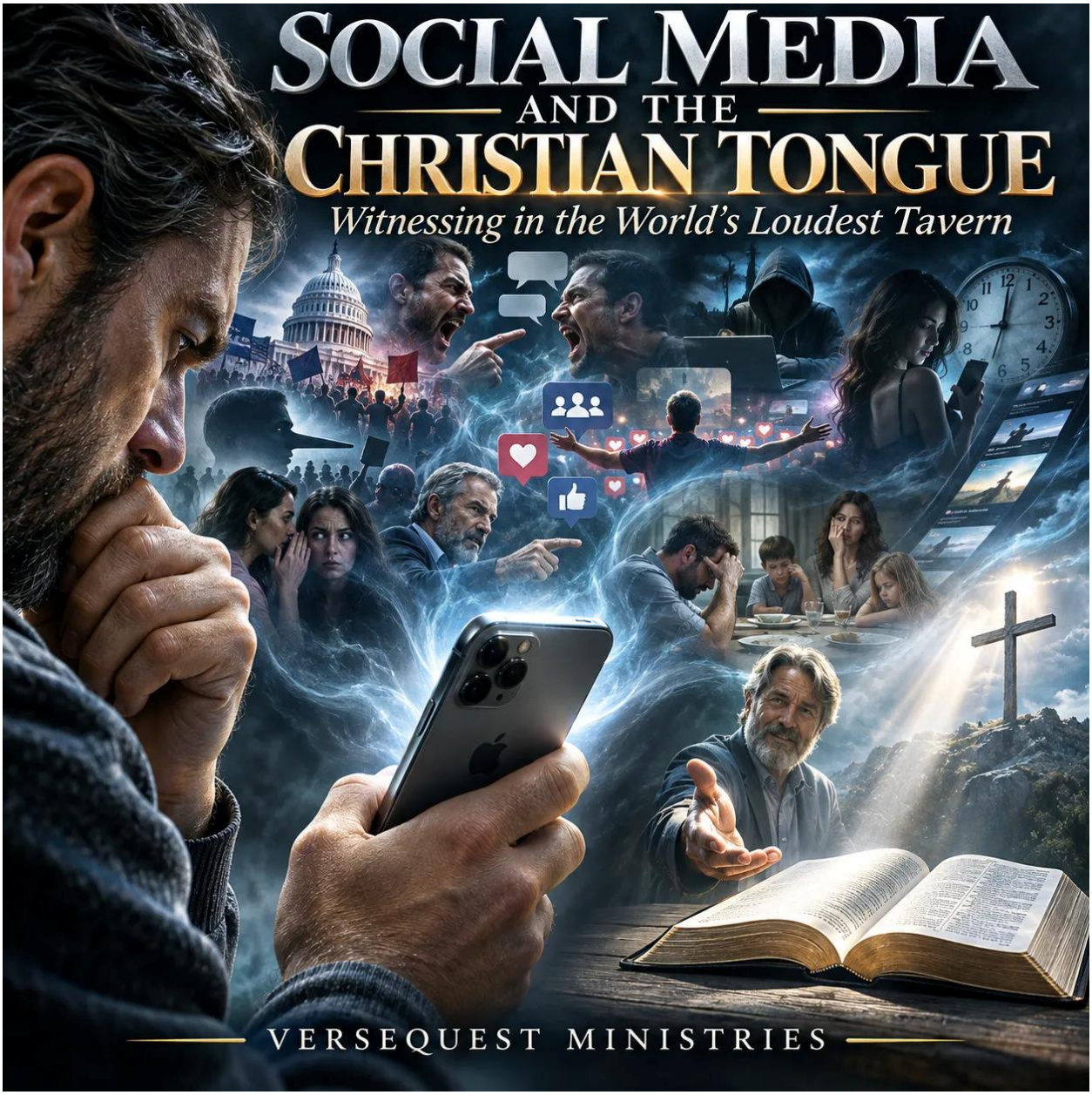
Social Media and the Christian Tongue

Witnessing in the World's Loudest Tavern

Series 1-10

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries




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Social Media and the Christian Tongue
Witnessing in the World's Loudest Tavern

Written by Pastor Paul Tackett
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VerseQuest Ministries

Teaching the Word of God through the King James Bible.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” — 2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

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Introduction — Social Media and the Christian Tongue

Witnessing in the World's Loudest Tavern

There was a time when a fool had to leave his house, find a street corner, and gather a crowd before he could advertise his ignorance. Today, all he needs is a smartphone, an internet connection, and enough confidence to mistake his opinion for wisdom. Social media has become the world's loudest tavern, where everybody has something to say, nobody wants to listen, and the loudest fellow in the room is frequently the one who knows the least. The gossip has a microphone, the slanderer has an audience, the false teacher has a platform, and the fellow who couldn't find the book of Habakkuk with both hands and a table of contents is suddenly correcting everybody's theology. But here is what troubles me far more than the foolishness of the unbelieving world: **Christians are increasingly behaving like the very people they are supposed to be reaching with the gospel.** We have men who can defend the inspiration of Scripture in one post and violate its plain commandments in the next. They can preach against wickedness while indulging their own flesh, condemn dishonesty while circulating unverified accusations, and announce their love for Jesus Christ while treating everybody who disagrees with them like an enemy to be destroyed. Something is terribly wrong when the difference between the Christian and the world disappears the moment somebody opens the comment section.

James 3:5 declares, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" The Holy Ghost settled the matter long before anybody invented social media. A little tongue can produce an enormous fire, and putting that tongue behind a keyboard does not make it any less dangerous. Proverbs 18:21 tells us that "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Think about that before you publish another accusation, join another argument, or share another scandal because somebody handed you a convenient screenshot. A man's reputation may have taken thirty years to establish, and you can help destroy it in thirty seconds without ever investigating whether the accusation is true. A Christian may spend years developing a testimony for Jesus Christ and compromise that testimony in one afternoon because his pride would not permit another person to have the final word. **The internet did not create the sinful heart, but it certainly gave the sinful heart a remarkable opportunity to advertise itself.** And the Lord never issued a special exemption from biblical conduct for Christians operating behind electronic screens.

Now understand something from the beginning of this series. I am not advocating a weak, apologetic, watered-down Christianity that refuses to identify false doctrine, condemn wickedness, or confront religious deception. God forbid! Jude 3 commands us to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Second Timothy 4:2

commands, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." We are supposed to stand for the truth. We are supposed to expose another gospel, defend the deity of Jesus Christ, proclaim salvation by grace through faith, and refuse to compromise the Word of God merely because somebody becomes offended. But there is a tremendous difference between having a backbone and having an uncontrolled mouth. There is a difference between biblical rebuke and personal revenge, between exposing heresy and enjoying an argument, between correcting a brother and humiliating him before an audience. Some Christians have confused being obnoxious with being courageous. They believe that if enough people become angry with them, they must be doing something spiritual. Well, a skunk can offend an entire neighborhood without ever preaching a sermon. **Offending people is not evidence that you are standing for God. Sometimes it is evidence that you have forgotten how to behave.**

Throughout these ten essays, we are going to put the Christian tongue under the examination of the King James Bible, and I do not intend to excuse the sins that have become respectable simply because they occur online. We are going to deal with anger, railing, profanity, gossip, slander, false accusations, and the destruction of reputations. We are going to examine when Scripture commands us to answer a fool and when it commands us to leave him alone. We will distinguish private offenses from public false teaching, genuine biblical correction from unnecessary exposure, and sincere questions from the endless circular arguments of people who never intended to learn anything. We will examine the Christian who becomes so consumed with politics that he talks more about earthly rulers than the coming King of kings. We will confront jealousy, comparison, the thirst for applause, and the temptation to measure spiritual usefulness by the number of strangers following an account. We will also address the private life behind the public testimony, including pornography, lustful curiosity, wasted hours, and the tragic possibility of reaching thousands of strangers while neglecting the family sitting in the next room. **If we are going to preach about the sins of the world, we had better be willing to let the Bible expose the sins we have permitted to become comfortable in our own lives.**

And I want to make another distinction that has become increasingly important. Not everybody who questions what we teach is an enemy. Some people have never heard the gospel explained correctly. Others have spent years under false teaching and genuinely struggle to understand what the Scriptures say. Some are young Christians trying to learn how to rightly divide the Word. Those people deserve patience, instruction, and clear answers from the Bible. Second Timothy 2:24 declares, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." But Scripture also tells us to avoid foolish questions, reject persistent heresy after proper admonition, and refuse endless contentions that accomplish nothing. I have no interest in turning Christian

ministry into an around-the-clock debate club for people who are determined to reject every answer before they have even read it. When a sincere question comes, answer it. When false doctrine threatens the understanding of others, expose it with Scripture. When somebody repeatedly ignores the truth and returns only to provoke another argument, there comes a time to close the conversation and redeem the time. **Blocking a persistent troublemaker does not mean you have surrendered the Bible. Sometimes it means you have finally decided to obey the part of the Bible that tells you not to waste your life arguing with fools.**

There is also a danger that receives far too little attention, and that is the gradual replacement of Christian service with the pursuit of personal recognition. Galatians 1:10 asks, "do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Social media makes it terribly easy to become preoccupied with numbers, followers, reactions, impressions, and comparisons. A ministry can begin with the sincere desire to distribute the gospel and eventually become more concerned about maintaining popularity than remaining faithful to Scripture. I believe we ought to use every legitimate opportunity to reach people with the truth. If a biblical message reaches thousands, praise God for the opportunity. If it reaches one person who desperately needed that particular passage, the labor was not wasted. But the minute we allow public approval to determine what we preach, whom we correct, or which doctrines we are willing to defend, we have exchanged the authority of Scripture for the approval of an audience. **The Lord did not call us to collect admirers. He called us to be faithful witnesses. A million people applauding a compromised message cannot make it worth more than one faithful declaration of God's truth.**

The purpose of this series is not to convince Christians to abandon social media. Quite the opposite. I believe the opportunity to communicate the gospel through modern technology is extraordinary. We can publish the Scriptures, answer genuine questions, encourage discouraged believers, expose false teaching, and explain the finished work of Jesus Christ to people we may never meet in this life. Romans 1:16 declares, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." That is the message worth carrying into the world's loudest tavern. Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Salvation is by grace through faith, not through religious works, ceremonies, or human merit. That truth is infinitely more important than winning another argument, humiliating another opponent, or receiving another thousand reactions. So throughout these ten studies, we are going to ask some uncomfortable questions, examine our conduct against the Scriptures, and establish what faithful Christian communication ought to look like. Because when the arguments have ended, the applause has faded, the

timelines have moved on, and nobody remembers who had the largest audience, there will still be a Lord Jesus Christ before whom every believer must give account. **The world has enough loud mouths. What it desperately needs is Christians who know the Book, believe the Book, obey the Book, and possess enough spiritual wisdom to open their mouths when truth requires it and close them when foolishness demands another argument. Let the world remember less of our personalities and more of our Saviour.**

1 of 10 — Social Media and the Christian Tongue — Every Fool Has a Pulpit, but Not Every Christian Has Wisdom

Key Passage: James 3:1–12 (KJV)

Introduction

“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” (James 3:5). There is something almost comical about watching modern civilization congratulate itself for inventing social media when God had already diagnosed its greatest problem nearly two thousand years before the first electronic screen was manufactured. James did not need a smartphone, an internet connection, or a collection of angry strangers to understand what happens when an uncontrolled tongue is given an audience. He knew that a small member of the human body could produce destruction entirely out of proportion to its size. A forest does not require a locomotive full of burning coal to become an inferno. One spark will do the job. Neither does a man's reputation, a church's testimony, or a family's peace require an elaborate conspiracy to be destroyed. Sometimes all it takes is one careless sentence from somebody who should have known better.

Social media has become the world's loudest tavern, except the tavern never closes, the arguments never end, and nobody has to demonstrate enough intelligence to operate the front door. Every fool has been handed a pulpit, every loudmouth can assemble a congregation, and every person possessing two thumbs and a questionable opinion can announce himself as an authority on matters he discovered approximately eleven minutes earlier. The tragedy is not that unbelievers behave like unbelievers. Scripture settled that question long ago. The tragedy is that Christians frequently enter this digital circus and begin performing the same tricks. They exchange insults, repeat accusations, celebrate another person's humiliation, and confuse a growing audience with a growing ministry. They will defend the inspiration of Scripture in one post and violate its plain commandments in the next. They can quote a passage condemning the flesh while

allowing the flesh to dictate every word they type. The internet did not invent human depravity. It simply furnished depravity with a microphone and removed the inconvenience of looking its victims in the eye.

Yet there is another side to this matter, and it must not be neglected. The same instrument that carries blasphemy can carry the gospel. The same platform used to spread lies can distribute sound doctrine. A Christian sitting at a kitchen table may reach someone thousands of miles away who has never heard a clear presentation of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. That opportunity is real, and believers should not surrender it merely because the neighborhood is full of fools. But opportunity does not excuse disobedience, and reaching an audience is not the same thing as reaching a soul. Proverbs 18:21 declares, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” The Christian must therefore face a question far more serious than how many people read his latest publication. When his words enter the world, do they carry the authority of God's truth, or merely the heat of his own temper? A man can possess a thousand followers and still be following his flesh.

1. The Tongue Was Dangerous Before Somebody Gave It a Keyboard

James begins his third chapter with a warning that deserves particular attention in an age when anybody can appoint himself a teacher. “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1). In James 1:1, the writer identifies his immediate audience as “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” That historical address must be respected rather than carelessly erased. Nevertheless, the warning concerning speech and the responsibility of those who instruct others carries an unmistakable practical application for Christians today. James immediately connects teaching responsibility with the difficulty of controlling the tongue. The man who assumes the position of instructor must understand that words influence other people, and influence carries responsibility. An internet account does not confer spiritual authority any more than buying a pulpit qualifies a man to pastor a church. There are people who have never carefully studied a single biblical chapter but are ready to correct everyone else's doctrine before breakfast. Confidence is cheap. Biblical understanding requires considerably more than a functioning keyboard.

James continues by comparing the tongue to a bit placed in a horse's mouth and a helm governing a great ship. “Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body” (James 3:3). The following verse describes mighty ships driven by fierce winds yet directed by a comparatively small helm. The comparison is deliberate. The tongue may appear insignificant when measured against the rest of the body, but its influence is enormous. A man's conversation reveals what governs his

conduct, where his attention is directed, and whether his judgment is under control. The same principle applies when speech is transferred into writing. A person may possess an impressive education, a substantial ministry, and years of Christian experience, yet a few reckless sentences can steer his public testimony directly onto the rocks. The remarkable thing about modern communication is that someone can wreck his reputation without leaving his recliner. The ship may be enormous, but the little helm still determines where it goes.

Then James moves from the shipyard to the forest fire. “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity” (James 3:6). He describes its destructive influence and declares that it is “an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8). These are not the expressions of a man who believes careless communication is a harmless personality trait. James presents speech as a matter requiring serious spiritual attention. He then exposes the contradiction of blessing God while cursing men made after His similitude. “My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (James 3:10). A Christian cannot reasonably praise the Lord in one publication and indulge in malicious personal abuse in the next without confronting the inconsistency. The fountain illustration that follows asks whether sweet and bitter water can proceed from the same source. The problem is deeper than vocabulary. It concerns what is being permitted to flow from the heart. A religious label attached to a poisonous stream does not make the water suitable for drinking.

2. A Word Does Not Become Innocent Because It Was Typed Instead of Spoken

The Lord Jesus Christ declared, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). Before applying that warning, its setting must be understood. In Matthew 12, the Pharisees were confronting the Lord Jesus Christ and attributing His miraculous works to Beelzebub. Christ exposed the wickedness of their accusation and addressed the spiritual condition revealed by their speech. He declared in Matthew 12:34, “for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” The immediate controversy concerned far more than ordinary conversational discourtesy. It involved the deliberate rejection and malicious misrepresentation of the works of Christ. Nevertheless, the Lord's teaching establishes a fundamental truth about human speech: words are not morally detached from the hearts that produce them. The man who imagines his conversation has no significance before God has misunderstood the authority of the One who will judge him.

The expression “every idle word” ought to disturb the comfortable assumption that only carefully prepared speeches carry responsibility. An idle word may be thoughtless, unprofitable, careless, or lacking proper purpose. Christ does not present human conversation as an area exempt from divine examination. This should make the Christian

reconsider the popular excuse that a statement was merely an internet comment. A comment is still communication. An insult remains an insult when displayed in glowing letters. A false accusation does not become truthful because it receives a thousand approving reactions. A deliberately misleading statement is not purified by attaching a smiling symbol to its conclusion. Modern society has managed to invent countless methods of transmitting words without discovering a single method of removing the speaker's moral responsibility for them. A keyboard may conceal a man's facial expression, but it cannot conceal the contents of his heart from God. Heaven does not recognize a special exemption for things said online.

This warning must also be handled without corrupting the gospel. The believer living in the present Church Age is saved by grace through faith, not by maintaining a flawless record of conversational behavior. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares that salvation is “not of works, lest any man should boast,” and Ephesians 1:13 identifies believers as sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The careless use of Matthew 12 to suggest that a genuinely saved person loses eternal life every time he speaks foolishly would contradict clear Church Age doctrine. Nevertheless, salvation by grace does not mean a Christian's conduct is beyond examination. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” The distinction between salvation and accountability is essential. The Christian's eternal acceptance rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, while his service and conduct remain matters of serious responsibility. Grace is not permission to behave like a fool. It is the very reason a redeemed man ought to know better.

3. Death and Life Are in the Power of the Tongue, Not in the Number of Followers

Proverbs 18:21 declares, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” Notice what the verse actually says. It does not teach that human beings possess some independent creative power to manufacture reality by speaking their desires into existence. That religious foolishness turns a proverb about the consequences of speech into a magical formula for obtaining prosperity. The context concerns the influence and fruit of a man's words. Proverbs 18:20 speaks of a man's mouth and the increase of his lips. The following verse establishes that speech can carry consequences touching the most serious matters of human existence. Words can condemn the innocent, mislead the ignorant, strengthen the discouraged, or communicate the truth by which a sinner hears of salvation. The tongue is not God, and words are not little gods running around performing miracles. Nevertheless, what a man says can produce consequences he may spend the remainder of his life regretting.

Consider how much destruction can be accomplished without ever raising a hand against another person. A false accusation can cost somebody employment. A malicious rumor

can damage a marriage. An irresponsible theological claim can mislead a young Christian who does not yet understand how to examine Scripture. A public accusation against a pastor, missionary, or ordinary believer may travel farther than any subsequent correction. Proverbs 18:8 warns that “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.” There is nothing harmless about distributing damaging information merely because the distribution requires no physical effort. A man who would never walk into another person's home and throw dirt across the furniture may have no hesitation about throwing dirt across his reputation before thousands of spectators. Apparently, some people believe slander becomes respectable when it is performed from a comfortable chair. Scripture gives no encouragement to that remarkable theory.

But the tongue also has a glorious capacity for good when it faithfully communicates God's truth. Romans 10:17 declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Paul connects the proclamation of the gospel with the necessity of people hearing the message of Christ. The saving power is not found in the speaker's personality, the attractiveness of his platform, or the emotional force of his presentation. Romans 1:16 identifies the gospel of Christ as “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” When a Christian uses modern communication to explain that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, he is employing his words for a purpose immeasurably greater than personal recognition. First Corinthians 15:1–4 supplies the foundation of that message. A thousand clever arguments cannot redeem one soul, but the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring a believing sinner into eternal life.

