The classes and worship services at the church of Christ meeting on Getwell continue to be inspiring to those who sincerely are looking for the truth (Jn. 8:31-32). Our teachers and preachers realize the importance of preparation and firm teaching from the Inspired Scriptures (II Pet. 1:20-21; II Tim. 4:1-4). James, the brother and faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jas. 1:1), speaks of the heavy responsibility of those who teach in the Lord’s church. He says, “My brethren, be not many masters (teachers), knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (Jas. 3:1). The Judge of all will not look with approval on those who are careless in teaching others (Matt. 18:6-7).

We are in the battle for our souls and lives with our enemy Satan! (I Pet. 5:8). Our children are walking on slippery slopes at times because of the lack of Bible principles in their lives. The decline of our nation’s morals, as well as those of some of our government officials, is at times very distressing! We must remember that “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people (Prov. 14:34). With abortion, drug and drinking addiction, lying, pleasure-mad-seekers, robbery, lust, selfishness, greed, sexual promiscuity, gambling, dancing, “and such like” (Gal. 5:19-21), the majority in the world are living a life calculated to take them to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). Shall we as individuals warn, teach, and exhort all to return to the Bible and to live our life so as to honor God?
In this writer’s 45 years of continually preaching the Gospel, no one in the churches of Christ has ever been heard to say that men are not saved by faith. We affirm that there is no other way to be saved but by faith (Jn. 8:24; Rom. 5:1). The faith that saves is the faith that believes and obeys God’s power unto salvation, the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). Paul says that our salvation is dependent on “faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us ... “ (Tit. 2:11-12). Paul further teaches us that we are not saved “by works of righteousness which we have done,” or which originated with us, “but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration (baptism, GC), and renewing of the Holy Spirit (new life in Christ, GC). He also states, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law (of Moses, GC); YE ARE FALLEN FROM GRACE” (Gal. 5:4). But while we would never say that one is saved without faith, at the same time we do affirm, and correctly so by the Bible, that no man can be saved by the works of the Law of Moses or “faith only” (Gal. 2:16; Jas. 2:24). If anyone could be saved by the works of the Law of Moses and not by obedient faith, it would have been Paul! (Gal. 1:13-14). Paul gave up what he had depended on in the past for his salvation, that is, the Law of Moses, so that he could enjoy obedience to Christ and the blessings that come by Him (II Cor. 1:20-21). Jesus came to establish a better plan of salvation. He said in the Sermon on the Mount, “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20). There had to be a better plan of righteousness or salvation than had been given in the Law of Moses or men could not enter the kingdom or church. The Law demanded perfection, but no man except Jesus kept it perfectly (Rom. 3:23). Paul said that he could not be saved by his own righteousness, nor that which is of the law, “but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:8-9). Christ came to abolish the Law of Moses, to remove is as a Law, so that He could establish His own new law (Matt. 5:17; Eph. 2:14-15; Rom. 8:1-2; Gal. 6:2).

Our salvation is a “gift” (Eph. 2:8), but without a receiver the gift is not completed. We must receive the gift by embracing the conditions of the Gospel, of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, by which God promises salvation (Acts 18:8). These are the “good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).
Words are important. We use words to form relationships, to make deals, and to convey our thoughts. Without either written or spoken words, our ability to communicate would be extremely limited. Our words are used to preserve history—reminding us where we have been. And we use words both to relay the present and discuss the future. Acknowledging the importance of our words, Jesus declared, “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they “will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37 KJV). Obviously, we must choose our words carefully. Words are not empty. Words matter.

Our words matter when we speak to friends and loved ones (Ephesians 4:32), and they matter when we address our enemies (Matthew 5:44). This is true whether our words are spoken or written. The words we whisper privately matter; the words we post openly on social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter also matter. Regardless of the situation, the Christian’s words should be “with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). Providing a needed reminder of this point, James encouraged, “So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:12).

It is entirely possible to use our words to disagree with others without being disagreeable. Open and straightforward discussions can and should occur without vitriol or sarcasm. Regrettably, this is not always the case. Such discussions, which are often viewed as confrontations, rarely end in a manner benefiting all the involved parties. Several factors contribute to this problem. Those who call the loudest for open discussion (and examination) sometimes cry the loudest when such a discussion brings rebuke (which is viewed as embarrassing rather than remedial). For these individuals, comments are welcomed only if complimentary. Opposition, however, is neither wanted nor handled properly. At the same time, those who feel the need to always correct others rarely examine their own motivation; neither do they take the time to listen to what others are actually saying. In either case, change is needed, for both sides are in error. Words spoken or written to further an agenda deserve honest examination and sometimes demand rebuke. Words spoken or written with the intent of establishing a reputation of intellectual superiority or unquestionable orthodoxy must also be challenged.

Ultimately, our words should be spoken or written only to bring glory to God, never to detract from such. If they do not glorify God (either explicitly or through compliance to His will), our words should either remain unspoken or be rephrased. When speaking with others, we would do well to heed James’ advice and be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19). When posting and commenting on social media platforms or blogs, we would do well to heed Peter’s advice and “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). Because words matter, we must choose them carefully.

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