

THE INSTRUCTOR



"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16

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DO YOU TALK TOO MUCH?

There is no character more despicable than one who uses lips to gossip. He is the one who has not learned to "guard his lips." Too much loose talk has been the ruin of many friendly relationships, and the person who gossips is not appreciated even by those who give him ear.

Gossip has traditionally, according to the humorists, been the fault of women. However, the female of the species is not more inclined to loose talk than the male. It can be found in both sexes in all walks of life. The frequency of it, however, is no excuse for its continuation. Someone has observed that there is at least one tattler in every community who delights in passing scandal on, gossip over the telephone, talking about the preacher and the church, until sinners hear it and exclaim, "What's the use."

One of the most damaging things in the work of a congregation is loose talk by disgruntled members. It seems that when some hear sermons that expose the sin in their lives they immediately run around thru the congregation seeking someone to agree that they are right in their error. Instead of going to the Word of God and studying it and applying it, they go about seeking sympathy from others. This is the reason why trouble arises in many congregations. People are unwilling to accept the truth and apply it to their own lives, and want to create a mob action to

harrass the one trying to lead them to a better understanding of the will of the Lord. This is wrong, no matter who is guilty, whether elder, deacon, or any other member. A wrong is not made right no matter how many people can be found to sympathize with the guilty.

I have known of some individuals who became offended because of a sermon who even went beyond the members of the church in seeking sympathy for their dissatisfaction. This certainly is no way to build respect for the church of the Lord in the eyes of the world. It gives the outsider the idea that the individual is unhappy with the work of the church, and will cause him to be repelled from any serious consideration of the truth of God.

The wise man said, "He that guardeth his mouth keepeth his life; But he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." (Prov. 13:2). One should guard his mouth when something has been told in confidence. Sometimes advice is given to preachers with the intention of helping them in their work of teaching people how to properly serve God. But this advice is treated as precious morsel of gossip to be passed around for every ear to hear. What has been told in confidence should remain confidential, and appreciated for what it was intended. On the other hand, some confidential matters would be better unsaid, for they make for suspicion of otherwise good and noble persons.

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Editorial— — —

THE BREVITY OF LIFE

Life is truly a gift from God! A long time ago, Elihu the son of Berachel declared: **"The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life."** (Job 33:4). In declaring the true God to the "men of Athens," the apostle Paul affirmed that God **"giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."** (Acts 17:25). Remember it was God who said: **"Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness . . ."** (Gen. 1:26). We learn from Genesis 1:27 that **"God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him . . ."** We are **"the offspring of God."** (Acts 17:29). He is truly **"the Father of spirits."** (Hebrews 12:9). It is **"In him we live, and move, and have our being."** (Acts 17:28).

As we study the Old Testament Scriptures we are impressed with **"the brevity of life."** By **"brevity,"** I mean the **"shortness of duration"** or **"the briefness of time"** as defined by WEBSTER. The duration or time of life on earth is, indeed, short. Please consider the following Old Testament passages and be impressed with the **"briefness of time"** of life on earth:

1. JOB 7:6 SAYS: **"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, . . ."** NOTE: Job spake these words.

2. JOB 7:7 SAYS: **"O remember that my life is wind . . ."** NOTE: Job spake these words.

3. JOB 8:9 SAYS: **"for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our says upon the earth are a shadow."** NOTE: Bildad the Shuhite spake these words.

4. JOB 9:25-26 SAYS: **"Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth away to the prey."** NOTE: The word **"post"** means a **"courier or runner, a messenger."** Job spake these words.

5. JOB 14:1-2 SAYS: **"Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."** NOTE: Job spake these words.

6. PSALMS 39:4-5 SAYS: **"Lord, make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreath; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity."**

7. PSALMS 90:4-6 SAYS: **"For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth."**

8. PSALMS 90:9-10 SAYS: **"For all our days are passed away in wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."**

9. PSALMS 90:12 SAYS: **"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."**

10. PSALMS 102:11 SAYS: **"My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withereth like grass."**

11. ISAIAH 40:6-8 SAYS: **". . . all flesh is grass, and the goodliness . . . surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever."**

Not only is **"the brevity of life"** emphasized

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THE BREVITY OF LIFE

in the Old Testament Scriptures but as we consider the following passages in the New Testament Scriptures we are likewise impressed with **"The shortness of duration of life"** on earth:

1. I PETER 1:24-25 SAYS: **"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever . . ."**

2. JAMES 4:13-15 SAYS: **"Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."**

At the longest, **life on earth is brief**. We have been placed on earth that we may **glorify God** and by so doing, **prepare for eternity**. (See 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 10:31; Romans 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10). Those who are not Christians should obey the first principles of the gospel of Christ that they may become Christians and thus be saved from their past sins. (See Romans 1:16; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38; Romans 10:9-10; Galatians 3:26-27; 2 Thess. 1:6-9). Those of us who are Christians should resolve in our hearts that we are going to be sober, watchful, stand fast in the faith, act like men, abound in the work of the Lord and follow after the things which make for peace and things where with we may edify one another.