4. The Christian Tongue Is Supposed to Belong to a New Man

Ephesians 4 does not offer the Christian a collection of optional suggestions for improving his public image. It presents the practical responsibilities belonging to those who have learned Christ. Paul contrasts the former conversation of the Gentiles with the life appropriate to believers who have been taught the truth in Jesus. Ephesians 4:22 commands the putting off of the former conversation of the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts. Verse 24 speaks of putting on the new man, “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” The passage does not teach that good behavior purchases salvation. Rather, it instructs saved people concerning the conduct that ought to accompany their new position in Christ. The distinction is foundational. A Christian does not become a new creature by learning to speak politely. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, he is a new creature in Christ, and that spiritual reality supplies the proper basis for his changed conduct.

Paul then provides an unmistakable command: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29). The expression “no corrupt communication” leaves remarkably little room for the argument that personal abuse becomes acceptable whenever somebody disagrees with our theology. Corrupt speech may take the form of profanity, dishonesty, degrading remarks, malicious exaggeration, or language designed to injure rather than instruct. Yet the command to edify must not be twisted into a requirement that every Christian statement sound pleasant. The same apostle instructed Timothy to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). Truthful rebuke can edify when it exposes dangerous error and directs the hearer toward obedience. The difference lies not in whether the words are comfortable, but whether they are truthful, necessary, and governed by biblical purpose. A surgeon's knife may hurt, but that does not make it a butcher's weapon.

The surrounding verses of Ephesians 4 remove any remaining excuse for indulging the flesh while claiming to serve God. Verse 25 commands truthfulness. Verse 26 declares, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” Verse 31 requires bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice to be put away. Verse 32 then directs believers toward kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. These commands belong together. Righteous anger does exist, but righteous anger is not an unlimited permit to engage in unrighteous conduct. A person may be genuinely correct about the wickedness of an issue while becoming personally wicked in his response to it. The Christian who can identify every doctrinal error in his opponent's position but cannot recognize bitterness in his own communication has developed a peculiar kind of spiritual blindness. He can apparently examine everybody else's heart through a computer screen while remaining unable to locate his own. Biblical separation from evil does not require personal surrender to the very flesh Scripture condemns.

5. Biblical Boldness Is Not the Same Thing as an Uncontrolled Temper

Second Timothy 2:24–25 provides an extraordinary description of the conduct expected from those who serve the Lord: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.” Notice that Paul does not command the servant of the Lord to abandon correction. He explicitly includes the instruction of opponents. The requirement is that such instruction be conducted with patience, teaching ability, and meekness rather than a fleshly appetite for conflict. Meekness is not doctrinal surrender. Gentleness is not permission for false teaching to spread unchallenged. A man may speak with tremendous firmness while remaining entirely free from personal malice. The biblical objective is to bring truth before

the hearer, not to demonstrate how thoroughly the speaker can humiliate an adversary. The fellow who thinks he has won a theological dispute because he produced the nastiest insult has confused Christian ministry with a tavern brawl.

There are occasions when strong language is entirely appropriate. The Lord Jesus Christ openly condemned religious hypocrisy in Matthew 23, and Paul issued severe warnings against those who corrupted the gospel in Galatians 1:6–9. Jude 3 commands believers to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." These passages must not be erased by an artificial standard that makes every biblical correction sound like an apology. Nevertheless, the presence of strong rebukes in Scripture does not authorize a Christian to treat every personal irritation as though he were confronting the Pharisees or exposing another gospel. Christ's authority is perfect, and the inspired words of Scripture are without error. Our personal reactions possess neither distinction. The danger arises when a Christian borrows the intensity of a biblical rebuke without establishing the biblical grounds for using it. A thunderous voice does not transform a private grievance into a divine commission. Noise is not authority, and indignation is not inspiration.

Proverbs 26:4 commands, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him." The following verse directs the answering of a fool lest he become wise in his own conceit. There is no contradiction when the different purposes and consequences are understood. Some foolishness must be exposed; other foolishness must not be imitated. Sometimes a clear biblical answer protects sincere readers from deception. At other times, continued participation merely allows a dishonest provocateur to dictate the Christian's schedule. Ephesians 5:16 commands believers to be "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." A Christian who spends six hours trading insults with an anonymous stranger has not necessarily accomplished six hours of ministry. He may simply have donated an entire afternoon to somebody who entered the conversation determined to waste it. There is a time to answer, a time to correct, and a time to leave the argument standing beside the Scripture that already settled it.

6. Are You Defending Jesus Christ, or Are You Defending Your Own Importance?

John the Baptist made one of the most remarkable statements concerning personal prominence in the entire New Testament: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). In its proper setting, John was addressing the increasing public attention being given to Jesus Christ and the relationship of his own ministry to the arrival of the Messiah. John's appointed work was to bear witness to Christ, not to compete with Him for attention. This is not a command transferring John's unique prophetic office to every Christian living today, but the spiritual principle of directing attention toward Christ is entirely applicable. The difficulty with social media is that it continually invites a person to measure his importance

through public recognition. A Christian may begin with a sincere desire to teach Scripture and gradually become preoccupied with whether strangers admire the man presenting it. When recognition becomes the controlling ambition, even doctrinally sound material can be employed to feed an unsound appetite for personal glory.

Paul confronted the question of human approval in Galatians 1:10: “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” The immediate setting concerns Paul's defense of the gospel against those corrupting it, not an excuse for being unnecessarily obnoxious. His concern was faithfulness to divine revelation rather than surrendering truth to satisfy human expectations. That distinction remains essential. A Christian must not soften the gospel simply because the audience dislikes the message. He must not replace biblical doctrine with popular religious sentiment to attract approval. But neither should he deliberately provoke people merely because controversy increases engagement. One man changes his doctrine to obtain applause; another manufactures unnecessary arguments for the same reason. Both have allowed the audience to become their master. The first sells the truth for popularity, while the second sells his testimony for attention. Different methods, same miserable bargain.

Here is a useful examination for every Christian with a public platform: What happens when somebody corrects a genuine mistake? Does the truth matter more than personal embarrassment? Can the Christian acknowledge an error, clarify a misunderstanding, or withdraw a statement without behaving as though his entire ministry has been threatened? Proverbs 9:8–9 distinguishes the wise man who receives rebuke from the scorner who despises it. A person genuinely governed by Scripture should be thankful when an accurate correction prevents him from continuing in error. Unfortunately, some defenders of biblical authority seem to believe that admitting a mistake would somehow diminish the authority of the Bible. It would not. It would merely demonstrate that the Bible is infallible and the person discussing it is not. Defending Christ requires faithfulness to His truth. Defending the ego requires protecting personal importance at almost any cost. One produces humility before God; the other produces an endless supply of arguments that accomplish nothing.

7. The Timeline Will Forget Your Words, but the Judgment Seat Will Not

The modern timeline is a remarkable monument to human forgetfulness. Yesterday's outrage becomes today's forgotten controversy, and tomorrow another argument will arrive to replace them both. People publish statements with extraordinary confidence, only to discover that the audience has moved on before the ink would have dried on an ordinary letter. Yet the temporary attention given to a statement does not determine its lasting

consequences. A careless accusation may remain in another person's memory long after the original publication disappears. A faithful presentation of Scripture may continue influencing readers whom the writer never meets. Ecclesiastes 12:14 declares, “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Although Ecclesiastes belongs to its own Old Testament setting, its warning concerning divine examination presents a sobering truth. The disappearance of public attention is not the disappearance of responsibility. A deleted comment may be forgotten by the audience, but deleting something from a screen does not erase its consequences before God.

For the Christian, the Judgment Seat of Christ supplies an especially serious reason to examine the use of his words. First Corinthians 3:11 establishes the foundation: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” The following verses describe the testing of a believer's work, including the difference between materials that endure and materials that are consumed. Verse 15 declares that a man's work may be burned while “he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” This is not the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20, where the dead are judged and the book of life is brought into view. Neither is it a system of earning entrance into heaven through successful religious activity. It concerns the examination of works performed upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. The distinction should comfort the believer concerning the security of his salvation while awakening him concerning the seriousness of his service. A man may accumulate enormous earthly attention and discover that much of what impressed the audience was worthless before Christ.

Second Corinthians 5:10 adds that the believer will receive according to the things done in the body, “whether it be good or bad.” The Christian ought to consider that reality before treating public communication as a game in which victory is measured by reactions, insults, or the number of people defeated in argument. The Lord is not impressed by artificial popularity, and He does not require an internet audience to determine whether a person's service was faithful. First Corinthians 4:5 speaks of the Lord bringing to light hidden things and making manifest the counsels of the hearts. That examination reaches beyond appearances into motives. A public correction may have been motivated by genuine concern for sound doctrine, or it may have been driven by resentment and vanity. A quiet word of encouragement may receive almost no public notice while accomplishing lasting spiritual good. The crowd measures what it can see. God sees what the crowd cannot measure. A Christian would be wise to remember whose judgment ultimately matters.

Conclusion

Social media is neither a substitute for the local church nor an automatic enemy of Christian ministry. It is an instrument of communication, and its usefulness depends greatly upon what is communicated and how it is employed. The apostle Paul used the means available in his generation to preach, teach, write, correct, and encourage believers across considerable distances. His epistles demonstrate that written communication can carry profound doctrinal authority when inspired by God, and ordinary Christians today may likewise use writing to communicate the inspired Scriptures faithfully. But no platform, however large, possesses the authority of Scripture itself. A Christian may reach thousands through the internet while still owing practical responsibilities to his family, his local assembly, and the ordinary people God has placed around him. The person who is endlessly available for arguments with strangers but unavailable to those under his own roof has confused visibility with faithfulness. A ministry should never become so consumed with reaching the world that it neglects the people standing in the doorway.

The proper response is not to abandon biblical boldness, retreat into frightened silence, or pretend that every disagreement can be settled with flattering language. Scripture commands believers to speak the truth, expose error, contend for the faith, and preach the gospel without shame. But those responsibilities must be carried out under the authority of the same Book that condemns corrupt communication, foolish disputes, bitterness, lying, and personal malice. First Peter 3:15 commands believers to be ready to give an answer concerning their hope “with meekness and fear.” That instruction does not require doctrinal uncertainty; it requires proper reverence and conduct. A Christian can reject false teaching without becoming dishonest, correct wickedness without becoming malicious, and refuse an argument without surrendering the truth. The world should never be permitted to determine the Christian's standards of conversation. If the world becomes more vulgar, the Christian has no reason to follow. If the world becomes more hostile, the Christian has no reason to abandon his commission. His orders have already been written.

The final question is not whether a Christian can gather an audience, silence an opponent, or produce a statement clever enough to be repeated by thousands. The final question is whether his communication faithfully represents the Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 4:6 declares, “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Salt does not exist merely to make everything sweet, and grace does not require the abandonment of truth. The Christian's words ought to possess substance, conviction, restraint, and the unmistakable evidence that their author answers to a higher authority than public opinion. There is no shortage of noise in the world's loudest tavern. It already has enough angry patrons, self-appointed experts, and performers demanding attention. What it desperately needs is somebody willing to stand upon the unchanging Word of God and faithfully point sinners to Jesus Christ. **A fool uses**

his tongue to prove that he has something to say. A wise Christian uses his tongue because God has given him something worth saying.

2 of 10 — Social Media and the Christian Tongue — The Fire Behind the Keyboard: Anger, Insults, and the Unbridled Tongue

Key Passage: James 1:19–20 (KJV)

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

Introduction

There is a remarkable phenomenon taking place in modern civilization. A man can sit quietly in his living room, surrounded by every imaginable comfort, with nobody threatening his life, nobody stealing his property, and nobody laying a finger upon him, yet within thirty seconds of opening a social media application, he can become angry enough to fight a war. Somebody disagrees with his opinion. Somebody questions his doctrine. Somebody makes a foolish statement that should have been ignored. Suddenly, the blood pressure rises, the fingers begin moving, and the Christian who was singing about the love of Jesus Christ ten minutes earlier is now composing a verbal assault that would embarrass a drunken sailor. The devil did not have to drag him into a tavern. He brought the tavern directly into his living room. James 1:19–20 establishes a divine order that modern communication has managed to reverse almost completely: “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” Social media encourages men to hear very little, speak immediately, and become angry before they have even understood the question.

The strange thing about online anger is how frequently people mistake it for courage. A man who would hesitate to challenge another person face-to-face suddenly discovers extraordinary bravery when separated from his opponent by a thousand miles and a glass screen. He becomes a theologian, prosecutor, judge, and executioner before breakfast. He can determine another person's motives from six words, pronounce judgment upon an entire ministry from one photograph, and issue a forty-seven-post indictment without ever considering whether he has understood the matter correctly. Unfortunately, Christians are not immune to this foolishness. Some have become so accustomed to the atmosphere of perpetual hostility that they cannot distinguish defending biblical truth from satisfying their own appetite for combat. They insist that their anger proves their zeal, their insults

demonstrate their conviction, and their ability to embarrass another person establishes their spiritual authority. Apparently, somewhere between the book of Acts and the invention of the smartphone, the fruit of the Spirit was replaced with the ability to deliver a devastating comeback.

But Scripture does not permit the Christian to justify his conduct by pointing to the wickedness of the people around him. The world has always been wicked, and the Lord never suggested that believers should become equally wicked in order to communicate with it. Ephesians 4:29 commands, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” That command does not evaporate when somebody insults your intelligence, misrepresents your position, attacks your faith, or deliberately attempts to provoke you. Neither does it require a Christian to surrender biblical truth, tolerate false doctrine, or pretend that wickedness is harmless. There is a tremendous difference between righteous indignation and fleshly wrath, between biblical rebuke and personal retaliation, between exposing error and enjoying another person's humiliation. The difference is not always visible to an audience, but it is never hidden from God. A Christian may win the argument, receive the applause, silence his opponent, and still have something serious to answer for when the Lord examines how the victory was obtained.

1. Swift to Hear, Slow to Speak, and Apparently Too Difficult to Obey

James begins his practical instruction by addressing his readers as “my beloved brethren.” The epistle identifies its historical recipients in James 1:1 as “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” That identification should not be erased merely because someone wishes to make every verse address the Church without distinction. Nevertheless, the instruction concerning anger and speech expresses a moral principle entirely consistent with the New Testament teaching given directly to the body of Christ. In the immediate context, James has spoken of God's goodness, His unchanging character, and the word of truth. Verse 18 declares that God begat His people “with the word of truth,” and verse 21 commands the receiving of the engrafted word with meekness. The command to listen before speaking therefore appears in a context emphasizing submission to divine truth rather than submission to uncontrolled human impulses. God has spoken, and man is expected to listen. That arrangement has not improved by permitting every individual with an internet account to become his own final authority.

Notice the order of the commandments. James does not say to become swift to answer, swift to accuse, and swift to demonstrate how little patience one possesses. He says to be swift to hear. Proverbs 18:13 reinforces the principle: “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” There is enough instruction in that single verse

to close down a considerable portion of the internet. A man reads half a sentence, assumes he understands the entire argument, and launches into a correction of something the other person never actually said. Another sees an unfamiliar quotation, refuses to examine its context, and announces that he has discovered heresy. A third joins the dispute because somebody he follows became offended, and evidently that is sufficient evidence for a conviction. Scripture calls answering before hearing folly and shame. Modern society frequently calls it engagement. Changing the vocabulary does not improve the behavior.

The command to be "slow to wrath" is immediately followed by the reason: "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." The distinction is decisive. Human anger does not become spiritually productive merely because its object involves religion. An irritated Christian may quote accurate Scripture while allowing his temper to control the manner in which he communicates it. The passage does not deny that wickedness deserves condemnation, nor does it demand indifference toward false doctrine. It denies the assumption that man's uncontrolled wrath accomplishes God's righteous purposes. A believer who cannot wait long enough to understand the accusation against him has already surrendered the advantage of sound judgment. The Lord did not command His people to become emotional machines, incapable of feeling indignation. He commanded them to exercise restraint rather than permitting indignation to become their master. The man whose temper determines his answers has effectively appointed his flesh as the editor of his ministry.

2. The Fire Is Not in the Keyboard; It Is in the Heart

The Lord Jesus Christ identified the source of corrupt speech when He declared, "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). In its historical setting, Christ was confronting religious opponents who had wickedly attributed His miraculous works to the power of Beelzebub. The immediate controversy concerned their rejection and malicious misrepresentation of the Messiah. Nevertheless, His statement reveals a principle concerning the relationship between the heart and human communication. Words do not originate independently of the person producing them. They reveal what occupies his thoughts, governs his desires, and directs his intentions. The internet has not created a new kind of human heart. It has simply provided existing human corruption with an extraordinarily convenient method of expression. A man may blame the platform, the controversy, the insulting stranger, or the inflammatory headline, but none of those things excuses what he chooses to say. The match may have come from outside, but the combustible material was already inside.

Proverbs 14:29 declares, "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." That is a remarkable statement because it reverses the world's

usual assessment of forceful personalities. The person who immediately explodes is not presented as courageous, decisive, or impressively passionate. He is described as someone who exalts folly. Proverbs 16:32 goes further: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” Consider the comparison. A man capable of conquering a fortified city may still be inferior in an important respect to the man who governs his own temper. The world applauds external conquest, but Scripture places tremendous value upon internal restraint. Some Christians would like to conquer entire nations with the gospel while remaining unable to conquer the desire to answer one anonymous insult. They talk about spiritual warfare while losing an argument with their own thumbs.

James 3:5–6 describes the tongue as a little member capable of kindling a tremendous fire. The chapter continues by portraying the tongue as “an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8). These descriptions are not compliments, and they are not presented as harmless characteristics of people possessing strong personalities. James exposes the contradiction of using the same mouth to bless God and curse men made after His similitude. The principle reaches directly into modern communication. It is entirely possible for somebody to publish a beautiful Scripture quotation in the morning and spend the afternoon circulating personal insults that contradict the passage he quoted. Such conduct is not evidence of courageous Christianity. It is evidence that religious vocabulary can coexist with an ungoverned tongue. A man can display a Bible verse on his profile without allowing that Bible verse to govern his conduct. The screen may contain Scripture while the heart behind it is feeding the fire.

3. A Soft Answer Can Stop a Fire That a Thousand Clever Insults Will Feed

Proverbs 15:1 declares, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” The proverb is not teaching that every gentle statement will automatically produce repentance or that every angry person can be persuaded through pleasant conversation. It identifies the ordinary tendency of different kinds of speech. A soft answer is capable of reducing hostility, while grievous words commonly intensify it. Anyone who has observed a prolonged internet argument has witnessed the second half of that verse in operation. One person makes an accusation, another responds with an insult, the first increases the hostility, and before long the original subject has disappeared beneath an avalanche of personal attacks. Neither participant remembers what started the dispute, but both are determined to finish it. It is an extraordinary achievement: two people can spend an entire afternoon proving that neither one intends to listen. The result is not instruction, correction, or understanding. It is merely a larger fire.

Proverbs 17:14 warns, “The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.” The comparison is particularly instructive. Once water breaks through a weakened barrier, the resulting damage may extend far beyond the original opening. A careless reply can produce a similar chain of consequences. A sarcastic remark invites retaliation, retaliation produces accusations, accusations attract spectators, and spectators begin repeating statements without understanding their origin. Soon the argument acquires a life of its own. A Christian who might have ended the dispute through one measured response instead spends hours attempting to manage a flood he helped release. Proverbs 26:20 supplies another picture: “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.” It is difficult to maintain a roaring fire when nobody continues supplying fuel. Unfortunately, some people arrive at every argument carrying enough firewood to heat a small village.

