

# SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt” (Col 4:6). *What a noble faculty is speech!* Man alone, of all the creatures of the earth, possesses it. Equally, with the power of reasoning, it is one of the things which set man high above the animals—for there is no comparison between the chatter of the ape, or the prattle of the parrot, and the articulated language of man. What an influential faculty is speech! What we say is capable of eternally affecting those who hear us, and therefore the Bible ranks our words with our works. How often has the oratory of a single man swayed a whole nation! We know not how deeply impressed, helped, or injured another may be by a single utterance. Speech is capable of high and wide service. Man is never more majestic than when he speaks with dignity, authority, and power. Speech is indeed a blessed gift, but it is also a responsible charge. God will yet hold us to strict account for the use we make of our tongues: “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Mat 12:36-37). What an unspeakably solemn consideration is that!

While capable of producing much good, *the tongue is also a power for much evil*. This valuable gift from the Creator is frequently perverted, yea, generally put to an evil use. What guilt is acquired, what havoc is wrought, by profanity, by filthy talk, by slander, by angry and cruel utterances, by talebearing! How each of us needs to cry daily unto God, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psa 141:3). What a fearful amount of gossip or idle talk the children of God are guilty of! In early English, the word *gossip* was “God sip,” meaning “related to God”; but, alas, gossip is now far more akin to the devil. How few there are who make conscience of engaging in our encouraging (by listening to it!) profitless conversation! Far better to be dumb and counted dull by our fellows than to prostitute this faculty by pouring out a stream of empty and useless prattle which is worse than profitless; for “in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise” (Pro 10:19). Even when an instructive and edifying subject of conversation *is* introduced, how quickly the average hearer seeks to turn it into a lower channel!

*A person’s speech is a sure index to his character*, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Mat 12:34). One does not have to pass condemnatory judgment upon his fellow when he listens to his vain and vulgar, or silly and senseless, chatter, for he plainly proclaims what he is by his own lips. “The mouth of fools poureth out foolishness” (Pro 15:2). Water will not rise above its own level, neither will a foul well yield that which is fit to drink. “They are of the world: *therefore* speak they of the world, and the world heareth them” (1Jo 4:5). Then how many whitewashed or respectable worldlings are there in the “churches,” for their everyday talk is about little or nothing else than some phase of this world. As a man’s

nature, so is his discourse. The portion of a natural man is a temporal one, and, as his interests are confined thereto, neither his aspirations, thoughts, or speech rise any higher. Where a man's treasure is, there is his heart also; and since the treasure of the unregenerate is limited to the things of time and sense, and his heart is absorbed with them, his speech is about them.

The power of speech is a blessed privilege, but *it entails a solemn responsibility*. How am I, how are you, using this talent? Since it is a divine gift, ought it not to be consecrated to God? Yet how few, even among His children, seem to realize it is both their duty and privilege to definitely dedicate their tongues unto the Lord. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom 12:1). That is, your body as a whole and in all its parts: "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom 6:13)—and one of the most important and influential of those members is the *tongue*! It is no longer your own, but "bought with a price" (1Co 6:20). Christians should be distinguished from non-Christians by their conversation—as in everything else. Their calling (Heb 3:1), their citizenship (Phi 3:20), their inheritance (1Pe 1:4)—each is a heavenly one; and ought not their speech to be so too? "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life" (Pro 15:4), ministering refreshment, wholesome and nourishing instruction unto others. Seek to make your conversation spiritually profitable unto your fellows.

*"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt"* (Col 4:6), especially when conversing with God's children. That is how we ought to employ our tongues, and how the Lord has bidden us to use them: our speech should be seasoned with true piety, savoring of heavenly things, elevating to the spiritual ear, such as will be "edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph 4:29). Surely the one whose affections are set upon things above will find it a delight to speak about them to a responsive soul. If Christ be "the chiefest among ten thousand" (Song 5:10) unto you, then must you not [therefore] extol Him? Perhaps you say, I would love to, but I do not possess the tongue of the learned. "Learning" is not necessary, nor are you called upon to address a learned congregation. But if the Word of Christ dwells in you richly (Col 3:16), when you meet one of His own, will you not spontaneously speak of His excellence? It is indeed useless to turn on the tap if a barrel be empty, but if your heart is really occupied with the One Who is "altogether lovely" (Song 5:16), then out of the abundance of your heart your mouth will speak.

Not that every Christian is competent to preach a whole sermon even to his most intimate friend, but he should, whenever he meets a member of the Household of Faith, *be able to say something which will help and cheer* him. It may be only the quoting of a single precept or promise, but often that means much to a fellow pilgrim who is discouraged and cast down by the difficulties of the way. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" (Pro 15:23): yes, just a word, if it be prompted by the Holy Spirit. "A word fitly spoken [out of a compassionate heart and with grace] is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Pro 25:11)—like luscious oranges with their glistening leaves for background. Only the day to come will reveal how many a traveler on life's highway went forth with renewed courage and strength after receiving an uplifting word from a humble Christian, as it will also reveal how many a golden opportunity we missed of uttering such a word! Of our Savior, it is recorded, "Grace is poured into thy lips"

(Psa 45:2); and even His enemies were obliged to admit, “Never man spake like this man” (Joh 7:46). Then seek to learn of Him and become more like Him.

If Christians be in a healthy state of soul, *they should never be at a loss for matter of spiritual conversation* when they meet one another. Then should each of them have occasion to say, “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth...O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together” (Psa 34:1, 3). Then will we be employing our tongues to good purpose. “I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works...I will declare thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness...They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power” (Psa 145:5-7, 11). What themes suited to the lips of the redeemed are these! They are indeed appropriate subjects for spiritual conversation which will edify one another. Instead of dwelling upon the evanescent trivialities which engage the thoughts of the unregenerate, exercise your mind and tongue upon those ineffable and eternal verities which the angels delight to contemplate. As you do so, the hearts of your hearers will burn within them, their souls will rejoice, and your Master will be magnified. Such spiritual conversation is registered on high (Mal 3:16), for *nothing concerning Christ can be lost or miss its reward.* ❧

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