George," "By Golly," "By Jove," etc, may not at all alarm us. But if the first is "swearing," what are the others but swearing in milder form? It can have no other meaning, and that it has a meaning is evident or it would not be used. Christians are apt to use such language in unthinking imitations of others, but it is corrupting. Nauseous medium is diluted so that its recipient may have all its power deprived of its loathsomeness, and Satan is ever ready to dilute sin that it may be pleasant while it corrupts. Jesus has positively forbidden all such conversation. "Swear not at all; neither by Jerusalem, by heaven, or earth, or any other oath, but let your communications be yea, yea, nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. (Matt. iv. 34-37.)

3rd. Worldly conversation on the Lord's day is corrupting. Men of the world whose hearts are full of it talk as freely on secular matters on the Lord's day as on any other day. The law that prevents secular business on that day does not interfere with the conversation of any and so men talk of what is nearest their heart. The true Christian regards the day as the Lord's and to be spent in his service. He is thankful that the law protects him in remembering the Lord's death and resurrection on his rising day. It is a day of sweet communion with Jesus and his redeemed followers, and he loves only to speak of him who died and rose and lives for us. But if he forgets this and engages as eagerly in secular conversation, as the worldly man does, he is overcome and drawn from Christ. Young Christians are encouraged to do the same, think it innocent and enjoy it till they gradually lose their interest in the house and worship of God, and in many cases forsake the assembling of themselves to worship for more congenial company. Were this vain practice earnestly dis-couraged by Christians, and the young encouraged to work for Christ, their conversation would be more religious and useful to others. No Christian can walk more circumspectly than the hearers expect him to walk, and when his light so shines before men that they see his good works, they will glorify his Father in heaven. Let the Lord's day be devoted to his honor both in public and at home, and the blessed results will soon appear.

1st. The Lord himself makes conversation a means of grace between him and the world. Neither by physical force nor by psychological instinct does he govern the mind of man, but by words spoken to his understanding and his affections. He revealed himself to us by the Word, who was made flesh and dwelt among men. The Holy Spirit, as Christ's advocate, spoke to the apostles and led them into the truth, and they told men that truth for their salvation. Man is raised above the brute by his reason and his speech. The highest use of his reason is to know God, and the noblest use of his speech is to make God known. By these he influences and affects others. To speak of wealth kindles the love of money, an impure conversation will corrupt the mind, and to speak of God and Christ and heaven will draw men to the Saviour. As soon as the Holy Spirit, through the apostles, told men that the Son of Man was lifted up on the cross, men were drawn to him; and it is still by earnest speaking, both publicly and privately of the greatest fact, that sinners are now drawn to Christ.

2nd. Christian conversation ministers grace to awakened sinners struggling between hope and despair. How often has such a one sought the company of Christians, hoping to hear them

speak of Jesus and his salvation, and how bitter his disappointment when no such words are spoken! But when a true Christian does discover his anxiety and tells him of Jesus' love and power, and points him to his plan of salvation—so free and so plain—that he can come to him and be saved, how pure and lasting is his joy! The form of his friend is ever before his mind as an angel of mercy, and the very spot on which they met abides in the memory as the gate of heaven. Different minds need different treatment, and he who studies this, and has his speech always with grace seasoned with salt, is wise to win souls. Christians, though they may not know it, are often in the midst of those who are anxious to be saved, and words fitly spoken often prove to them "words of eternal life."

3rd. Religious conversation often ministers grace to the young, who, like the poor, are always with us. We can remember how in youth we often desired to be saved, and how surrounding circumstances would quench these feelings and draw the mind after vanity. Still there was a respect for religion, and those who spoke to us of Jesus and his love, with a manifest interest in our salvation, we could not but esteem as our best friends. We remember, when young, of entering a room in which Christians were waiting to begin a prayer-meeting. One lady, with an earnest, affectionate smile, remarked to the other, "Oh! if he were growing in grace as fast as he is in stature, would he not make an amiable Christian?" Many a time did this question arise with us. What, but the love of Jesus, could make that lady so much interested in the salvation of an apparently careless boy? It made an impression at the time that over three score years have not effaced. Yet how easy for a friend of Jesus thus to speak! How often have friends long parted met, when the younger tells that he received impressions in his boyhood from remarks made by the senior about Christ and salvation that never left him until Jesus and his Father came to abide with him. These words may have been forgotten by the speaker, but not by the hearer. He that ordereth his conversation aright shall see the salvation of God.

"Our children have minds that forever will last,
Which are filling with error or truth;
They're looking to us as the time's flying past,
We have something to say to the youth."

God will make the conversation of him who speaks as the oracles of God, speaks the truth in love, in humility and piety, the vehicle of his grace to old and young.

4th. Religious conversation is good to edify even in times of religious declension. In the days of Malachi, they that feared the Lord spake often one to another. When they could not gain the attention of those outside of their own circle, they sought out each other for religious converse and stirred up one another in zeal for God, and although their earnest speech was unheeded and unheard by others, God hearkened and heard them, and noted favorably their conversation in the book kept for the final separation of them that fear the Lord and them that fear him not. Such conversations are good for reviving saints here and good for the final judgment.

5th. The Son of God, in his last address to men, until he shall call the living and the dead to judgment, expresses his love for sinners and his intense anxiety to let all know it. He describes the unity and work of the Holy Spirit and the church, emphasizing in a striking manner the speech of both in conjunction with his own pressing invitation. "And the Spirit and the bride say come. And let him that heareth say come. And let him that is athirst come. AND WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." (Rev. xxii. 17).