The practical wisdom is not complicated, although the flesh frequently resists it. Before answering an accusation, establish whether the accusation is true. Before correcting a statement, determine whether it has been understood. Before publishing a reply, consider whether it clarifies the issue or merely expresses irritation. Ecclesiastes 3:7 recognizes “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” Not every provocation requires an answer, and not every silence constitutes surrender. There are occasions when a biblical correction is necessary to protect readers from deception. There are also occasions when further debate simply rewards somebody who has no intention of discussing the truth. A Christian should not permit the hostility of his opponent to determine the condition of his own testimony. If the other person arrives carrying a torch, there is no biblical requirement to provide him with gasoline. Sometimes the strongest response is not the loudest sentence but the refusal to contribute another spark.

4. Righteous Indignation Is Biblical; Personal Revenge Wearing a Bible Verse Is Not

Scripture does not condemn every expression of anger. Mark 3:5 records the Lord Jesus Christ looking upon His opponents “with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.” The occasion concerned a man with a withered hand and religious opponents who objected to healing on the sabbath day. Christ's anger was connected with their hardness of heart and their resistance to what was right. The passage does not portray an uncontrolled emotional outburst or a personal quarrel over wounded dignity. It reveals the righteous response of the sinless Son of God to genuine wickedness. Ephesians 4:26 likewise commands, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” The presence of that command settles the question of whether anger can ever be appropriate. It can. But the same verse establishes that anger must not be permitted to

develop into sin. Those two truths belong together, and removing either one produces doctrinal confusion.

Paul continues in Ephesians 4:27, “Neither give place to the devil.” The connection is worth considering. Anger becomes spiritually dangerous when it is permitted to govern conduct, nurture bitterness, or produce sinful retaliation. The surrounding chapter commands believers to put away corrupt communication, bitterness, wrath, clamour, evil speaking, and malice. There is no contradiction between righteous indignation and those commands. The distinction lies between opposing genuine wickedness and indulging the flesh under the appearance of opposing wickedness. A Christian should become concerned when the gospel is corrupted, when Scripture is deliberately twisted, when the innocent are mistreated, or when false teachers prey upon those who lack understanding. But when the real offense is that somebody questioned his intelligence, rejected his interpretation, or failed to admire his ministry, calling the resulting temper righteous indignation is a rather generous description of wounded pride. Putting a Bible verse on resentment does not baptize it into holiness.

Jonah provides an instructive Old Testament example of how a servant of God can become angry for reasons that do not reflect God's purposes. After Nineveh received mercy, Jonah was exceedingly displeased, and the Lord asked, “Doest thou well to be angry?” (Jonah 4:4). The historical setting concerns God's dealings with Nineveh and His appointed prophet, not the administration of the present Church Age. Yet the incident exposes a danger that has not disappeared. A man may possess genuine knowledge of God's truth while allowing personal desires to distort his response to God's actions. The Lord questioned Jonah's anger rather than endorsing it merely because Jonah held the office of prophet. That should disturb the modern Christian who assumes every expression of his religious indignation enjoys divine approval. The proper question is not whether the individual feels intensely. It is whether the object, motive, and expression of his anger agree with Scripture. God never promised to endorse a man's temper simply because the man can quote a verse while displaying it.

5. Railing, Profanity, and Personal Insults Are Not the Gifts of the Spirit

Colossians 3:8 gives Christians an unmistakable command: “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.” Paul is writing to believers whose lives are to reflect their position in Christ. Earlier in the chapter, he directs their attention toward things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. The practical instruction follows from that spiritual reality. The Christian is not commanded to remove filthy communication in order to purchase salvation. He is commanded to put it away because such conduct is inconsistent with the life belonging to

a redeemed person. Some believers seem to imagine profanity becomes acceptable when it is directed against sufficiently wicked individuals. Others employ crude language and then boast that they are simply being authentic. Scripture does not recognize authenticity as a defense for disobedience. A sewer is authentic to its contents, but nobody should mistake the odor for spiritual maturity.

First Peter 3:9 instructs believers, “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing.” The verse does not require Christians to approve wickedness or refrain from correcting false doctrine. It forbids answering abusive conduct with the same kind of abusive conduct. That distinction is essential because railing often masquerades as biblical boldness. A man receives an insult and immediately produces a more elaborate insult. He then declares that he has defended the faith. But the faith was never the actual subject of the exchange. His wounded pride was. Ephesians 4:31 specifically identifies evil speaking and malice among the things to be put away. A Christian should be capable of identifying theological error, presenting Scripture, and issuing necessary warnings without descending into a competition over who can produce the most humiliating description of the other person. If the argument cannot be won without violating Scripture, the argument is not being conducted faithfully. A filthy mouth does not become clean because it is defending a clean Book.

Some attempt to justify personal mockery by pointing to the strong language of biblical prophets or the rebukes delivered by the Lord Jesus Christ. Elijah mocked the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:27, and Christ condemned the scribes and Pharisees with unmistakable severity in Matthew 23. Those passages are Scripture, and their language should not be softened to satisfy modern religious sensitivities. Nevertheless, the presence of inspired rebuke does not authorize every Christian to imitate its intensity whenever somebody irritates him. Elijah was confronting the public demonstration of idolatry in Israel. Christ was exposing the hypocrisy and spiritual blindness of religious leaders. Their words had a definite target and purpose. Biblical sarcasm exposes the absurdity of falsehood; fleshly sarcasm frequently exists merely to entertain spectators at another person's expense. A pointed comparison may reveal the foolishness of a false doctrine more effectively than an entire paragraph of polite confusion. But there is a difference between making error look foolish and making cruelty look clever. Scripture authorizes the exposure of falsehood, not the unlimited indulgence of personal contempt.

6. The Crowd May Applaud Your Comeback While Heaven Condemns Your Motive

Galatians 1:10 presents a question every Christian communicator ought to consider: “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” In its immediate context, Paul is defending the divine

origin and authority of the gospel against those who would corrupt it. His declaration concerns faithfulness to God's message rather than surrendering truth to obtain human approval. That principle has direct application to public communication. A Christian must not modify biblical doctrine because the audience dislikes what Scripture teaches. But neither should he manufacture hostility because angry exchanges attract attention. Both errors permit the audience to become the controlling influence. One man softens the gospel to collect approval, while another sharpens his insults for the same reward. The methods differ, but the underlying appetite may be identical. Neither popularity nor controversy provides reliable evidence of spiritual faithfulness.

Social media has made spectators an unusually powerful influence upon human conversation. A disagreement that might have been settled privately becomes a public performance in which each participant attempts to impress his own supporters. The temptation is no longer merely to establish the truth. It is to produce the cleverest response, the harshest accusation, or the most memorable humiliation. Proverbs 29:25 warns, “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.” The fear of man does not always appear as cowardice. Sometimes it appears as the desperate need to impress an audience. A Christian may be afraid to appear weak, afraid to acknowledge a mistake, or afraid to conclude a discussion without delivering the final insult. He imagines that silence will diminish his standing with the crowd. Consequently, the crowd begins exercising authority over his conscience. The spectators have become his congregation, the applause has become his reward, and his temper has become the sermon.

James 3:13 asks, “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?” The answer is not that the wisest man produces the most devastating insult. James directs attention toward good conversation and works performed with meekness of wisdom. He then contrasts bitter envying and strife with the wisdom that is from above. James 3:17 describes that wisdom as “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” Notice that purity comes first. Biblical wisdom is not peace purchased through compromise with error. Neither is it purity supposedly demonstrated through constant hostility. The passage joins doctrinal and moral integrity with proper conduct. A Christian should never be embarrassed to speak the truth plainly, but he ought to be embarrassed when his manner contradicts the truth he claims to defend. The crowd may admire a sharp tongue, but God examines the heart that controls it. A thousand approving reactions cannot turn fleshly strife into heavenly wisdom.

7. The Gospel Is Too Important to Be Buried Beneath Your Temper

Colossians 4:5–6 provides a remarkably suitable standard for Christian communication: “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Paul is instructing believers concerning their conduct toward those outside the Christian fellowship. The immediate context includes prayer and a request that God would open a door for the word so the mystery of Christ might be made manifest. Thus, his instructions about wise conduct and gracious speech stand in the setting of gospel ministry. The expression “seasoned with salt” does not command Christians to make every statement sweet, comfortable, or agreeable. Salt possesses a distinct character, and biblical truth frequently exposes what sinners would rather conceal. But the verse plainly requires grace in speech and wisdom in answering. The Christian should communicate truth with a purpose higher than expressing personal irritation. He has been given a message too important to bury beneath his temper.

That message is the gospel of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares “that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not by works. A lost sinner needs to understand his condition before God and the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ. He does not need to watch a Christian spend forty minutes trading personal insults with another religious disputant. Certainly, false gospels must be exposed, and genuine questions concerning salvation deserve clear answers. But the purpose of such correction is to establish divine truth, not to showcase the personality of the person delivering it. Romans 1:16 identifies the gospel as the power of God unto salvation. No comparable statement is made concerning sarcasm, personal humiliation, or the ability to dominate an online argument. God saves sinners through the gospel, not through the impressive sharpness of a believer's tongue.

Consider what happens when an unbeliever observes a Christian defending biblical truth while behaving in a manner that directly contradicts biblical commands. The unbeliever may reject the gospel regardless of the Christian's conduct; Scripture never promises that personal faithfulness will remove the offense of the cross. Nevertheless, there is no reason to add unnecessary personal offense to the offense already inherent in biblical truth. Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds believers that they must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That examination concerns the Christian's accountability and must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20. Salvation rests securely upon Christ, but Christian service is not beyond examination. The believer should therefore ask whether his communication serves the Lord or merely satisfies the flesh. If a stranger attacks the faith, answer the substance with Scripture. If he sincerely asks a question, teach him. If he persistently seeks nothing but contention, recognize when the discussion

has ceased to be profitable. The gospel deserves faithful witnesses, not perpetual contestants in an argument nobody intends to resolve.

Conclusion

The Christian does not need permission from the world to speak plainly, and he should never apologize for the authority of the King James Bible. False doctrine remains false doctrine whether its advocates possess ten followers or ten million. Wickedness does not become righteousness because it receives public approval, and the gospel does not change because modern society finds it offensive. But the same Scriptures that command believers to contend for the faith also condemn railing, bitterness, corrupt communication, and fleshly wrath. Those commandments cannot be separated merely because obedience becomes inconvenient during a heated dispute. The Christian who insists upon correcting everybody else's sin while excusing his own sinful manner has not demonstrated superior discernment. He has simply developed a convenient arrangement in which Scripture governs everybody except himself. Biblical authority must begin with the person claiming to defend it. If the Word of God cannot govern a Christian's tongue, his public declarations about respecting its authority are considerably less impressive than he imagines.

A practical examination is therefore necessary. Before answering an insulting remark, ask whether the reply is required by truth or demanded by pride. Before publishing a harsh correction, determine whether the accusation has been properly established. Before employing sarcasm, consider whether it exposes genuine doctrinal absurdity or merely provides entertainment at another person's expense. Before entering another prolonged dispute, remember Ephesians 5:16 and the command to redeem the time. There are souls that need the gospel, Christians who need instruction, families requiring attention, and responsibilities that cannot be fulfilled while spending every available hour arguing with strangers. The Lord Jesus Christ never commissioned His people to win every internet disagreement. He commissioned them to preach the gospel and remain faithful to His Word. A man may leave an argument unfinished without leaving the truth undefended. Sometimes the most disciplined Christian in the discussion is the one who recognizes that another response would accomplish nothing except satisfy his own desire to have the final word.

The fire behind the keyboard is ultimately a matter of spiritual government. Either the Christian allows the Word of God to govern his communication, or he permits the flesh to use his communication as an instrument of anger, pride, and retaliation. James 1:20 remains as true today as when it was written: “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” A clever insult may produce laughter. A devastating comeback may receive applause. A public humiliation may attract thousands of spectators. But none of

those things establishes that God approves of the conduct. The Christian's responsibility is not to impress the tavern with his ability to fight like its patrons. His responsibility is to stand in that hostile environment with biblical conviction, moral restraint, and a testimony worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ. **If your opponent's wickedness determines your behavior, he has already conquered something far more valuable than the argument. He has persuaded you to surrender the very biblical standards you entered the discussion to defend.**

3 of 10 — Social Media and the Christian Tongue — The Digital Whispering Campaign: Gossip, Slander, Rumors, and Destroyed Reputations

Key Passage: Proverbs 6:16–19 (KJV)

“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.”

Introduction

There are seven things identified in Proverbs 6:16–19 that the LORD hates, and it is remarkable how many of them can be accomplished without a man ever leaving his favorite chair. A proud look, a lying tongue, wicked imaginations, a false witness, and somebody sowing discord among brethren can all be found operating simultaneously behind a single computer screen. A man does not need a weapon to destroy a reputation, a printing press to circulate a falsehood, or a congregation to start a division. He needs only an accusation, an audience, and enough disregard for the truth to publish what he cannot prove. The ancient talebearer had to walk from house to house. His modern counterpart can poison a thousand conversations before his coffee gets cold. Technology has improved the speed of communication, but it has done absolutely nothing to improve the honesty of the human heart. A lie traveling at the speed of electricity remains a lie, and God does not become less offended because the transmission was accomplished efficiently.

Social media has transformed gossip from a neighborhood nuisance into an international industry. A suspicious photograph appears, somebody supplies an inflammatory caption, another person adds a detail he invented, and within minutes an entire population of amateur investigators has discovered a scandal that may never have existed. Christians are not immune to this foolishness. Some who would never knowingly preach a false gospel

will circulate an unverified accusation against another believer without the slightest hesitation. They demand chapter and verse when examining doctrine but apparently require nothing more than a screenshot when examining somebody's character. They will tell you that every word of God is pure while repeating words that have never been established as true. The contradiction is staggering. A Christian can spend years building a testimony of honesty and then compromise it in thirty seconds because an accusation appeared on a screen and happened to agree with his existing opinion of the person being accused.

The issue is not whether Christians should expose wickedness. Scripture commands the exposure of darkness, the correction of false teaching, and the protection of God's people from those who would deceive or harm them. The issue is whether those responsibilities can be carried out through dishonesty, careless accusations, malicious speculation, and public humiliation. They cannot. Proverbs 11:13 declares, “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.” Proverbs 16:28 adds, “A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.” These statements expose conduct that modern society frequently rewards with attention. A Christian must therefore determine whether he intends to be a faithful witness or merely another contributor to the world's endless supply of scandal. There is a tremendous difference between exposing documented wickedness and manufacturing suspicion. Truth may require courage to publish, but a rumor requires nothing more than a willing tongue and a conscience that has stopped asking questions.

1. God Hates a Lying Tongue, Even When It Belongs to a Religious Person

Proverbs 6:16 begins with an expression that ought to interrupt the careless conversation of every professing Christian: “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him.” The passage is not describing minor social inconveniences or personality characteristics that happen to irritate other people. It is revealing conduct that God Himself condemns. The surrounding context, beginning in Proverbs 6:12, describes a wicked man who walks with a froward mouth, devises mischief, and continually sows discord. The list in verses 16–19 reinforces that condemnation. Notice that a lying tongue appears alongside hands that shed innocent blood. The passage does not declare that every lie produces the same consequences as murder, but it certainly destroys the modern assumption that dishonesty is a minor offense. God places falsehood among the abominations He identifies for special condemnation. The Christian who treats lying as acceptable whenever it injures somebody he dislikes has not discovered a clever exception to righteousness. He has discovered another reason to examine his heart.

The list becomes even more striking when its repetition is considered. Verse 17 identifies “a lying tongue,” while verse 19 identifies “A false witness that speaketh lies.” These expressions are related but place attention upon different aspects of dishonesty. A lying tongue communicates falsehood, while a false witness employs falsehood as testimony concerning a matter or person. Both are condemned. The final expression, “he that soweth discord among brethren,” exposes another destructive consequence of corrupt communication. False accusations do not merely affect the individual being accused. They can divide friendships, damage families, disrupt churches, and turn believers against one another. A person may announce that he is defending righteousness while spreading statements he has not established as true. But righteousness does not require dishonesty to accomplish its purposes. **When a man must lie to defend what he calls the truth, the first thing he has exposed is the corruption of his own defense.**

The historical setting of Proverbs must also be respected. Solomon's wisdom was given within Israel's Old Testament setting, and these instructions are not a substitute for the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. A sinner is not saved by successfully completing a program of honest communication. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, entirely apart from works as a means of earning eternal life. Nevertheless, the moral character of God has not changed, and New Testament believers are likewise commanded to reject dishonesty. Ephesians 4:25 declares, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.” A saved person has no biblical permission to employ the sins condemned in Proverbs merely because he lives under grace. Eternal security is not eternal permission to behave dishonestly. The Christian who claims to love God's Word ought to begin by refusing to publish statements that contradict God's commandments.

2. The Talebearer Carries a Knife and Calls It News

Proverbs 11:13 declares, “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.” The contrast is between a person who cannot be trusted with information and someone whose faithfulness governs what he reveals. Not everything a person knows needs to be announced, and not everything he hears belongs to him to distribute. Some matters are private because they concern legitimate personal responsibilities, confidential conversations, or information that would accomplish no righteous purpose through publication. A faithful spirit does not treat another person's difficulties as entertainment. The talebearer, however, receives information as though it were property available for immediate distribution. He may insist that he is only keeping people informed, but Scripture is more interested in whether his communication is truthful, necessary, and faithful. There are people who cannot carry a confidence across

the street without stopping three times to unload it. Give them a social media account, and they can betray an entire friendship before lunch.

Proverbs 16:28 warns, “A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.” Notice that the whisperer does not necessarily create a public confrontation. His work often begins privately, through carefully selected details, insinuations, and conversations designed to influence one person against another. Modern technology has made that operation extraordinarily convenient. A private message can introduce suspicion, a screenshot can furnish apparent evidence, and a group conversation can develop an entire accusation without the subject ever knowing that he has been placed on trial. The whisperer may never issue a direct charge. He asks suggestive questions, expresses exaggerated concern, and allows others to reach the conclusion he intended. This is gossip dressed in the respectable clothing of caution. It is possible to damage a man's reputation without ever making a complete accusation against him. Sometimes the most poisonous sentence in a conversation is the one deliberately left unfinished.

Proverbs 18:8 states, “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.” The Lord did not describe those words as harmless entertainment. They wound. A careless report may cause a husband to distrust his wife, a congregation to suspect its pastor, or a Christian to question the character of a faithful friend. Such consequences cannot be dismissed merely because the speaker later explains that he was repeating something he heard. Yet faithfulness does not require concealing abuse, credible threats, criminal conduct, or wrongdoing that must be reported to protect others. The difference lies in the purpose, accuracy, and proper handling of the information. Reporting genuine danger to responsible authorities is not equivalent to spreading private allegations for public entertainment. A Christian must possess enough judgment to distinguish protecting the innocent from feeding the curious. The faithful man guards what ought to remain private and exposes what righteousness genuinely requires to be brought into the light.

3. Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness — The Commandment Did Not Expire With Sinai

Exodus 20:16 declares, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” The commandment was delivered to Israel within the covenant established at Sinai, and its historical and dispensational setting must not be confused with the Church's position under grace. Israel possessed a national legal system governed by divine commandments, judgments, and ordinances. False testimony could corrupt that system and bring serious consequences upon innocent people. Deuteronomy 19:15–21 provides additional regulations concerning witnesses and the examination of false accusations. Those judicial provisions belonged to Israel under the law and are not transferred wholesale into the

government of the New Testament Church. Nevertheless, the moral prohibition against bearing false witness remains consistent with the commandments given to Christians. Colossians 3:9 declares, “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.” God has not revised His character to accommodate dishonest Christians with internet connections.

