



Heart Talks on Holiness

Chapter 23 – Evil-Speaking

'Speak evil of no man' (Titus iii. 2)

This is a command of God, and should be meditated upon and obeyed. A failure to do this leads to innumerable evils. Myriads of souls have backslidden; multitudes, almost persuaded, have turned back into darkness; many revivals have been quenched; and many houses of God have become spiritual sepulchers, all because of evil-speaking.

I. What is evil-speaking?

It is evil to tell lies about any man, or slander him in any way. 'Thou shalt not bear false witness' (Exod. xx. 16), God says. A man's reputation and character are sacred in the sight of God, and just as He forbids one man to rob another of his property, or take his life, so He forbids him to lie about another, or rob him of his good name. This is a holy commandment, and commends itself to every man's conscience.

It is evil to retail the faults and infirmities of others. This is a very common form of evil-speaking, but love will cover up such faults and infirmities. Just as it is beautiful in children to never speak about or appear to notice the club-feet or hunch-back or cross-eyes of a little playmate, so it is lovely and Christ-like in us to pass by faults and infirmities, and is evil not to do so.

It is evil to tell of any man's sins and actual wrongdoing where and when it will do no good.

II. Why should we speak evil of no man?

Because in speaking evil we wrong the man. It is a grievous wrong to speak evil of any man. You do not like any one to speak evil of you, and you consider it wrong for anyone to do so. But why? When you have answered you have given yourself a reason why you should not speak evil of any



man.

Because in speaking evil of any man we wrong those to whom we thus speak. It fills their minds with unholy, unjust prejudice. It excludes good thoughts, and it tempts them to think and speak evil.

Because we wrong our own souls by evil-speaking. It destroys all generous and kindly thoughts in us, and quenches love. It opens our hearts for the devil to enter, and he will make haste to come in. It prevents us from praying in faith and love for the person, which would be infinitely better than speaking evil of him, and which he especially needs, if he is in any way wrong.

Because in speaking evil of any man we grieve the Holy Spirit and break the commandment of God. The Holy Spirit leads us to love all men – even our enemies; leads us to love them – even as Jesus loved them, but evil-speaking destroys love. The Holy Spirit leads us to pray for all men, especially for those who are faulty and sinful, but evil-speaking quenches the spirit of prayer as water quenches fire.

Because in speaking evil of any man we wrong Jesus. He died for that man. He bought him with His Blood, and even though the man may be a sinner, a backslider, a hypocrite, and refuses to obey God and love and trust Jesus, yet Jesus loves him and spares him, and is wronged when he is evil spoken of. Jesus identifies Himself with the sinner to whom we give a cup of cold water in His name, and says the good we do is done unto Him, and so He will identify Himself with the sinner whom we wrong by evil-speaking, and in the Judgment will face us with the wrong as done to Himself unless we hastily and heartily repent.

III. What is the remedy? If he is bad or faulty in any way, consider the fact that he may have secret trials and temptations that you know nothing about. He may have business troubles and cares that lead him to wrong, or he may have family trials to which you are a stranger, or he may have had very faulty early training which has marred him for life. Not that these things will excuse him in the Day of Judgment, but they should lead you and me to pity rather than to abuse him by



speaking evil of him.

Think about your own evils. This will be far more profitable to you than to think about his, and will be infinitely more likely to make a better man or woman of you.

I often see in my own thoughts, When they lie nearest Thee,

That the worst men I ever knew Were better men than me.

One of the chief dangers to ourselves in evil-speaking is that we come to under-estimate everybody else, and to esteem ourselves more highly than we ought. We come to look at our own virtues and other people's faults, when we ought to look long at their virtues and at our own faults.

Yes, they have caught the way of God, To whom self lies displayed

In such clear vision as to cast O'er other's faults a shade.

If we want to be like Jesus, we must obey the command, 'In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves' (Phil. ii. 3), but this will be impossible where evil-speaking is indulged in.

Consider how Jesus loves him. If Jesus loved him enough to die for him; if He still loves him enough to spare him, in spite of all his faults and sins, and to save him the moment he repents, trusts and obeys, how dare we speak evil of him! And if he is a follower of Jesus and a child of God, even though he may be very imperfect, how dare we speak evil of him! Would we dare speak evil of an angel by the Throne of God and expect God to be deaf and allow our sin to go unpunished? Would we not rather expect His holiness to flame out in terrible wrath and consume us? And is any poor sinful soul that has looked to Jesus for salvation, any less dear to the heart of God than the shining angels around His Throne?



'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' (Matt. vii. 5). Get a clean heart, full of the Holy Ghost, full of love, and you cannot speak evil of any man. With a heart flaming with love, you will pray for the wrong-doer, and if you see evil in him, you will go to him in love and try to correct him, just as you would go to a blind man walking toward a precipice, and try to turn him from certain death.

I need Thy mercy for my sin; But more than this I need

Thy mercy's likeness, in my soul, For others' sin to bleed.

All bitterness is from ourselves, All sweetness is from Thee;

Sweet God, for evermore be Thou Fountain and fire in me.