The **length** of our lives on earth is not nearly as important as the **quality** of our lives. It matters not how **long** we live on earth, but **how** we live. Our attitude should be as that expressed by the Psalmist in Psalms 90:12 which says: **"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."** Only then will our lives have true meaning and thus serve a worthwhile purpose on earth.

(CRS)

SOLOMON SAID: **"Fools make a mock at sin."** —Proverbs 14:9.

The Conclusion of The Whole Matter

A long time ago a man of great experience and wisdom gave to man for all time to come words of wisdom and instructed him thusly: **"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."** (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

The wise man spoke from great experience as well as wisdom and his words are inspired. Solomon had tried every pleasure the age in which he lived could afford. Wisdom, wealth, wine, women, and song were all tried by him in his quest for happiness and contentment in this life, but all failed and left him weary and beaten—an old man who learned too late that all his life he had disregarded man's only hope for felicity and security in this life or the one to come. His wealth made him haughty; his wisdom puffed him up with pride and vanity; his wine lulled him into a stupor and killed all his finer senses, and women led him away into idolatry and sin. And now, from bitter experience he gives the exhortation of our text.

And why cannot a man learn from the wisdom of experience and age? Why is it that we must struggle all the days of our lives before we are made to realize that **"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth?"** Why must a man spend his strength and youth in seeking wholly after those things which are earthly and transitory? All of Solomon's wealth and wisdom could not save him from a doom common to all men—death and the grave and oblivion. With his death, came the end of his kingdom; Rehoboam ascended to the throne; the kingdom divided; ten tribes revolted and selected Jeroboam to be their king. God allowed the kingdom under Solomon to become the greatest the world had known; then in its destruction taught the world a lesson for all time to come—**THAT HUMAN WAYS AND HUMAN WISDOM CANNOT ENDURE!**

—Jesse M. Kelley in TIDINGS OF TRUTH

DAVID SAID: **"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth."**

—Psalms 145:18

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DO YOU TALK TOO MUCH?

In Leviticus 19:2 God commanded the children of Israel, "Ye shall be holy . . ." Among things that make for holiness is this statement, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people." (Verse 6). This same principle is found in the writings of James. "Speak not one against another, brethren." (Jas. 4:11). In the third chapter, James warns about the tongue as a "restless evil."

Vicious gossip, talebearing, and all manner of evil speaking shows the attitude of the heart of the person involved. Our Saviour said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things; and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. And I say unto you, That 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." (Matt. 12:34-37).

Someone has said that the gossiper should be hanged by his tongue and the person who gives ear to the gossiper should be hanged by his ears. From our Lord's words we can certainly see that the idle word and evil tongue will not go unpunished.

—James E. Cooper in ANCIENT ORDER

THE HILL-SUTTON DEBATE

This year has ended and we are still waiting for the "elders" of the West Hobbs Street church in Athens and **Albert Hill** to re-schedule the HILL-SUTTON DEBATE. They promised it in a short time from the last of April, 1974. That's right. It has been about **twenty months** and we are still waiting. Why are they so reluctant to "**keep their promise?**" It looks like their courage has failed, doesn't it? It looks like they are no longer concerned about defending in public debate their teaching and practice, doesn't it?

We are challenging the "elders" to get someone to take **Albert Hill's** place if he is the reason they haven't re-scheduled the debate! We challenge **Albert Hill** to get someone else besides West Hobbs Street to endorse him if West Hobbs Street is no longer willing to endorse him! What is the problem? Who has been dragging their feet? The "elders" or the "preacher?" Or have BOTH been doing so? Does anyone know what is the trouble? If so, we would certainly appreciate hearing from you. YES, WE ARE STILL WAITING!

S e n t e n c e S e r m o n s

A man without principle never draws much interest.

The Christian's walk and talk must go together.

It is easier to float a rumor than to sink one.

The brook would lose its song if you took the rocks away.

A hypocrite is like a pin—points one way and heads the other.

CHURCH OF CHRIST

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