The principle of establishing accusations through adequate testimony appears repeatedly throughout Scripture. Deuteronomy 19:15 states that a matter was to be established through proper witnesses. Paul likewise declares in 2 Corinthians 13:1, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” First Timothy 5:19 provides a specific instruction concerning accusations against an elder: “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.” These passages do not mean that every report lacking multiple eyewitnesses must automatically be declared false. They establish the seriousness of receiving accusations and the need for responsible examination rather than reckless judgment. Credible documentary evidence, corroborating facts, and appropriate investigation may all have an important place in establishing what occurred. The biblical principle is that accusations deserve examination, not automatic publication. An anonymous account claiming to possess inside information does not become a reliable witness merely because its allegations happen to be sensational.

Proverbs 18:17 offers another warning: “He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.” The first account of a controversy frequently sounds convincing because the hearer has not yet encountered the other relevant facts. This is especially important when evaluating online allegations. One person presents a carefully arranged narrative, provides selected evidence, and invites the public to deliver a verdict. The accused individual may possess information that changes the meaning of what has been presented. Or the accusation may be substantially correct. The responsible course is to examine the evidence rather than predetermine the conclusion. Biblical judgment does not mean automatically believing the accuser, automatically believing the accused, or refusing to investigate wrongdoing. It means refusing to substitute enthusiasm for evidence. **A Christian who demands proof before accepting a doctrine should not abandon the requirement for proof when somebody's reputation is on the line.**

4. Screenshots, Cropped Quotations, and the Ministry of Half a Sentence

One of the most effective methods of spreading a misleading impression is to publish something technically authentic while deliberately withholding the information necessary to understand it. A screenshot may display words that were genuinely written, yet those words may appear within a larger conversation that changes their meaning. A quotation may be accurate while the conclusion drawn from it is entirely false. A headline may

describe one element of an event while omitting the facts that explain what actually occurred. Proverbs 18:13 declares, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” The principle applies whenever partial information is treated as complete evidence. A Christian should be particularly cautious about accusations constructed from fragments of conversation. The person distributing those fragments may be telling the truth, concealing the truth, or presenting selected truth in a manner intended to deceive. Half a sentence can become a whole lie when its missing half contains the explanation.

Consider how easily a doctrinal controversy can be manufactured through selective quotation. A teacher discusses a false position, quotes an opponent for the purpose of refuting him, and somebody circulates the quotation without the surrounding explanation. The audience then condemns the teacher for supposedly endorsing the very doctrine he was exposing. Similar distortions occur when humor is presented as a serious declaration, an earlier mistaken position is circulated without acknowledging its correction, or a private disagreement is published without relevant context. Second Peter 3:16 warns of those who wrest the Scriptures unto their own destruction. Although Peter is discussing the twisting of Scripture, the passage illustrates the seriousness of manipulating words. If men are willing to wrest the inspired Word of God, nobody should imagine ordinary human statements are immune from similar treatment. A cropped photograph does not acquire the authority of a complete record simply because it looks convincing on a screen.

The Christian's responsibility extends beyond avoiding deliberate manipulation. He must also refuse to become an unwitting distributor of another person's deception. Ephesians 4:25 commands truthfulness, and Philippians 4:8 instructs believers to think upon things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Those commandments are difficult to reconcile with a habit of circulating inflammatory claims without examining them. Before sharing an accusation, consider whether the evidence actually establishes what is being claimed, whether the material has been presented in context, and whether publication serves a legitimate purpose. Private correspondence requires particular care. The fact that somebody possesses a message does not automatically mean distributing it publicly is righteous, although disclosure may be necessary to establish serious wrongdoing or protect others. A Christian should not need a complicated legal education to understand that truthful evidence deserves honest presentation. **A screenshot can capture what somebody typed; it cannot automatically capture everything that happened.**

5. Exposing Wickedness Is a Duty; Manufacturing Scandal Is a Sin

Ephesians 5:11 commands, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” The verse does not instruct believers to remain silent whenever wickedness becomes uncomfortable to discuss. Christians are commanded to separate from evil and expose what is contrary to God's righteousness. Romans 16:17 warns believers to mark those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine they have learned, and Titus 1:9–11 addresses the necessity of answering gainsayers whose teaching subverts households. There are genuine occasions when public correction is necessary. False doctrine that is publicly propagated may require public biblical examination. Documented misconduct that endangers others may require warnings, accountability, and appropriate intervention. The existence of gossip does not justify concealing genuine wrongdoing. Some religious organizations have caused considerable harm by treating every uncomfortable disclosure as disloyalty. Scripture does not command Christians to protect the reputation of an institution at the expense of truth and justice.

Nevertheless, the command to reprove darkness does not eliminate the responsibility to establish what actually happened. A Christian cannot simply announce that he is exposing wickedness and thereby exempt himself from the commandments against lying, false witness, and malicious speech. Matthew 18:15–17 addresses the handling of an offense involving a brother, beginning with personal confrontation and progressing when necessary. That passage should not be twisted into a universal prohibition against public correction or the reporting of crimes. Galatians 2:11–14 records Paul confronting Peter publicly because his conduct had produced a public doctrinal and practical contradiction. First Timothy 5:19–20 addresses accusations against elders and the public rebuke of those who sin. These passages demonstrate that circumstances matter. Private misunderstandings, public false teaching, serious abuse, and criminal conduct do not all require identical procedures. A man who applies one verse mechanically to every situation is not demonstrating careful biblical interpretation. He is using Scripture like a hammer and treating every problem as a nail.

The distinction becomes especially important when allegations concern vulnerable people or those occupying positions of authority. A credible report of abuse must not be dismissed as gossip merely because the accused possesses a respected title. Nor should an accusation automatically be declared true because it concerns someone already unpopular. Romans 13:1–4 recognizes the legitimate function of civil authority, including the punishment of evil. Serious criminal allegations belong before appropriate authorities, and immediate danger requires appropriate protection. Churches also possess responsibilities concerning discipline, qualification for leadership, and the welfare of those under their care. These duties must be exercised without intimidation, retaliation, or

dishonest concealment. At the same time, public exposure should be governed by documented facts and legitimate necessity rather than speculation and revenge. **Truth does not become gossip because it embarrasses the guilty, and gossip does not become truth because it embarrasses somebody we dislike.** Both distinctions are essential.

6. The Digital Mob: When Everybody Becomes a Witness Without Seeing Anything

Exodus 23:1 contains a command that exposes the wickedness of organized rumor: “Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.” The next verse declares, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.” These commandments belonged to Israel's legal and covenantal order, but the moral wisdom they express is immediately recognizable. A crowd does not transform falsehood into truth. Ten thousand people repeating an accusation do not necessarily provide ten thousand independent witnesses. They may simply be repeating the statement of one person who never established the original claim. Yet social media frequently treats the number of reactions as though it were the weight of the evidence. An allegation becomes popular, popularity is mistaken for credibility, and credibility is assumed to establish guilt. By that extraordinary method, a rumor can be promoted into a verdict without ever passing through an honest examination of the facts.

James 4:11 commands, “Speak not evil one of another, brethren.” The surrounding passage confronts pride, strife, and the improper judging of others. James is not forbidding every exercise of moral discernment, for Scripture repeatedly commands believers to distinguish truth from error and righteousness from wickedness. He is condemning the arrogant and destructive conduct of those who speak evil against their brethren. The digital mob operates through precisely such temptations. People who know almost nothing about a controversy begin announcing conclusions, assigning motives, and demanding punishment. Some join because they dislike the accused. Others join because they fear appearing disloyal to their own group. Still others discover that outrage produces attention. Soon the original evidence becomes almost irrelevant. The controversy has become a public performance, and the spectators are competing to demonstrate who can express the greatest indignation. A crowd of uninformed people does not become wise merely because its ignorance is unanimous.

Christians must refuse the temptation to become participants in collective cruelty. Proverbs 24:28 warns, “Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips.” The following verse forbids personal retaliation. These instructions address both truthfulness and motive. A believer should not publish allegations merely because his friends are publishing them, nor should he assume that an unpopular person's

suffering is automatically deserved. Second Timothy 2:24–25 requires the servant of the Lord to exercise patience and meekness when instructing opponents. That standard does not prevent firm correction, but it certainly exposes the wickedness of enjoying another person's destruction. A Christian may rightly warn others concerning established danger without participating in threats, harassment, fabricated accusations, or unnecessary humiliation. The fact that a person deserves correction does not mean every form of punishment imagined by an angry crowd becomes righteous. **God never commanded His people to join a mob first and investigate the truth afterward.**

7. Deleting the Post Does Not Repair the Reputation

Proverbs 22:1 declares, “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.” A good reputation is not a trivial possession, particularly when it has been established through years of honest conduct. A man may labor faithfully for decades, serve his family, maintain his integrity, and build relationships through consistent truthfulness. Then somebody circulates an accusation that reaches thousands of people before he even knows it exists. The claim may later be disproved, but the correction seldom travels with the same enthusiasm as the original scandal. People remember the accusation while forgetting the explanation. Some retain suspicion simply because they heard something unfavorable. The injury can affect employment, relationships, ministry opportunities, and the peace of an entire household. Scripture's valuation of a good name should cause Christians to approach accusations with considerable seriousness. A reputation is not disposable property belonging to whoever possesses the loudest microphone.

When a Christian discovers that he has circulated a false accusation, repentance requires more than quietly deleting the offending statement. Second Corinthians 7:10–11 describes godly sorrow producing repentance and identifies earnestness and carefulness among its fruits. The immediate context concerns the Corinthians' response to correction, but the principle of genuine repentance producing corresponding conduct is clear. A person who has publicly distributed false information should make an appropriate public correction. If he has shared the accusation privately, he should correct it among those who received it. If his words have materially injured another person, he should acknowledge the injury rather than pretending that removing the original publication settles everything. Zacchaeus, in Luke 19:8, demonstrated a willingness to make restitution where he had wrongfully taken from others. His circumstances are not identical to modern defamation, but his conduct illustrates that genuine repentance concerns the consequences of wrongdoing, not merely the desire to escape embarrassment.

There is also a responsibility upon the person who receives the correction. Ephesians 4:32 commands believers to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them. Forgiveness does not require pretending that a false accusation caused no damage, automatically restoring lost trust, or abandoning necessary accountability. But neither should a Christian employ another person's acknowledged mistake as permanent ammunition for retaliation. Where genuine repentance occurs, reconciliation should be pursued according to truth, wisdom, and the circumstances involved. The offender must not demand instant trust while refusing to repair the injury, and the injured person should not be pressured to conceal ongoing danger. There is a difference between extending forgiveness and pretending consequences never existed. A deleted publication may disappear from public view, but its effects may remain in hundreds of conversations. **If you had enough courage to publish the accusation, you ought to have enough integrity to publish the correction.**

Conclusion

The digital whispering campaign is not merely an unfortunate feature of modern communication. It is the ancient sin of talebearing operating through modern instruments. The same human heart that whispered against a neighbor centuries ago can now accuse a stranger before an international audience. The equipment has changed, but the commandments of God have not. Proverbs 6:16–19 still identifies the lying tongue, the false witness, and the sower of discord among the things God hates. James 4:11 still condemns evil speaking among brethren. Ephesians 4:25 still commands the putting away of lying. No Christian possesses an exemption from those instructions because he operates a religious account, defends a particular doctrine, or believes himself engaged in an important controversy. The greater the audience, the greater the opportunity for both good and harm. A believer who would not knowingly preach false doctrine should demonstrate equal concern about circulating false accusations. Truth must govern his testimony in every direction.

There is an especially sobering example in the treatment of the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 26:59 records that the chief priests, elders, and council sought false witness against Jesus to put Him to death. Their hatred required accusations, and their accusations required testimony that would support the outcome they desired. The sinless Son of God was subjected to a corrupt effort to secure His condemnation. The historical setting is the arrest and trial of Israel's Messiah before His crucifixion, an event central to God's redemptive purpose and not merely an ordinary example of personal mistreatment. Nevertheless, the conduct of His accusers demonstrates how wicked men can manipulate testimony to accomplish predetermined objectives. Christians should find it deeply

troubling to imitate such dishonesty while professing allegiance to the One who declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). The followers of the Truth should never become comfortable with falsehood simply because it advances their preferred accusation.

The Christian's responsibility is therefore unmistakable. Speak the truth. Examine accusations. Refuse malicious gossip. Protect legitimate confidences. Expose genuine wickedness through honest evidence and proper means. Correct false statements when they are discovered, and never mistake public popularity for divine approval. The gospel itself rests upon the truth of what Jesus Christ accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection, as declared in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4. Those who proclaim that gospel should be especially careful that their own words do not become instruments of deception. A Christian may be unable to prevent every lie circulating through the world, but he can refuse to contribute another one. He may not control the accusations of others, but he remains responsible for the testimony he personally bears. **A false witness may destroy a reputation with words he cannot prove, but he destroys something within his own testimony the moment he knowingly abandons the truth. The Christian who carries a Bible in one hand must not carry a rumor in the other.**

4 of 10 — Social Media and the Christian Tongue — Answer Not a Fool, Answer a Fool: Knowing When to Speak and When to Walk Away

Key Passage: Proverbs 26:4–5 (KJV)

“Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.”

Introduction

There are two verses sitting side by side in the book of Proverbs that have probably spared more sensible people from unnecessary arguments than a thousand books on human communication ever could. Proverbs 26:4 declares, “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.” The very next verse declares, “Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.” There they stand, one after the other, without apology, without embarrassment, and without the slightest indication that God has made a mistake. One verse says not to answer, and the other says to answer. To the careless reader, this looks like a contradiction. To the Bible believer willing to examine the words, it is a lesson in spiritual judgment. God is not confused about whether a fool should

receive an answer. He is teaching His people that the circumstances, purpose, and consequences of answering must be considered. Sometimes silence prevents a man from becoming a fool himself. Sometimes speaking prevents a fool from imagining that his foolishness has gone unanswered.

Social media has made that distinction more important than ever. Every day, Christians encounter sincere questions, confused believers, deliberate provocateurs, dishonest accusations, false teachers, and people who apparently rise from bed each morning with the ambition of beginning an argument before their feet touch the floor. Some genuinely desire to understand the Scriptures. Others want somebody to explain what they have been taught incorrectly. Still others have no interest in learning anything whatsoever. They simply want attention, controversy, and the satisfaction of watching another person lose his temper. Unfortunately, many Christians respond to all three categories in exactly the same manner. They either refuse to answer anything because they fear confrontation, or they answer everything because they cannot bear the possibility of somebody believing they have lost an argument. Neither extreme demonstrates biblical wisdom. A man who refuses every challenge may be neglecting his responsibility to defend the truth. A man who accepts every challenge may be allowing strangers to manage his entire life.

The Christian must understand that having an answer does not mean he must deliver it every time somebody demands one. Second Timothy 2:23 commands, “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.” Yet 1 Peter 3:15 instructs believers to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.” Both instructions belong in the Bible, and both must be obeyed according to their proper meaning. There is a difference between a man asking why Christians believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ and a man demanding the same explanation for the twentieth time after deliberately rejecting nineteen previous answers. There is a difference between exposing a dangerous false doctrine and entertaining somebody whose only objective is to provoke another quarrel. The servant of the Lord must learn when to open his mouth and when to close it. **A man does not prove that he possesses wisdom by answering every fool. Sometimes he proves it by recognizing that the fool has already received enough answers.**

1. Two Verses, Two Commands, and No Contradiction in the Bible

Proverbs 26:4–5 must first be understood within the wisdom literature given to Israel under the Old Testament. Solomon's collection of proverbs contains instruction concerning righteousness, wickedness, diligence, foolishness, speech, judgment, and the fear of the LORD. These are not Church Age instructions concerning how a sinner receives eternal salvation, nor are they a replacement for the gospel of grace revealed through the apostle

Paul. They are divine wisdom concerning life and conduct, and their principles find legitimate application wherever the conduct described remains morally relevant. The immediate chapter repeatedly describes the fool, his inappropriate honor, his unreliable conduct, and the damage produced by entrusting important matters to him. Proverbs 26:3 mentions a whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back. The following two verses concern the proper handling of his speech. God is not giving permission for uncontrolled argument. He is teaching discernment concerning a person whose foolishness can spread to anyone careless enough to imitate him.

Examine the wording carefully. Verse 4 says, “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.” The danger is becoming like the fool. If the fool uses dishonest reasoning, personal insults, deliberately absurd accusations, or arguments designed to produce confusion, the wise man must not adopt those methods in response. To answer according to the fool's folly in that manner is to enter his territory and begin playing by his rules. Verse 5 presents a different danger: “Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.” Here the concern is permitting foolishness to stand unchallenged when correction is necessary to expose its error. The same expression appears in both verses, but the stated consequences reveal two different circumstances. The wise man must neither imitate foolishness nor allow foolishness to parade as wisdom when a necessary answer would expose it. The apparent contradiction disappears when the complete statements are permitted to explain themselves.

There is a marvelous illustration of modern religious discussion in these two verses. A man announces that the Bible contradicts itself because one verse says to answer and another says not to answer. He congratulates himself upon discovering a difficulty that apparently escaped the attention of everybody who possessed the Scriptures for thousands of years. He has found two adjacent verses, read them without considering their qualifying clauses, and declared victory over divine inspiration. The trouble is not with the Bible. The trouble is with a reader who stopped thinking before finishing the sentences. Proverbs 26:4–5 does not provide contradictory commandments for identical circumstances. It provides contrasting instructions for different dangers. Sometimes answering would make the wise man foolish. Sometimes refusing to answer would leave the fool confident in his error. **The question is not merely whether the fool deserves an answer. The question is what righteousness requires and what the answer will accomplish.**

2. Not Every Question Comes from the Same Kind of Heart

One of the greatest mistakes a Christian can make is assuming that every questioner possesses the same motives. Acts 8 records Philip encountering an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” The

man answered in Acts 8:31, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” That is not the language of somebody trying to manufacture an argument. It is the language of a person who recognizes that he needs instruction. Philip did not ridicule his ignorance, accuse him of wasting time, or inform him that the passage should have been obvious. Acts 8:35 declares that Philip opened his mouth, began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. The historical setting concerns the spread of the gospel during the transitional period recorded in Acts, but the example of patient scriptural instruction remains unmistakable. A sincere question deserves a serious biblical answer.

Acts 18 provides another important distinction. Apollos was an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures, who taught diligently concerning the Lord while knowing only the baptism of John. Aquila and Priscilla recognized that his understanding required further instruction. Acts 18:26 declares that “they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” Notice what they did not do. They did not immediately organize a public campaign to destroy his reputation, publish accusations against his character, or treat incomplete understanding as proof of malicious deception. They instructed him. The result was that Apollos became an effective servant in demonstrating through the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ. There is a tremendous difference between correcting a teachable believer and confronting a determined deceiver. Some Christians have become so accustomed to arguing with hostile strangers that they begin treating every confused brother like an enemy combatant. That is not discernment. That is a failure to distinguish ignorance from rebellion.

But Scripture also records questioners whose motives were anything but sincere. Matthew 22:15–18 describes the Pharisees attempting to entangle the Lord Jesus Christ in His talk through a question concerning tribute to Caesar. Their approach included flattering language, but Christ recognized their wickedness and exposed their hypocrisy. In other passages, religious opponents asked questions not because they desired truth but because they wanted grounds for accusation. The Lord did not treat every question as an innocent request for information. Neither should Christians. A question may seek instruction, conceal an accusation, present a false choice, or attempt to force the respondent into an unnecessary controversy. The proper response requires examining what is actually being asked. A sincere seeker deserves patience. A mistaken believer deserves biblical correction. A dishonest provocateur does not automatically deserve unlimited access to another person's time. **The same question can be an open door in one man's mouth and a concealed trap in another's. Wisdom must recognize the difference.**

3. Sometimes Silence Is the Strongest Answer in the Conversation

Proverbs 17:28 declares, “Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.” The verse contains enough dry humor to embarrass a considerable number of modern commentators who cannot resist explaining everything they think. Even a fool can appear wise when he refrains from demonstrating the full extent of his ignorance. Unfortunately, social media has largely eliminated the opportunity for that particular advantage. People feel compelled to publish an opinion upon every subject, whether they understand it or not. They pronounce judgment upon complicated theological disputes after reading a headline, and some cannot encounter a biblical statement without producing an objection merely to prove they exist. Proverbs 29:11 adds, “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.” The wise man possesses restraint. The fool apparently believes every passing thought deserves immediate publication before the opportunity disappears.

The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated that silence can be deliberate rather than cowardly. Luke 23:8–9 records Herod questioning Christ at length during the proceedings preceding His crucifixion. The passage declares, “Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.” Herod had desired to see Jesus because of reports concerning Him and hoped to witness some miracle. The Lord did not provide the spectacle he desired. This was not because Christ lacked answers or feared the questions. The sinless Son of God understood the circumstances perfectly. Yet elsewhere Christ answered opponents, exposed hypocrisy, taught sincere listeners, and declared truth before rulers. His silence before Herod must therefore be understood within that specific historical setting rather than converted into an excuse for Christians to refuse every difficult question. The lesson is that silence can serve a righteous purpose. Not every demand for an explanation deserves compliance, especially when the questioner seeks entertainment rather than truth.

Ecclesiastes 3:7 declares that there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” The verse belongs to the larger discussion of seasons and appointed occasions under heaven, but its practical wisdom is unmistakable. Silence can prevent foolishness from multiplying, protect a confidential matter, or refuse participation in an argument that serves no righteous purpose. Yet silence can also be cowardly when truth requires testimony and an individual refuses to speak because he fears criticism. Therefore, silence itself is not automatically virtuous. Its value depends upon the circumstances and motive. A Christian should never confuse the responsibility to contend for the faith with an obligation to respond to every insult. If somebody makes a ridiculous accusation that no reasonable person would believe, producing seventeen elaborate defenses may accomplish nothing except giving the accusation greater visibility. **A fool can throw a stone into a well, but the Christian is not commanded to climb down after every stone.**

4. When Public Falsehood Requires a Public Biblical Answer

There are circumstances when silence would permit dangerous error to spread without necessary correction. Jude 3 declares that believers should “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” The context concerns ungodly men who had crept in unawares and were corrupting the truth. This is not permission to manufacture theological disputes over every insignificant disagreement. It is a serious warning concerning the defense of revealed doctrine against genuine corruption. Titus 1:9 likewise describes the qualification of a bishop who holds fast the faithful word so that he may be able “by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” The following verses describe those whose teaching subverts whole houses. Such errors cannot simply be dismissed as harmless personal opinions. When false teaching threatens the understanding of believers or misrepresents the gospel, a clear biblical answer may be necessary even when the false teacher has no desire to receive correction.

Galatians 2:11–14 provides a particularly important example. Paul confronted Peter at Antioch because Peter's conduct concerning fellowship with Gentile believers had compromised the practical implications of the truth of the gospel. Paul declared, “I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” The confrontation was not a private personality dispute elevated into public entertainment. Peter's conduct had affected other believers, and Paul addressed the issue because it concerned the truth being demonstrated before the church. This historical and doctrinal setting must be preserved. It does not authorize Christians to publicize every private disagreement, but it certainly disproves the claim that every public correction is inherently unbiblical. When an error has been promoted publicly and is influencing others, the necessary correction may also need to be public. The purpose, however, must remain the protection and clarification of truth, not the personal humiliation of the individual being corrected.

Consider a public claim that salvation requires water baptism, religious works, or continued personal performance to maintain eternal life. Such teaching directly affects the gospel and deserves a biblical answer. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares salvation by grace through faith, not of works. First Corinthians 15:1–4 identifies the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the essential gospel message. A Christian who encounters a public distortion of these truths may need to provide a clear explanation for the benefit of readers who have never examined the matter. But once the Scripture has been presented accurately and the error exposed, the Christian must consider whether additional replies accomplish anything. One carefully developed correction may instruct hundreds of silent readers. Twenty personal exchanges may merely demonstrate that two people possess

sufficient free time to repeat themselves indefinitely. **Biblical correction is measured by the truth established, not by the number of arguments accumulated beneath it.**

5. Foolish Questions, Circular Arguments, and the Man Who Refuses an Answer

Second Timothy 2:23 gives a command that modern Christians would do well to memorize: “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.” Paul does not merely warn Timothy to answer such questions carefully. He instructs him to avoid them. The surrounding context concerns the proper conduct of the servant of the Lord, the handling of the word of truth, and the rejection of profane and vain babblings. Verse 24 continues, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.” Notice the balance. The servant must be capable of teaching, but he must not become consumed with strife. There are arguments whose chief product is another argument. They generate heat without light, hostility without understanding, and endless controversy without spiritual profit. Paul does not commend participation in such activity as evidence of zeal. He commands its avoidance.

Titus 3:9 strengthens the instruction: “But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.” The immediate concerns include particular controversies troubling believers in the apostolic period. Nevertheless, the principle concerning unprofitable contention has an obvious application. A discussion becomes circular when the same objection is repeatedly presented after it has been answered, the same Scripture is continually ignored, and no new evidence or genuine difficulty is introduced. One individual asks a question, receives a documented answer, dismisses it without explanation, and immediately repeats the original question. The Christian answers again. The cycle continues until both have spent an afternoon accomplishing precisely what the passage warns against. Apparently, some people believe an argument becomes more intelligent after being repeated twenty times. Scripture calls certain contentions unprofitable and vain. Repetition does not convert them into useful ministry.

Second Timothy 2:25–26 explains the proper purpose of instruction: “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.” The desired result is acknowledgment of truth, not the personal satisfaction of winning a contest. This does not mean a Christian can determine another person's heart with infallible accuracy. A sincere questioner may struggle to understand an answer, and patience is appropriate when genuine confusion remains. But there is a difference between someone asking for clarification and someone repeatedly rejecting the same explanation while offering nothing substantive in return. The servant of the Lord should recognize that

distinction. When the discussion ceases to involve learning, evidence, or honest examination, further participation may become obedience to the provocateur rather than obedience to Scripture. **You cannot force a man to receive an answer merely by delivering it louder, longer, and more frequently.**

6. Pearls Before Swine and the Wisdom of Closing the Door

Matthew 7:6 records the Lord Jesus Christ declaring, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” The statement occurs within the Sermon on the Mount, delivered by Israel's Messiah to His disciples in the context of His teaching concerning the kingdom. The original setting must not be erased by pretending that every instruction in Matthew belongs doctrinally to the Church without distinction. Nevertheless, the moral wisdom concerning discernment is plain. Something valuable should not be deliberately placed where it will be treated with contempt and used as an occasion for attack. The passage does not permit Christians to label every unbeliever a dog or every person who disagrees with them a swine. Such reckless applications would contradict the responsibility to preach the gospel to sinners. The issue is the discernment required when sacred truth is deliberately despised.

Proverbs 23:9 declares, “Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.” Compare that instruction with Proverbs 9:7–8, which warns concerning the response of the scorner to rebuke. The Scriptures distinguish the teachable person from the individual who treats correction as another opportunity for hostility. Some people enter a discussion announcing that they want biblical evidence, but every verse supplied becomes an excuse for another insult. Others demand an explanation while openly declaring that no explanation could possibly change their conclusion. The Christian must not assume responsibility for overcoming deliberate dishonesty through unlimited repetition. There is no righteousness in allowing somebody to turn sacred truth into a perpetual theatrical performance. A man who persistently tramples the pearls has already demonstrated what he intends to do with the next handful. Continuing to supply them may accomplish little beyond exhausting the person who brought them.

Titus 3:10 declares, “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.” The surrounding passage concerns doctrinal contention and those who persist in divisive error. It must not be converted into permission to brand every sincere Christian who disagrees about a secondary matter as a heretic. Nor does it authorize personal harassment or abusive treatment. The instruction establishes that admonition does not have to continue indefinitely when someone persistently promotes destructive error. Romans 16:17 similarly commands believers to mark and avoid those causing divisions

and offenses contrary to received doctrine. Applied carefully, these principles demonstrate that refusing continued association or discussion may be appropriate when necessary warnings have already been given. In modern communication, that may involve declining further replies, restricting access, or blocking someone who persistently promotes falsehood or harassment. **Closing a door against endless contention is not the same thing as closing the Bible against honest questions.** Wisdom knows which door is being closed.

7. Redeeming the Time Means Refusing to Let Fools Manage Your Ministry

Ephesians 5:15–16 commands, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Paul addresses believers concerning their conduct in a wicked world. The command requires careful walking rather than careless involvement in whatever demands attention. Time is a limited earthly resource, and Christians will answer for the manner in which they employ the opportunities God provides. Social media presents extraordinary possibilities for preaching, teaching, encouragement, and distributing biblical instruction. Yet it also presents an endless collection of distractions disguised as urgent responsibilities. A person may begin the morning intending to prepare a Bible study and discover three hours later that he has accomplished nothing except answer accusations from strangers. The remarkable thing is that he may still describe the afternoon as ministry. But spending time upon religious controversy does not automatically mean the time has been redeemed. A man can waste an entire day arguing about the importance of serving God.

Colossians 4:5–6 provides further instruction: “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” The immediate setting concerns Paul's desire for opportunities to make Christ known. The command to answer wisely therefore belongs within a larger concern for faithful Christian witness. A believer should consider not only the person arguing with him but also those silently reading the conversation. Sometimes a concise biblical correction is necessary because an unanswered falsehood might mislead sincere readers. Once the truth has been established, however, continuing the quarrel may damage the very testimony the original correction was intended to protect. The Christian should consider whether his next response will add necessary instruction or merely satisfy his desire to possess the final word. The gospel is too important to bury beneath an endless contest over who can outlast the other person.

The distinction between defending doctrine and defending personal pride must remain central. Philippians 2:3 commands, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” That instruction does not

require the surrender of biblical convictions. It forbids allowing selfish ambition and empty glory to control conduct. Sometimes the reason a Christian cannot leave an argument is not that the truth remains undefended. It is that he cannot tolerate the possibility of somebody believing he has been defeated. His opponent has discovered the perfect method of controlling him: issue another provocation and watch another hour disappear. Meanwhile, family responsibilities remain unattended, Bible study is postponed, prayer is neglected, and genuine ministry opportunities pass unnoticed. **The devil does not always have to persuade a Christian to abandon the ministry. Sometimes he only has to keep him arguing with somebody who will never listen.** Redeeming the time requires knowing when enough has been said.

Conclusion

The two instructions in Proverbs 26:4–5 remain among the most practical examples of biblical wisdom concerning human conversation. One warns against answering foolishness in a manner that makes the responder foolish. The other warns against allowing foolishness to become confident in its own imagined wisdom when correction is necessary. There is no contradiction, and there is no requirement to choose one verse while disregarding the other. Both must be applied according to the circumstances Scripture describes. The Christian should answer the sincere questioner with patience, instruct the confused believer through Scripture, confront dangerous public error when necessary, and refuse to be drawn into endless exchanges that produce nothing but strife. Silence must never become an excuse for cowardice, but speaking must never become an excuse for vanity. A faithful witness does not measure his courage by the number of controversies he enters or his wisdom by the number of opponents he silences.

The Lord Jesus Christ provides the perfect example of one who always knew when to speak and when to remain silent. He answered genuine questions, exposed religious hypocrisy, corrected false understanding, and proclaimed divine truth without compromise. Yet He also refused to satisfy every hostile demand or provide entertainment for those seeking a spectacle. Christians possess neither His perfect knowledge nor His sinless judgment, which makes submission to the written Word all the more necessary. First Peter 3:15 commands readiness to give an answer concerning the hope within the believer, with meekness and fear. Second Timothy 2:23 commands the avoidance of foolish and unlearned questions. Both instructions must govern Christian communication. The believer who walks according to Scripture will neither hide the gospel from those who need it nor waste his life attempting to persuade people whose only purpose is to consume his attention. Faithfulness requires courage to speak, patience to teach, and wisdom to stop.

The world's loudest tavern will continue producing arguments long after the present generation has departed. Another accusation will appear, another provocateur will demand attention, and another foolish question will be presented as though nobody in the history of Christianity has ever considered it. The Christian cannot answer everything, nor has God commanded him to try. His commission concerns the gospel of Jesus Christ, the teaching of sound doctrine, and faithful obedience to the Scriptures. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. That message deserves the Christian's time, attention, and faithful proclamation. Let the truth be stated clearly. Let sincere questions receive careful answers. Let dangerous error be exposed. And when the discussion becomes nothing more than another invitation to foolishness, let the Word already spoken stand without another unnecessary argument. **A fool believes that having the last word proves he has won. A wise Christian understands that when God's Word has settled the matter, the last word has already been spoken.**

5 of 10 — Social Media and the Christian Tongue — Rebuke Before All or Speak Privately? Correcting Error Without Creating a Spectacle

Key Passage: 1 Timothy 5:19–20 (KJV)

“Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”

Introduction

There is a peculiar kind of Christianity operating on social media that believes every private disagreement deserves a public execution and every public false doctrine deserves the protection of a private conversation. A man can publish heresy before fifty thousand people, and somebody will immediately insist that correcting him publicly violates Matthew 18. Meanwhile, another Christian can make an innocent mistake in a private message, and somebody else will publish the entire conversation before breakfast, complete with screenshots, accusations, and a triumphant announcement that another great scandal has been uncovered. Apparently, the modern rule is that heretics deserve privacy while ordinary brethren deserve an audience. That arrangement may satisfy the appetite for controversy, but it has precious little to do with rightly dividing the word of truth. First Timothy 5:19–20 establishes two important principles concerning accusations and correction. Paul warns against receiving accusations without proper testimony, yet he also commands that those who sin be rebuked before all. Both instructions are Scripture.

Both require obedience. Neither can be discarded simply because it interferes with somebody's preferred method of handling a controversy.

The problem is not that Christians correct one another. The problem is that too many have forgotten the difference between correction and destruction. Biblical correction seeks truth, protects those who may be harmed, exposes genuine wickedness, and calls the offender to repentance. Fleshly correction frequently seeks applause, retaliation, superiority, or the satisfaction of making another person look foolish. One man discovers a doctrinal error and carefully opens the Scriptures to demonstrate the truth. Another discovers a private embarrassment and immediately begins advertising it as though he has uncovered the greatest religious conspiracy since the golden calf. Both may describe themselves as defenders of righteousness, but motives matter, methods matter, evidence matters, and the consequences of unnecessary exposure matter. Proverbs 18:13 declares, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” The Christian who rushes to condemn somebody before understanding the circumstances has not demonstrated spiritual courage. He has demonstrated that his eagerness to speak has outrun his willingness to investigate.

Scripture provides different instructions for different circumstances because different circumstances require different responses. Matthew 18:15–17 addresses a brother's trespass and the progressive handling of an offense. Galatians 2:11–14 records Paul confronting Peter publicly because Peter's conduct had publicly compromised the truth of the gospel. First Timothy 5:19–20 establishes safeguards concerning accusations against elders while requiring public rebuke when the circumstances warrant it. Second Timothy 4:2 commands the preaching of the Word through reproof, rebuke, and exhortation with longsuffering and doctrine. These passages do not contradict one another. They address matters that must be distinguished rather than carelessly thrown into one convenient religious formula. A personal offense is not automatically a public doctrinal scandal. A public false gospel is not merely a private misunderstanding. An unverified accusation is not established guilt, and a documented danger is not something to conceal merely because exposure might embarrass an institution. **Biblical correction requires enough courage to confront what is wrong and enough wisdom not to manufacture wrong where it does not exist.**

1. Matthew 18 Was Never Permission to Turn Every Private Offense Into Public Entertainment

Matthew 18:15 begins with words that should settle considerable confusion: “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” Notice the situation. A brother

has trespassed against another, and the offended individual is instructed to approach him privately. The stated purpose is not to gather evidence for a future public humiliation. It is to gain the brother. This teaching was delivered by the Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry to Israel, before His death, burial, resurrection, and the full revelation of the Church's position in Christ through the apostle Paul. The immediate historical setting must be respected. Nevertheless, its principle concerning personal reconciliation is entirely consistent with the conduct expected among Christians. If a private offense can be resolved privately, there is no spiritual advantage in dragging it before an audience. The Lord did not establish an entertainment committee for offended brethren.

The following verses establish a progression. If the offending brother refuses to hear, one or two more are to be taken so that every word may be established. If he continues refusing, the matter proceeds before the assembly. The movement is from private confrontation toward broader accountability when necessary, not from private irritation directly into public exposure. The additional witnesses serve a purpose beyond increasing the number of people who know about the controversy. They help establish the matter and provide a proper basis for further action. Matthew 18:17 refers to telling the matter unto the church, an important feature of the Lord's instruction that must be considered in its historical setting and subsequent application. The passage concerns an identifiable matter requiring judgment, not somebody's desire to circulate an embarrassing private conversation. A person who skips every reasonable opportunity for reconciliation and immediately publishes an accusation has reversed the direction of Christ's instruction. That is not obedience to Matthew 18. It is disobedience wearing the passage as a disguise.

Consider a practical example. Two Christians exchange private messages concerning a misunderstanding, an unfortunate remark, or a disagreement that does not involve public false teaching or immediate danger. One becomes offended and publishes the conversation to thousands of strangers, inviting them to judge the other person's character. What has been accomplished? A matter that might have been resolved through one honest conversation now becomes a public controversy involving people who know little about either individual. Proverbs 17:9 declares, “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.” That proverb does not command the concealment of abuse, crimes, or continuing danger. It addresses the destructive habit of unnecessarily repeating offenses that ought to be handled through faithfulness and discretion. Some Christians are remarkably skilled at finding the publication button and remarkably inexperienced with the private conversation. **If your first instinct after a personal disagreement is to assemble an audience, you may be more interested in winning spectators than gaining your brother.**

2. Matthew 18 Is Not a Muzzle for Public False Teachers

One of the most dishonest applications of Matthew 18 occurs when somebody publicly promotes false doctrine and then insists that no Christian may challenge it without first arranging a private meeting. A teacher can publish a false gospel, distribute it across several platforms, instruct thousands of people to believe it, and then complain that a public biblical correction violates Christian conduct. That is a convenient arrangement for the false teacher, but it is not established by the passage. Matthew 18:15 specifically addresses a brother's trespass against another person. It does not declare that every published doctrinal error becomes immune from public examination until the person correcting it has completed a private disciplinary process. If the doctrine has been announced publicly, the doctrine may be examined publicly. The distinction is essential. Correcting a published teaching is not automatically the same thing as prosecuting a private offense. A Christian who confuses the two has allowed a passage concerning personal reconciliation to become a protective fence around public error.

Acts 17:11 commends those at Berea because “they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Their examination of apostolic preaching demonstrates the importance of testing teaching against Scripture. Paul likewise instructed Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” The instruction does not limit necessary doctrinal correction to private conversations. It places the Word of God at the center of preaching and correction. Titus 1:9 requires a qualified bishop to hold fast the faithful word so that he may “by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” The following verses describe teachers whose mouths must be stopped because they subvert whole houses. Such language is considerably stronger than the modern suggestion that every theological disagreement should be handled through a polite private message that nobody else is permitted to examine.

The determining issue is the nature of the error and the responsibility involved in answering it. Suppose a public teacher announces that salvation requires water baptism, religious ordinances, or continued works to remain saved. That teaching directly contradicts the gospel of salvation by grace through faith established in Ephesians 2:8–9. It deserves scriptural examination, particularly when sincere readers may otherwise be deceived. The correction should address the actual teaching, establish its error through the Bible, and explain the truth. There is no necessity to invent accusations about the teacher's private life or publish unrelated personal information. The objective is doctrinal clarity, not character assassination. **A public lie does not become private property simply because the person who published it dislikes being corrected.** At the same time, a public

disagreement over a secondary matter does not automatically justify treating another Christian as a dangerous heretic. Biblical judgment requires both doctrinal conviction and careful distinctions.

3. Paul Withstood Peter Publicly Because the Gospel Was Being Publicly Compromised

Galatians 2:11 provides a clear example of public correction: “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” The setting is critical. Peter had been eating with Gentile believers, but when certain men came from James, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those of the circumcision. Galatians 2:13 declares that other Jews participated in his dissimulation, and even Barnabas was carried away by it. The controversy was not merely a disagreement over table arrangements. Peter's conduct implied a distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers that compromised the practical truth of their standing in Christ. Paul recognized the doctrinal significance of what was happening. His confrontation was not motivated by a desire to demonstrate superiority over Peter or gain personal influence among the Gentiles. He confronted a public inconsistency that was leading others into error. The matter had already moved beyond a private misunderstanding because Peter's conduct was influencing the assembly.

Paul explains his concern in Galatians 2:14: “But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all.” Notice the standard. Paul did not say that Peter had embarrassed him, offended his personal preferences, or failed to acknowledge his importance. He said they were not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. The issue concerned the practical implications of justification apart from the works of the law and the standing of Gentile believers in Christ. Peter's conduct had become public, its influence was public, and Paul's correction was delivered before those affected by it. This passage establishes that public correction can be entirely appropriate when a public action compromises essential truth. It also establishes that the correction must have a legitimate biblical foundation. Paul did not publish a collection of Peter's private weaknesses merely because he had discovered an opportunity to embarrass an apostle.

The incident should also silence the notion that correction is automatically disrespectful when directed toward a recognized spiritual leader. Peter was an apostle personally called by the Lord Jesus Christ, yet his conduct was not beyond examination. The authority of Scripture does not become subordinate to the reputation of the person being corrected. Nevertheless, Paul's example must not be twisted into permission for ordinary believers to conduct theatrical confrontations over every minor disagreement. The seriousness of Peter's conduct, its public influence, and its relationship to the truth of the gospel explain

the necessity of Paul's response. Christians today should follow the principle rather than merely imitate the volume. If a brother teaches error publicly, correct the error with Scripture. If he acknowledges the correction, there may be no need for continued controversy. **The purpose of public correction is not to prove that the person correcting is superior. It is to demonstrate that the truth of God is superior to every person involved.**

4. Against an Elder Receive Not an Accusation — Evidence Before Exposure

First Timothy 5:19–20 must be examined in its proper setting because these verses are frequently handled carelessly. Paul is instructing Timothy concerning the affairs of the local church, including the treatment of elders who rule well and labor in the Word and doctrine. Verse 19 declares, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." The command recognizes the seriousness of accusing someone entrusted with spiritual responsibility. An elder may become the target of resentment, false allegations, or attempts to undermine his ministry. Therefore, accusations must not be accepted simply because somebody makes them confidently. Proper testimony and examination are required. That safeguard protects both the congregation and the person accused. A church that destroys its leadership upon unsupported allegations is not practicing biblical accountability. It is permitting accusation to replace judgment. The pulpit is not a throne above examination, but neither is it a shooting gallery for every disgruntled individual carrying a rumor.

Verse 20 continues, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." In the immediate context, Paul is addressing the handling of elders and their accountability. The previous verse establishes safeguards concerning accusations; this verse addresses the public rebuke of those whose sin requires such action. The two commandments belong together. A man must not be condemned merely because an accusation exists, yet proven wrongdoing must not be concealed merely because the offender occupies an important position. Verse 21 reinforces the seriousness of impartial judgment: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality." There is the standard. No favoritism. No predetermined verdict. No special exemption for a popular preacher. No automatic condemnation because an elder has acquired enemies. The truth must govern the examination and the response. **A church that believes every accusation will eventually destroy the innocent; a church that investigates none of them may leave the guilty free to continue.**

This becomes especially important when allegations involve abuse, exploitation, threats, or criminal wrongdoing. The biblical command to establish accusations must never be

transformed into an excuse for ignoring credible reports, intimidating those who come forward, or refusing appropriate civil investigation. Romans 13:1–4 recognizes the authority of civil government in dealing with evil, and the church does not possess permission to conceal criminal conduct under the pretense of preserving its reputation. First Timothy 5:19 is a standard concerning the responsible reception of accusations against elders, not a command to disregard evidence merely because two eyewitnesses were not standing in the room. Documents, corroborating circumstances, testimony, and proper investigation may all contribute to determining what happened. The church must distinguish allegation from established fact while taking necessary protective measures when danger is credible. Biblical justice does not consist of automatically believing everyone or automatically disbelieving everyone. It consists of refusing dishonesty, favoritism, and reckless judgment while seeking the truth.

5. Private Messages, Screenshots, and the Modern Ministry of Public Embarrassment

Proverbs 11:13 declares, “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.” There is a world of difference between revealing information because righteousness requires disclosure and revealing it because somebody enjoys the attention produced by scandal. Private correspondence often contains informal language, incomplete explanations, personal concerns, or matters shared in reasonable confidence. The fact that a Christian possesses a message does not automatically mean he has a righteous reason to publish it. Some people apparently believe every private conversation is merely a public controversy waiting for an appropriate occasion. They collect screenshots the way a farmer collects seed, except they are not planning to grow anything worth harvesting. When disagreement develops, the collection becomes ammunition. The question is no longer how to resolve the original matter but how much embarrassment can be inflicted upon the other person. Scripture calls for faithfulness, not the deliberate cultivation of future opportunities for retaliation.

Yet confidentiality is not absolute. There are occasions when private correspondence provides necessary evidence of threats, misconduct, abuse, deception, or other wrongdoing that must be disclosed to responsible persons. The distinction concerns legitimate purpose and proper handling. A threatening message may need to be preserved and presented to authorities. A documented attempt to deceive believers may require examination by church leadership or appropriate public warning. But a conversation containing personal irritation, awkward wording, or a minor disagreement does not automatically deserve worldwide distribution. Even when disclosure is warranted, honesty requires preserving the relevant context rather than arranging selected sentences to create a misleading impression. Proverbs 18:17 declares, “He that is first in his own cause

seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." One screenshot may establish that certain words were written. It does not necessarily establish the complete circumstances, the meaning intended, or the truth of every accusation built upon it. **Evidence must be examined, not merely displayed.**

The Christian who publishes private material must also consider the consequences for innocent people. A controversy between two individuals may involve spouses, children, congregations, coworkers, or people whose names and circumstances have no legitimate reason to become public. Broadcasting unnecessary private details can damage relationships that had nothing to do with the original disagreement. Proverbs 16:28 warns, "A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends." That warning is not suspended when the whisperer owns a religious account. Ephesians 4:29 commands communication that is good to the use of edifying, and verse 31 requires evil speaking and malice to be put away. These commandments do not prohibit truthful warnings about genuine danger, but they do condemn the unnecessary multiplication of injury. A Christian should never confuse possession of private information with divine authorization to publish it. The person who can expose every embarrassing sentence another believer has written may still lack the spiritual judgment to know which sentences ought to remain private.

6. Biblical Rebuke Seeks Restoration, Not the Destruction of a Brother

Galatians 6:1 supplies one of the clearest New Testament instructions concerning the correction of a fallen believer: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Notice the word "restore." Paul does not instruct spiritually minded believers to assemble an audience, advertise the offender's disgrace, and compete to produce the harshest condemnation. The objective is restoration, and the manner is meekness. That does not mean wrongdoing should be minimized, consequences ignored, or dangerous conduct concealed. Restoration requires truth concerning the offense and genuine repentance where sin has occurred. But it does mean the person correcting must examine his own spirit rather than treating another person's failure as a glorious opportunity for self-exaltation. The individual who enjoys humiliating a fallen brother ought to read the warning about considering himself. A man standing beside a ditch should not become so occupied with mocking the person who fell that he forgets where his own feet are planted.

Second Thessalonians 3:14–15 provides another important distinction concerning church discipline. Paul instructs believers to note the man who refuses obedience to the apostolic instruction and to have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet verse 15 immediately adds, "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." Discipline and brotherly concern are not contradictory. A congregation may need to

withdraw fellowship from someone persisting in disobedience without treating that person as an object of personal hatred. First Corinthians 5 likewise demonstrates that serious, public, unrepentant sin may require decisive action by the assembled church. Paul's instruction concerning the immoral man at Corinth was not an invitation to circulate entertaining gossip. It concerned the purity of the assembly and the necessity of addressing conduct that brought reproach upon the testimony of Christ. Biblical discipline may be severe, but severity is not the same thing as cruelty. The difference lies in righteousness, purpose, and obedience to Scripture.

The distinction becomes especially revealing when a corrected brother acknowledges his error. If the original concern was genuinely doctrinal, an accurate correction should satisfy the need for truth. If the offense involved personal wrongdoing, repentance and appropriate restitution should be considered according to the circumstances. But some people are not satisfied when an individual repents. They want his humiliation to continue because the controversy has become personally profitable. A public correction receives attention, so they repeat it. The offender offers clarification, so they reinterpret the clarification as further evidence of guilt. He acknowledges wrongdoing, and they announce that the confession proves he was even worse than they claimed. At that point, correction has become a business that cannot afford to lose its customer. Second Corinthians 2:6–8 demonstrates Paul's concern that a disciplined individual should not be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow and that love should be confirmed toward him. **When repentance becomes an inconvenience to the person demanding correction, the objective may no longer be righteousness.**

7. Is the Goal to Defend the Truth or to Become the Center of Attention?

Second Timothy 4:2 commands, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” The command is not merely to rebuke. It includes preaching the Word, exhortation, longsuffering, and doctrine. These elements are essential because biblical correction must be governed by the authority of Scripture rather than the personality of the person delivering it. The following verses warn that a time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine but will turn toward teachers who satisfy their own desires. The answer is not to abandon sound doctrine or replace it with entertainment. The answer is faithful preaching. A Christian who corrects another person publicly should therefore be able to demonstrate the actual biblical issue. If the correction consists primarily of insults, insinuations, and personal attacks, it is reasonable to ask where the promised doctrine has gone. An argument conducted in the name of biblical truth ought eventually to contain some biblical truth.

The desire for public recognition can corrupt even a legitimate correction. Philippians 2:3 commands, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” A person may expose an actual error while secretly enjoying the opportunity to increase his own importance. He may be correct concerning the doctrine but wrong concerning his motive. John 3:30 records John the Baptist declaring concerning Christ, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” John's historical ministry and prophetic calling were unique, but the principle of directing attention toward Christ rather than personal prominence deserves careful consideration. The servant of God must not become more important than the message entrusted to him. Public correction should make biblical truth clearer, not merely make the correcting individual more famous. A man who begins every controversy with a Bible verse and ends it with a celebration of his own brilliance has managed to change the subject without noticing.

The Judgment Seat of Christ should also restrain the Christian's appetite for public controversy. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” This concerns the believer's accountability before Christ and must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20. The Christian is saved by grace through faith, and his eternal security rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, his service remains subject to examination. First Corinthians 4:5 speaks of the Lord bringing to light hidden things and making manifest the counsels of the hearts. That means motives matter. A correction that appears courageous before an audience may have been driven by envy, resentment, or the desire for applause. A quiet private admonition may receive no public recognition while accomplishing genuine spiritual good. **The crowd sees who won the controversy. The Lord knows why the controversy was started.**

Conclusion

The Scriptures provide no support for the notion that every offense must be publicized or that every public error must be handled privately. Matthew 18:15–17 establishes the seriousness of addressing personal offenses with a view toward reconciliation and proper accountability. Galatians 2:11–14 demonstrates that public conduct compromising gospel truth may require public correction. First Timothy 5:19–20 safeguards the reception of accusations against elders while commanding appropriate public rebuke when wrongdoing is established. Second Timothy 4:2 requires reproof and rebuke to remain joined to the preaching of the Word, longsuffering, and doctrine. These passages form a coherent biblical pattern when their audiences, circumstances, and purposes are properly

understood. They do not authorize reckless exposure, and they do not command cowardly silence. The Christian must identify the actual nature of the matter before determining the appropriate response. Private misunderstanding, public doctrinal error, serious misconduct, and dangerous criminal behavior are not interchangeable categories. The Bible contains sufficient wisdom to distinguish them without permitting personal ambition to manufacture confusion.

The practical responsibilities are substantial. If a brother privately offends you, pursue an honest resolution rather than immediately advertising the matter. If somebody publicly teaches a false gospel, examine the teaching openly through Scripture without inventing personal allegations. If an accusation concerns a spiritual leader, insist upon careful examination rather than automatic belief or automatic dismissal. If wrongdoing threatens the safety of others, protect those who may be harmed and involve appropriate authorities when necessary. If private correspondence must be disclosed, present it honestly and only as broadly as legitimate circumstances require. If a brother acknowledges a genuine fault, consider whether the purpose of correction has been accomplished rather than demanding additional humiliation. Proverbs 15:28 declares, “The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.” The righteous man studies before answering. He considers truth, circumstances, evidence, and consequences. The wicked man simply pours out whatever happens to be available. **Biblical courage does not eliminate biblical caution, and biblical caution does not excuse the refusal to confront genuine evil.**

The world's loudest tavern will always reward the person who can produce the largest scandal, the harshest accusation, and the most entertaining public humiliation. But the Christian has not been commissioned to operate according to the tavern's standards. He represents the Lord Jesus Christ, whose Word commands both truthfulness and righteousness. John 8:32 declares, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” The immediate setting concerns Christ's words to those Jews who believed on Him and continued in His Word, but the statement reminds us that truth is central to His teaching. The Christian must therefore refuse to protect error through dishonest silence and refuse to manufacture scandal through dishonest speech. He must care enough about the truth to expose what genuinely requires exposure and care enough about his brother to avoid unnecessary destruction. The purpose of correction is not to build a throne from another person's failure. It is to uphold God's Word, protect His people, and call men to what is right. **A faithful Christian does not hide the truth to protect a reputation, and he does not destroy a reputation to advertise himself as a defender of the truth. He lets Scripture determine when to speak, how to speak, and when the matter has been properly settled.**

6 of 10 — Social Media and the Christian Tongue — Contend for the Faith, Then Block the Heretic: The Biblical Limits of Endless Debate

Key Passage: Jude 3 (KJV)

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

Introduction

There is a command in Jude 3 that ought to put some backbone into every Christian who has been persuaded that defending biblical truth is somehow unloving. Jude declares, “that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Notice that the command is not to casually mention the faith, apologize for the faith, negotiate the faith, or surrender the faith whenever somebody becomes offended. The word is *contend*, and the instruction is intensified by *earnestly*. The Christian has been entrusted with divine revelation, not a collection of religious suggestions awaiting approval from the latest generation of unbelievers. Yet there is another danger lurking immediately behind this command. Some Christians have apparently concluded that earnestly contending requires spending every waking hour arguing with every fool who discovers their account. They begin by defending the Bible and end by defending their own ego. What started as doctrinal conviction becomes an exhausting contest to see who can type the final sentence.

Social media has furnished false teachers with an audience that previous generations of religious deceivers could scarcely have imagined. A man can deny the deity of Jesus Christ, corrupt the gospel of grace, teach baptismal regeneration, reject eternal security, or introduce another counterfeit Christianity, and within minutes his words can reach thousands of people. The same instrument can be used to expose his error through the Scriptures. That opportunity should not be surrendered. But neither should Christians mistake unlimited argument for unlimited faithfulness. Some people enter a discussion because they genuinely want to understand the Bible. Others arrive carrying a theological position they have never examined carefully. Still others have already decided that no amount of Scripture will change their minds, and their only ambition is to keep the argument going until everybody involved has wasted another afternoon. The Christian who cannot distinguish these people will eventually spend more time feeding controversy than proclaiming Christ. A man can become so occupied with fighting religious error that he neglects the very truth he claims to defend.

Scripture provides a complete answer to this problem when its commands are handled together instead of selectively. Jude 3 commands earnest contention. Titus 3:9–11 warns against foolish controversies and establishes limits upon dealing with a divisive heretic. Romans 16:17–18 commands believers to mark and avoid those who cause divisions contrary to sound doctrine. Second John 9–11 warns against receiving those who refuse the doctrine of Christ. Second Timothy 2:24–26 requires the servant of the Lord to teach patiently rather than become addicted to strife. There is no contradiction among these passages. God commands His people to defend truth, instruct the teachable, expose deception, and recognize when continued association becomes spiritually unprofitable. Sometimes a public answer is necessary. Sometimes a second admonition is sufficient. Sometimes the most faithful thing a Christian can do is block the persistent troublemaker and return to preaching the gospel. **The Bible commands believers to contend for the faith. It never commands them to become full-time employees in the argument department of hell.**

1. Earnestly Contend for the Faith, Not for Your Personal Reputation

Jude begins his epistle by identifying himself as the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, writing to those sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called. His original intention involved writing concerning the common salvation, but circumstances demanded a direct warning against dangerous religious corruption. Jude 4 explains why: “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” These were not merely confused believers asking sincere questions. They were ungodly men introducing destructive error among those who professed the faith. Jude's command to contend must be understood against that background. The faith once delivered was under attack, and silence would not have been a demonstration of spiritual maturity. It would have left dangerous falsehood without necessary opposition.

Notice the expression “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Jude does not present biblical truth as an unfinished religious experiment requiring constant revision. The Christian faith rests upon divine revelation, centered upon the person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostolic message was not something men possessed authority to rewrite according to changing public opinion. Galatians 1:8 declares that even if an angel from heaven should preach another gospel, he is to be accursed. That is considerably stronger language than the modern suggestion that all religious positions deserve equal acceptance. Biblical Christianity does not permit a man to deny Christ's deity, corrupt salvation, and then demand recognition as merely another harmless interpreter. The issue

is not whether a false teacher possesses a pleasant personality or an impressive audience. The issue is whether his doctrine agrees with what God has revealed. **A counterfeit gospel does not become genuine because the counterfeit preacher smiles while distributing it.**

But earnest contention must not be confused with personal combat over wounded pride. Jude commands believers to contend for *the faith*, not for their own importance, popularity, or reputation as unbeatable debaters. A Christian may correctly expose false teaching while indulging sinful motives in the process. Philippians 2:3 commands, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory." That instruction does not prohibit the correction of error; it prohibits allowing selfish ambition and empty glory to govern conduct. If a man becomes furious because somebody rejects the deity of Christ, he should examine the doctrinal issue carefully. If he becomes equally furious because somebody questions his intelligence, he ought to examine himself. Those are not identical offenses. One concerns the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ. The other may concern a man's inability to tolerate criticism. The Christian who cannot distinguish defending Christ from defending himself is already approaching the controversy with defective spiritual judgment.

2. Another Gospel Is Not a Harmless Difference of Opinion

The central message of Christianity is not complicated, although religious systems have labored for centuries to bury it beneath ceremonies, requirements, and human accomplishments. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes the means of salvation: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." A sinner receives eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not through water baptism, church membership, religious observances, personal merit, or successful completion of a lifetime of good behavior. Romans 4:5 declares that God justifies the ungodly who believe on Him. A gospel requiring sinners to contribute their works as the basis of justification is not an improved gospel. It is another gospel, and the apostle Paul already pronounced judgment upon that religious merchandise.

The person of Jesus Christ is equally nonnegotiable. John 1:1 declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14 identifies the Word made flesh. Colossians 2:9 declares concerning Christ, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." These passages do not leave room for a counterfeit Jesus who is merely a created being, an exalted angel, or an ordinary man later promoted into divine status. First John 4:2–3 emphasizes the importance of confessing Jesus Christ come

in the flesh, and 2 John 7 warns against deceivers who reject that confession. When a religious teacher attacks the biblical identity of Christ, he is not making a minor adjustment to Christian terminology. He is striking at the foundation. The devil is perfectly willing to let a man use the name Jesus provided he can persuade him to reject the Jesus revealed in Scripture.

Nevertheless, not every mistaken Christian should immediately be classified as a heretic. A believer may misunderstand a difficult passage, inherit an incorrect teaching, or struggle to reconcile Scriptures he has not yet studied carefully. Acts 18:24–26 records Apollos, an eloquent man mighty in the Scriptures, whose understanding required further instruction. Aquila and Priscilla took him unto them and expounded the way of God more perfectly. They did not establish a public campaign to destroy him for possessing incomplete understanding. They taught him. That distinction matters. A sincere believer who asks whether baptism contributes to salvation deserves careful instruction from Scripture. A persistent teacher who has repeatedly encountered the biblical answer yet continues promoting a false gospel requires a different response. Christians must distinguish ignorance from deliberate propagation of error. **A confused sheep needs instruction; a wolf spreading poison needs to be exposed. The tragedy begins when Christians cannot tell the difference.**

3. The Servant of the Lord Must Teach, Not Become a Professional Quarreler

Second Timothy 2:24 provides one of the most direct instructions concerning Christian controversy: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.” Paul is writing to Timothy concerning the responsibilities of a faithful servant amid doctrinal corruption and opposition. The surrounding passage warns against profane and vain babblings, including the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who were teaching that the resurrection was past already and overthrowing the faith of some. Paul does not dismiss their error as harmless. He names the false teaching and explains its destructive effect. Yet he also commands Timothy to avoid foolish and unlearned questions that generate strife. Both responsibilities belong together. A faithful servant must possess sufficient biblical knowledge to correct error and sufficient spiritual discipline to recognize when an argument has ceased to be profitable.

The following verses explain how instruction should be conducted: “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:25). The purpose is acknowledgment of truth, not the humiliation of an opponent. Meekness does not mean weakness, and patience does not mean doctrinal compromise. A Christian can state plainly that baptismal regeneration contradicts salvation by grace without calling the questioner an idiot. He can

expose a denial of Christ's deity without inventing accusations about the teacher's private life. He can demonstrate the error of works-based salvation without treating every confused religious person as an enemy beyond correction. If a man cannot explain sound doctrine without losing his temper, the problem may not be the difficulty of the passage. It may be the condition of the man explaining it. **A preacher who needs a personal insult to support his doctrine has brought a remarkably poor substitute for Scripture.**

Yet patience must not become an excuse for endless repetition. Second Timothy 2:23 commands, "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes." Some questioners genuinely struggle with the same issue and deserve additional explanation. Others repeatedly demand answers they have already received, ignore the verses supplied, and immediately return with precisely the same objection. No new evidence appears. No meaningful question develops. The conversation simply circles the same ground until the Christian becomes exhausted. There is no spiritual virtue in repeating an answer indefinitely when the other participant has demonstrated no intention of engaging honestly. A man may read Ephesians 2:8–9 twenty times and still insist that salvation is earned through works. The failure is not necessarily in the explanation. Sometimes the hearer refuses what the passage plainly says. Scripture commands patient instruction, but it does not require a Christian to spend the remainder of his earthly life conducting remedial lessons for someone determined to reject the textbook.

4. Mark Them Which Cause Divisions and Offences Contrary to Doctrine

Romans 16:17–18 contains an instruction that the modern religious world frequently avoids because it interferes with its sentimental definition of Christian unity. Paul writes, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." Notice both commands. Believers are to mark such individuals and avoid them. The word *mark* requires recognition and identification of the danger. The word *avoid* requires separation rather than endless fellowship with those persistently producing doctrinal corruption. Paul continues by explaining that such individuals do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly, and that through good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple. False teachers are not always loud, abrasive, or obviously unpleasant. Some possess tremendous charm. Their ability to speak attractively may be the very instrument through which they introduce error.

The context also prevents careless misuse. Romans 16 does not authorize Christians to mark every believer who disagrees with them concerning an insignificant matter. Paul specifically identifies divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine already received. The standard is established apostolic truth, not personal preference, denominational tradition,

or the latest interpretation promoted by an internet personality. A Christian who announces that everybody disagreeing with his opinion must be marked and avoided has confused himself with the final authority. The Bible occupies that position, not the individual interpreting it. Nevertheless, once genuine doctrinal corruption has been established, the command cannot be dismissed merely because separation appears unfriendly. A false teacher may possess an enormous audience, impressive credentials, and a reputation for kindness. None of those qualities converts error into truth. **A wolf wearing a respectable necktie remains a wolf, and a smooth sermon does not make poisonous doctrine fit for consumption.**

Consider how the instruction applies to modern communication. A Christian encounters an account persistently teaching that salvation requires religious works. He presents Scripture establishing justification by faith and explains the contradiction. The teacher refuses correction and continues using the conversation to promote his system. Must the Christian provide unlimited replies? Romans 16:17 says to avoid those identified by the passage, not to establish a permanent debating partnership with them. Avoidance may involve refusing further discussion, declining to promote their material, warning others concerning documented false teaching, or blocking an account that continually seeks access to one's audience. The action should be governed by the seriousness and persistence of the error, not personal irritation. Blocking a sincere questioner because he asks something difficult is foolish. Refusing continued participation with a determined promoter of destructive doctrine can be entirely consistent with biblical separation. The difference is established by Scripture, not by the size of the Christian's temper.

5. Receive Him Not: When Separation Becomes a Biblical Responsibility

Second John 9 declares, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” The immediate context concerns deceivers who refuse the biblical confession concerning Jesus Christ come in the flesh. John writes to the elect lady and her children, emphasizing truth, love, obedience, and the danger posed by those who would corrupt the doctrine of Christ. His warning is not an abstract prohibition against speaking with unbelievers. It concerns receiving and supporting teachers who do not bring the doctrine of Christ. Verse 10 declares, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.” The issue is the danger of extending approval and assistance to the propagation of religious deception.

Verse 11 explains the seriousness: “For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” That statement ought to disturb Christians who imagine that promoting false teachers is harmless provided they personally disagree with some of the doctrine. There is

a difference between showing ordinary kindness to an unbeliever and furnishing endorsement, hospitality, or assistance that advances a deceptive religious ministry. Second John addresses that latter danger within its historical setting. The principle has an obvious application to online platforms. A Christian should not knowingly promote teachers who deny the biblical Christ, distribute their material as though it were sound doctrine, or provide them with an audience under the pretense of demonstrating broad-mindedness. The Christian is commanded to love people, but he is not commanded to help counterfeit Christianity advertise its merchandise. Love never requires cooperating with a lie. Indeed, genuine love for those being deceived may require refusing to give the deception another platform.

There is an especially absurd argument sometimes raised against blocking persistent false teachers. The claim is that preventing someone from continually commenting beneath a Christian's publications somehow violates Christian love. But a private social media account is not a public courthouse, and the person operating it has no biblical obligation to provide every religious deceiver with unrestricted access. The command to preach the gospel does not include a requirement to host endless advertisements for another gospel. Nor does the instruction to love enemies require allowing harassment, threats, profanity, or deliberate disruption. Christians must continue showing appropriate concern for lost souls and remain willing to answer sincere inquiries. But there is no contradiction between loving a person and refusing to assist his efforts to corrupt others. **You can love a man without lending him your pulpit, and you can pray for his salvation without providing him the microphone.**

6. After the First and Second Admonition, Stop Feeding the Argument

Titus 3:9 declares, “But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.” The surrounding chapter concerns Christian conduct, including submission to proper authorities, gentleness, and the responsibility to maintain good works. Paul has also stated in verse 5 that salvation is “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” Sound doctrine and practical conduct are inseparable concerns. In that setting, Paul warns against controversies that produce no spiritual benefit. He does not suggest that Timothy or Titus should determine the winner of every religious argument through sheer endurance. Some questions are foolish, some disputes are unprofitable, and some participants are committed to contention rather than correction. The Christian must learn to recognize when discussion has stopped serving the truth and has become an exercise in religious vanity.

Titus 3:10–11 continues, “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” The instruction establishes that continued association with a persistently divisive religious offender is not required after appropriate admonition. The first and second admonitions demonstrate that rejection is not necessarily the immediate response to every error. Correction is provided. Opportunity to receive it is given. But when the person persists in destructive opposition, the servant of God is instructed to reject him. This passage should not become an excuse for labeling honest disagreement as heresy or declaring an individual hopeless because he asks difficult questions. Yet it also cannot be explained away merely because modern Christians dislike the idea of doctrinal boundaries. Paul did not command Titus to arrange a third, fourth, fifth, and sixteenth public debate until everybody involved had forgotten the original issue.

A sensible application is straightforward. When someone publicly promotes an important doctrinal error, present the relevant Scriptures accurately and explain the correction. If a genuine objection remains, address it patiently. If the person continues repeating the same falsehood while disregarding the answers already supplied, recognize that further exchanges may accomplish nothing. One final admonition may be appropriate, particularly where sincere readers need clarification. After that, the Christian may refuse continued engagement. There is no requirement to deliver a theatrical farewell speech announcing that the offender has been blocked, nor is there any righteousness in gathering supporters to insult him. Simply end the discussion and protect the platform from continued misuse. Let the biblical correction remain available where appropriate. **When the same falsehood has received the same answer repeatedly, another argument is not necessarily another ministry opportunity. Sometimes it is merely another shovel of coal thrown into a furnace that produces nothing but smoke.**

7. Redeem the Time: The Devil Does Not Need to Defeat You if He Can Keep You Busy

Ephesians 5:15–16 commands, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Paul is addressing Christians concerning the manner of life appropriate to those who belong to Christ. The command requires careful judgment about the use of earthly opportunities. Time spent cannot be recovered, and the Christian possesses responsibilities extending far beyond the latest controversy demanding attention. He must attend to the Word of God, prayer, his family, the local church, honest labor, and opportunities to communicate the gospel. Social media can contribute meaningfully to some of those responsibilities, but it can also become a remarkable instrument of distraction. A Christian may begin the morning preparing to teach Scripture and end the afternoon having accomplished nothing except answering thirty

insults from someone who never intended to learn. Religious controversy does not become spiritually profitable merely because Scripture was mentioned during the argument.

Consider the difference between faithful correction and compulsive participation. A false teacher publishes a denial of eternal security. A Christian answers with John 10:27–29, Ephesians 1:13–14, and Romans 8:38–39, carefully distinguishing salvation from the believer's responsibility concerning service and fellowship. The correction establishes the relevant doctrine for those reading. The opposing teacher refuses the answer and repeats the accusation. Another explanation follows. The same objection returns. Eventually, the conversation no longer concerns understanding Scripture. It concerns which participant will surrender first. The Christian should recognize that his obligation is not to make the opponent admit defeat. His responsibility is to present the truth faithfully. Whether the hearer receives it is not under the Christian's control. **A man can plant the seed, water the ground, and explain the harvest, but he cannot argue a stone into becoming fertile soil.** There comes a time when continued effort in that particular conversation produces no reasonable prospect of further benefit.

The Judgment Seat of Christ supplies a solemn consideration beyond the temporary frustrations of online disagreement. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” This concerns the believer's accountability before the Lord, not the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20. Salvation remains secured through the finished work of Jesus Christ, while the believer's service is subject to examination. First Corinthians 3:11–15 distinguishes the foundation of Christ from the differing value of works built upon that foundation. The Christian therefore ought to consider whether his use of time reflects faithfulness or merely personal obsession. Thousands of comments may impress an audience without accomplishing anything of lasting spiritual value. One carefully prepared gospel presentation may reach someone who genuinely desires salvation. One patient answer may strengthen a struggling believer. One decision to end a useless argument may preserve hours for responsibilities that actually require attention. God did not appoint the Christian to be the world's unpaid manager of endless foolishness.

Conclusion

The Scriptures establish both the necessity of doctrinal contention and the limits of continued engagement. Jude commands believers to earnestly contend for the faith. Romans instructs them to mark and avoid those causing divisions contrary to sound doctrine. Second John forbids cooperation with teachers who reject the doctrine of Christ. Titus establishes the rejection of a persistently divisive heretic after appropriate admonition. Second Timothy requires the servant of the Lord to remain patient, capable of

teaching, and unwilling to surrender himself to foolish strife. These are not competing instructions that must be balanced by disregarding whichever one happens to be inconvenient. They are complementary responsibilities belonging to faithful Christian conduct. The believer must possess enough courage to expose falsehood, enough knowledge to explain the truth, enough patience to instruct the confused, and enough discernment to recognize when continued argument has become spiritually useless. Biblical separation is not cowardice, and biblical patience is not compromise.

The practical application requires careful judgment rather than indiscriminate blocking or indiscriminate debating. A sincere person asking about the deity of Christ deserves the Scriptures establishing His identity. A confused believer questioning eternal security deserves instruction concerning the promises of God. A public teacher promoting works-based salvation deserves doctrinal correction because the gospel itself is being misrepresented. A persistent disputant who repeatedly ignores correction, circulates the same accusations, or uses every response to advertise destructive doctrine need not receive unlimited access. Blocking such a person may be a reasonable exercise of biblical discernment, provided the decision is not merely an excuse to avoid legitimate correction or honest questions. The Christian should be willing to acknowledge his own mistakes and receive sound rebuke. He should also refuse to let others turn his ministry into a permanent argument. **The right to speak does not include the right to commandeer another man's time, and the duty to answer does not include the duty to argue forever.**

Ultimately, the Christian has been entrusted with something far more important than winning an internet quarrel. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ: His death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection the third day according to the Scriptures. Romans 1:16 identifies that gospel as the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. The world's loudest tavern desperately needs that message, not another exhibition of wounded pride disguised as doctrinal zeal. Let the false gospel be exposed. Let the biblical Christ be proclaimed. Let sincere questions receive patient answers, and let dangerous teaching receive necessary correction. But when the truth has been clearly established and the opponent has demonstrated that he desires nothing except another argument, the Christian should recognize that the discussion has reached its proper conclusion. Leave the Scriptures standing. Refuse the invitation to endless strife. Return to the work God has actually commanded. **Contend for the faith with the courage of a soldier, teach with the patience of a servant, and walk away with the wisdom of a man who understands that the battle belongs to the Lord. A Christian does not surrender the truth by refusing to spend his entire life arguing with someone determined never to receive it.**

7 of 10 — Social Media and the Christian Tongue — When Politics Becomes Your Gospel: Trading an Eternal Message for a Temporary Battle

Key Passage: Philippians 3:20 (KJV)

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:”

Introduction

There is something seriously wrong when a man who claims to be a citizen of heaven spends more time defending politicians than proclaiming the Saviour who purchased his citizenship. Philippians 3:20 declares, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” That is not an invitation to abandon earthly responsibilities, neglect government, or pretend that national wickedness is none of the Christian's concern. It is a declaration concerning the believer's heavenly position and expectation. Yet social media has produced a remarkable collection of professing Christians who appear to have misplaced that distinction. They can identify every political scandal, repeat every campaign controversy, explain every election dispute, and recite the failures of public officials with astonishing accuracy. Ask them to explain justification by faith, rightly divide the word of truth, or present the gospel from 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, and suddenly the conversation becomes considerably shorter. Some people have memorized more political slogans than Scripture, and their enthusiasm for earthly government makes their interest in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ appear almost recreational.

The danger is not political awareness. Christians possess legitimate responsibilities as citizens, and Scripture never commands believers to surrender their judgment concerning righteousness, justice, government, or public morality. The danger begins when political controversy becomes the controlling purpose of a Christian's public testimony. His social media account once contained Scripture, gospel teaching, and encouragement for believers. Gradually, the Bible becomes an occasional decoration attached to an endless parade of political accusations. Every disagreement becomes a battle for civilization. Every election becomes the most important event in human history. Every opponent becomes an enemy who must be humiliated, and every favorable political development is celebrated as though the kingdom of God has finally arrived. Apparently, the eternal purposes of Almighty God have become dependent upon which group controls the government for the next several years. That may sound impressive to somebody who has forgotten his Bible, but it is a rather small understanding of the God who declares the end from the beginning.

The Scriptures establish a far greater perspective. Second Timothy 2:4 warns against becoming entangled with the affairs of this life. First Timothy 2:1–4 commands prayer for

those in authority and connects that responsibility with God's desire that men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Romans 13:1–7 explains the proper function of civil government. Colossians 3:1–2 commands believers to seek those things which are above. These passages do not create a Christianity that is indifferent to earthly wickedness. They establish priorities that prevent earthly concerns from swallowing eternal responsibilities. The Christian can oppose corruption without becoming corrupt in his speech. He can support lawful government without treating politicians as saviours. He can care deeply about his country without confusing national prosperity with spiritual salvation. **The Christian who trades the gospel for political warfare has exchanged an eternal message for a temporary argument, and no earthly victory can compensate for the souls he neglected along the way.**

1. Our Conversation Is in Heaven, Not in the Latest Political Headquarters

Philippians 3:20 must be examined within its immediate context rather than reduced to a decorative statement about heaven. Paul begins the surrounding passage by urging believers to follow godly examples and recognize those who walk according to the apostolic pattern. He then warns in Philippians 3:18–19 concerning enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and who mind earthly things. The contrast in verse 20 is striking: “For our conversation is in heaven.” Paul is not suggesting that Christians should pretend earthly responsibilities do not exist. He is establishing the fundamental difference between those whose lives are governed by earthly appetites and those whose position and expectation are centered upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer belongs to a heavenly calling. His final hope does not rest upon the success of a political institution, the popularity of a national leader, or the stability of an earthly administration. His hope rests upon a living Saviour who has promised to return.

The following verse makes the expectation unmistakable. Philippians 3:21 describes the Lord Jesus Christ, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” Paul does not direct the believer's ultimate expectation toward an improved political system. He directs it toward the personal appearing and transforming power of Jesus Christ. This is especially important in understanding the distinction between the Church and Israel. God has made specific national and kingdom promises to Israel that will receive their proper fulfillment according to Scripture. The Church, which is Christ's body, possesses a heavenly calling and awaits the Lord's coming. Neither truth cancels the other. A Christian who confuses the Church's present commission with the establishment of an earthly political kingdom has failed to rightly divide the Scriptures. The Lord has not instructed His Church to manufacture the Millennium through legislation, election

campaigns, or governmental reform. The King will establish His kingdom according to His own prophetic Word.

Colossians 3:1–2 reinforces this heavenly orientation: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” These commandments concern believers whose spiritual position is already established in Christ. They do not forbid earning a living, caring for a family, participating in civic matters, or addressing the wickedness surrounding them. They forbid allowing earthly things to become the controlling objects of the heart. A Christian may become so emotionally invested in political developments that a favorable headline determines his joy and an unfavorable election destroys his peace. Meanwhile, the Lord Jesus Christ remains seated at the right hand of God regardless of which politician occupies an earthly office. **If the condition of your soul rises and falls with the latest political headline, you have permitted an earthly government to exercise authority over territory that belongs to Jesus Christ.**

2. No Man That Warreth Entangleth Himself With the Affairs of This Life

Second Timothy 2:3–4 declares, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” Paul is instructing Timothy concerning faithful service amid opposition, suffering, and the responsibilities of ministry. The comparison to a soldier emphasizes devotion to the one who has called him. A soldier cannot effectively fulfill his assignment while allowing competing interests to control his attention and interfere with his orders. The word “entangleth” is especially important. Paul does not say that a Christian must abandon every ordinary earthly activity. He warns against becoming so involved in those activities that faithful service is hindered. A man who spends his days absorbed in political controversy may discover that the things which once occupied a reasonable portion of his attention have become the master of his schedule.

The distinction between involvement and entanglement is easily demonstrated. Paul himself exercised the rights belonging to his Roman citizenship when circumstances required it. In Acts 22:25–29, he questioned the legality of the treatment being prepared for him, and the authorities recognized the significance of his citizenship. Later, he appealed unto Caesar in Acts 25:10–12. Those actions were not departures from his spiritual calling. They were lawful responses within the governmental structures under which he lived. Paul did not preach that Christians must become ignorant of legal rights or indifferent to civil injustice. Yet neither did he abandon the preaching of Jesus Christ to establish a permanent political campaign against Rome. He understood the difference between using

legitimate civic provisions and allowing the political system to become the purpose of his life. The Christian who cannot distinguish those responsibilities may find himself defending political activity that has gradually displaced his spiritual commission.

Second Corinthians 5:20 declares, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” The immediate context concerns the ministry of reconciliation entrusted through the gospel. An ambassador represents the interests and message of the authority who commissioned him. His assignment is not to invent another message because the surrounding population becomes excited about a different controversy. Christians certainly may exercise earthly citizenship, but they must never forget whose reconciliation they have been commissioned to proclaim. Imagine an ambassador arriving in a foreign country with an urgent message from his sovereign, only to spend his entire assignment arguing about the local mayor. He might develop an impressive understanding of municipal politics, but he would have miserably neglected his commission. **The Christian soldier has orders from heaven. He ought not spend his whole deployment fighting battles that were never assigned to him.**

3. God Commanded Prayer for Rulers, Not Worship of Them

First Timothy 2:1–2 declares, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority.” Notice the order. Paul begins with prayer for all men and specifically includes those occupying positions of governmental responsibility. He does not restrict the command to rulers whom Christians admire, governments whose policies they approve, or leaders who belong to their preferred political movement. The command concerns kings and all in authority. The stated desire is that believers may lead quiet and peaceable lives in godliness and honesty. Such a life provides circumstances in which the gospel may be proclaimed and Christian responsibilities faithfully discharged. The emphasis is not upon making political leaders the objects of religious devotion. It is upon seeking God's help concerning those whose decisions influence the lives of others. Prayer is commanded; political worship is not.

The following verses establish the greater purpose. First Timothy 2:3–4 declares, “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” There is the divine priority. The apostle moves from prayer concerning government directly into God's concern for the salvation of men. He continues by identifying the one mediator between God and men, “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Notice what Paul does not say. He does not instruct Timothy to place his ultimate hope in acquiring political influence, capturing government offices, or

ensuring that his preferred ruler controls the empire. The apostolic concern is that believers may live godly lives while the truth of salvation through Jesus Christ is proclaimed. A Christian who spends ten hours attacking political opponents but cannot find ten minutes to pray for those in authority has certainly developed an interesting interpretation of apostolic priorities.

Romans 13:1–7 further establishes that civil government possesses a legitimate place within God's ordering of human affairs. The passage identifies governing authority as responsible for restraining evil and maintaining public order. It does not teach that every decision made by every government is righteous or that believers must obey commands requiring direct disobedience to God. Acts 5:29 supplies the necessary distinction: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Christians must respect lawful authority while recognizing that no human institution possesses authority to overrule divine revelation. This balance prevents both anarchy and political idolatry. The believer should neither despise government as though all civil authority were inherently wicked nor exalt government as though its occupants were beyond correction. **A ruler may possess lawful authority over a nation, but he possesses no authority to replace the Lord Jesus Christ as the Christian's ultimate allegiance.**

4. National Righteousness Matters, but Political Victory Is Not Salvation

Proverbs 14:34 declares, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” The statement belongs to Old Testament wisdom literature and must not be confused with the specific covenant promises God made to Israel. The United States, or any other modern nation, does not become Israel by adopting religious language, displaying national symbols, or claiming a special place in divine prophecy. Israel's national covenants remain Israel's covenants. Nevertheless, the moral truth expressed in the proverb is unmistakable. Righteousness is beneficial to national life, while sin brings reproach. A Christian may therefore possess legitimate concern about dishonesty, injustice, corruption, violence, immorality, and governmental abuse. He does not need to apologize for believing that moral conduct matters beyond the walls of a church building. Biblical Christianity has never required believers to become indifferent spectators while wickedness is celebrated around them.

Ephesians 5:11 commands, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Christians are not forbidden to identify moral evil simply because the issue has entered political controversy. If an action is wicked according to Scripture, its moral character does not change when politicians begin debating it. Likewise, a policy question does not automatically become a test of Christian salvation merely because religious people possess strong opinions about it. Scripture distinguishes eternal doctrine

from matters involving judgment, administration, and competing practical considerations. Believers may agree concerning biblical righteousness while disagreeing over particular governmental methods intended to address a problem. That distinction requires honesty. A Christian must not invent divine commandments where Scripture has not spoken, and he must not abandon clear biblical commandments because speaking about them might become controversial. **The Bible is the standard of righteousness; it is not a campaign advertisement waiting for somebody to attach a candidate's photograph.**

The problem arises when Christians begin treating political victories as though they accomplish what only regeneration can accomplish. A law may restrain certain behavior, but it cannot give a sinner a new heart through faith in Christ. A government may punish criminal conduct, but it cannot justify the ungodly. A court may settle a legal controversy, but it cannot reconcile a lost soul to God. Romans 4:5 identifies God as the One who justifies the ungodly who believe on Him. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation through grace by faith, not works. No political institution possesses the power to substitute for those truths. Christians may properly seek justice, participate in elections, and advocate lawful reforms without imagining that governmental success constitutes the salvation of a nation. **A government can restrain a man's hands, but only Jesus Christ can save his soul. Confusing those two things produces a religion that is politically busy and spiritually bankrupt.**

5. Political Rumors Are Still Lies, Even When They Help Your Side

Exodus 23:1 declares, “Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.” The following verse warns against following a multitude to do evil. These instructions were given to Israel within the law, where truthful testimony and righteous judgment were essential to the administration of justice. Their moral principles remain entirely consistent with New Testament commands concerning honesty. Ephesians 4:25 instructs believers to put away lying and speak truth. Yet political controversy has produced an environment in which people frequently treat accusations as trustworthy because those accusations happen to injure someone they already dislike. A sensational headline appears, an anonymous account claims secret knowledge, and thousands begin circulating allegations before anybody establishes whether the information is genuine. Christians sometimes participate with astonishing enthusiasm. Apparently, the commandment against false witness has acquired an exception for election season. Unfortunately for that theory, God never authorized the amendment.

Proverbs 18:13 declares, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” Verse 17 adds, “He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.” These statements should govern the Christian's

treatment of political accusations, particularly those involving alleged conspiracies, hidden motives, secret arrangements, or misconduct not yet established by reliable evidence. Something may be possible without being proven. An accusation may deserve investigation without deserving immediate acceptance. A photograph may be genuine while its caption is misleading. A quotation may be accurate while its surrounding context changes the meaning entirely. A Christian who would demand careful biblical evidence before accepting a doctrinal claim should not suddenly abandon all standards of proof when examining an accusation against a politician. **Suspicion is not evidence, repetition is not verification, and a thousand people sharing the same accusation do not magically transform it into a thousand independent witnesses.**

The danger becomes particularly serious when political hostility permits dishonesty to appear righteous. A believer sees a damaging accusation against somebody he opposes and decides to circulate it because the person is already regarded as wicked. Yet Romans 12:17 commands, “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.” The Christian's obligation to truthfulness does not depend upon the moral character of the person being discussed. If an accusation is false, repeating it remains wrong even when the accused has committed other genuine offenses. If a report is uncertain, uncertainty should be acknowledged rather than concealed. If evidence contradicts an earlier claim, the Christian should correct his statement rather than protecting his pride. The person who defends righteousness through deliberate falsehood has already surrendered the righteousness he claims to represent. **A lie does not become a servant of God because it has been aimed at somebody who deserves criticism. The truth needs no counterfeit witnesses.**

6. Political Opponents Are Not Beyond the Reach of God's Grace

James 3:9–10 exposes a contradiction that becomes especially visible during heated controversy. James speaks of the tongue being used to bless God while also cursing men made after the similitude of God, concluding, “My brethren, these things ought not so to be.” The historical recipients of James must be recognized, yet the moral contradiction is immediately applicable. A Christian may spend Sunday praising the goodness and mercy of God and Monday speaking about political opponents as though they were creatures beyond the possibility of redemption. He may condemn hatred while cultivating his own, denounce dishonesty while circulating accusations, and proclaim the love of Christ while expressing delight over the suffering of those he dislikes. Scripture does not demand that Christians approve wickedness or refuse necessary criticism. It does demand that their conduct remain governed by divine truth rather than personal hostility.

Romans 12:18 declares, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” The following verses forbid personal revenge and command believers not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. Notice that Paul does not guarantee peace with everyone. The qualification recognizes that another person's conduct may prevent peaceful relations. Nevertheless, the believer remains responsible for his own actions. Second Timothy 2:24–25 likewise requires the servant of the Lord to avoid strife and instruct opponents with meekness. These commandments do not cancel biblical rebuke. They distinguish faithful correction from the fleshly pleasure of humiliating an opponent. A Christian can identify a false claim, oppose a wicked action, and disagree strongly with a political position without treating the people involved as personal enemies to be destroyed. **If political disagreement has made you incapable of speaking truthfully or treating others justly, politics has already gained more control over your conduct than it deserves.**

Consider the apostle Paul before his conversion. Acts 9 describes Saul breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. He was not a harmless skeptic politely seeking religious instruction. He was actively persecuting Christians. Yet the risen Lord Jesus Christ confronted him, and the persecutor became a preacher of the faith he once attempted to destroy. First Timothy 1:13–16 records Paul's testimony concerning the mercy he obtained, despite having been a blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious. The point is not that every wicked person will eventually be converted or that serious wrongdoing should escape proper consequences. The point is that Christians have no authority to declare a living sinner beyond the saving grace of God merely because of political hostility. A man may be thoroughly wrong about government and still desperately need the gospel. **If the Lord could save Saul of Tarsus, the Christian ought to be careful about deciding that somebody who voted differently is beyond the reach of redemption.**

7. The Coming King Will Not Need a Campaign Committee

John 18:36 records the Lord Jesus Christ declaring to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” The statement must be understood in its historical and prophetic context. Christ was standing before a Roman governor during the proceedings preceding His crucifixion. He was not denying His identity as King or canceling the future earthly kingdom promised in Scripture. The distinction between His kingdom's divine origin and the political structures of the present world is central to His answer. His servants were not commissioned to establish His immediate rule through military resistance to His arrest. The Lord's earthly reign will be established according to God's prophetic program, not through the Church's ability to acquire

governmental authority. Christians who imagine that an election can inaugurate the kingdom have confused an earthly political process with the sovereign fulfillment of divine prophecy.

The Scriptures distinguish the Church's present hope from the Second Advent and the establishment of Christ's millennial reign. First Thessalonians 4:16–17 describes the Lord descending from heaven, the dead in Christ rising first, and living believers being caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. This is the blessed hope of the Church, consistent with the expectation expressed in Philippians 3:20–21. Revelation 19 presents the returning King in judgment and victory, while Revelation 20 describes His thousand-year reign. These events must not be blended into one vague religious expectation or transferred into contemporary political movements. The Church is not Israel, and the promises concerning Israel's national restoration and the earthly reign of Messiah are not fulfilled through the success of a modern political party. The Lord Jesus Christ will accomplish exactly what Scripture declares, whether the present world approves or not. **The King of kings will not require an endorsement, an election committee, or permission from the nations to fulfill His Word.**

Meanwhile, the Christian possesses a clearly revealed responsibility. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Romans 1:16 identifies the gospel of Christ as the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. That message remains eternally more important than the temporary fortunes of earthly political organizations. A Christian should not withdraw from every civic concern, but he should continually examine whether his public testimony still communicates the gospel with clarity. Does his audience understand what he believes about salvation? Does he teach the Scriptures? Does he explain the finished work of Christ? Does he warn against false doctrine? Or has his entire public identity become associated with political conflict? Colossians 3:2 commands believers to set their affection on things above. **The Christian who spends his whole life preparing for the next election while neglecting the coming of the Lord has become remarkably occupied with the wrong appointment.**

Conclusion

The Christian does not need to become politically ignorant, morally indifferent, or silent concerning genuine wickedness. He may participate responsibly in civic affairs, examine public policies, seek honest government, oppose injustice, exercise lawful rights, and speak concerning matters of righteousness. Scripture provides no justification for abandoning those responsibilities merely because politics can become contentious. But the Christian must also recognize the limits of earthly government and the supremacy of

his heavenly calling. Romans 13 establishes the legitimate function of civil authority. First Timothy 2 commands prayer for rulers and connects godly living with the spread of saving truth. Second Timothy 2 warns against becoming entangled with the affairs of this life. Philippians 3 directs the believer's expectation toward the returning Saviour. These truths belong together. A Christian may love his country without worshiping it, respect his government without surrendering his conscience, and exercise civic responsibility without allowing political controversy to replace the gospel.

The real examination concerns what has captured the heart and what proceeds from the tongue. When a Christian becomes more eager to defend a politician than to defend the Scriptures, something is out of order. When he becomes more distressed over an election result than over the spiritual condition of the lost, his priorities deserve examination. When political opponents become objects of personal hatred rather than human beings who remain accountable to God and in need of His grace, the problem has progressed beyond ordinary civic disagreement. Ephesians 4:29 commands communication that is good to the use of edifying. Colossians 4:6 commands speech seasoned with grace. These instructions do not prohibit firm disagreement, moral rebuke, or exposing documented wrongdoing. They prohibit the surrender of Christian conduct to the passions of the surrounding world. The believer must not permit political controversy to turn his public testimony into an endless exhibition of bitterness, suspicion, and personal retaliation. **The Christian who loses his biblical testimony while fighting for his political convictions has paid a spiritual price no earthly victory can repay.**

One day the political arguments presently consuming so much attention will be remembered, if at all, as small events within the passing history of this world. Governments will change, public controversies will disappear, and the names of once-prominent political figures will become entries in historical records. But the Lord Jesus Christ will remain exactly who Scripture declares Him to be. His death, burial, and resurrection will remain the only sufficient foundation for the salvation of sinners. His promises will remain true, His judgments will remain righteous, and His coming will not depend upon the approval of earthly authorities. The Christian therefore possesses every reason to speak faithfully about present concerns without surrendering his eternal priorities. Let government remain government. Let civic responsibility remain civic responsibility. Let righteousness be defended and wickedness be exposed according to Scripture. But let the gospel remain the gospel, and let Jesus Christ retain the place that belongs to Him alone. **A ballot can help determine who governs a nation for a season, but it cannot determine where a soul will spend eternity. A politician may influence the direction of a country, but only Jesus Christ can save a sinner from hell. Never trade the message that changes eternity for an argument about who controls tomorrow.**

8 of 10 — Social Media and the Christian Tongue — The Thirst for Applause: Followers, Envy, Comparison, and the Addiction to Being Noticed

Key Passage: Galatians 1:10 (KJV)

“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”

Introduction

There is a strange new religion operating in the modern world, and its worshipers can be identified by how frequently they check the number of people watching them. Its altar is a glowing screen, its congregation is an audience of strangers, its offerings are photographs and opinions, and its most cherished blessing is another thousand followers. The remarkable thing is that Christians have become just as susceptible to this foolishness as the unbelieving world. A man can spend six hours preparing a Bible study, publish it with a sincere desire to teach Scripture, and then spend the next six hours examining whether enough people appreciated his labor. Every notification becomes a little reward. Every new follower becomes a personal accomplishment. Every disappointing number becomes an occasion for discouragement. Before long, the servant who began by wanting people to hear about Jesus Christ finds himself wondering why more people are not hearing about him. Galatians 1:10 raises a question that cuts straight through this modern vanity: “do I seek to please men?” A Christian had better answer that question before the audience answers it for him.

The danger is not that a Christian possesses an audience or desires his ministry to reach more people. The apostle Paul traveled considerable distances, preached in public places, reasoned in synagogues, wrote epistles, and employed every legitimate opportunity to communicate the truth of God. There is nothing inherently sinful about distributing Bible studies, maintaining a public ministry, examining whether people are receiving published material, or rejoicing when more individuals encounter the gospel. The trouble begins when numerical attention becomes the measure of spiritual importance. A thousand reactions are mistaken for a thousand spiritual victories. A growing audience becomes evidence of divine approval, while a smaller audience becomes an occasion for resentment. Some Christians have nearly convinced themselves that the Holy Ghost operates through a mathematical formula involving impressions, shares, and the number of people who pressed a little symbol beneath their publication. That may be an impressive understanding of internet statistics, but it is a miserable substitute for the biblical doctrine of faithfulness.

Scripture establishes an entirely different standard. Proverbs 27:2 declares, “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.” Second

Corinthians 10:12 condemns those who compare themselves among themselves. Philippians 2:3 forbids strife and vainglory, while John 12:43 exposes those who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. These passages confront the pride, jealousy, self-promotion, and spiritual confusion that can develop when public recognition becomes more important than obedience. The Christian must remember that he has been called to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, not to spend his life collecting admiration from people who may forget his name tomorrow. A large audience can provide a tremendous opportunity for the gospel, but that opportunity becomes spiritually dangerous when the messenger begins competing with the message for attention. **The moment a Christian becomes more concerned about being noticed than being faithful, his audience has begun occupying territory that belongs to God alone.**

1. They Loved the Praise of Men More Than the Praise of God

John 12:42–43 presents a revealing example of what happens when human approval becomes more important than openly acknowledging the truth. John records that many among the chief rulers believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. Verse 43 supplies the explanation: “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” The historical setting concerns Jewish rulers during Christ's earthly ministry, when acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah could bring serious consequences within their religious community. Their position must not be confused with the Church's present responsibility or used to establish salvation through public performance. Nevertheless, the passage exposes the power of human approval. These men were not merely concerned about the truth. They were concerned about what others would think if they acknowledged it. Their religious standing had become more precious to them than the approval of God.

There is a terrible irony in this account. The men who should have been examining the evidence concerning Israel's Messiah were occupied with preserving their reputation among the religious authorities. The Son of God stood before them, and they were calculating the social consequences of acknowledging Him. Modern Christianity has developed its own versions of that disgraceful arrangement. A believer knows what Scripture teaches but hesitates to publish it because certain followers may become offended. A religious teacher discovers that some biblical subjects reduce his popularity, so those subjects gradually disappear from his ministry. Another begins altering his language until nobody can identify what he actually believes. He has not formally denied the Bible. He has simply placed it under the supervision of his audience. Apparently, the King of glory must now obtain permission from the people who operate the comment section.

The problem reaches beyond deliberate doctrinal compromise. Human praise can become so desirable that a Christian begins evaluating his entire service through the reactions of spectators. He feels encouraged when strangers applaud and defeated when they ignore him. He becomes unusually sensitive to criticism because criticism threatens the public image he has carefully cultivated. Yet Proverbs 29:25 warns, “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.” Fear of man is not always expressed through trembling silence. Sometimes it appears as a desperate appetite for recognition. The same individual who refuses to surrender to an opponent may nevertheless surrender to the approval of his supporters. He can be bold against enemies while remaining enslaved to friends who continually praise him. **The man who cannot endure being disliked may eventually become willing to disobey God in order to remain admired.**

2. Let Another Man Praise Thee: The Bible's Cure for Self-Advertisement

Proverbs 27:2 declares, “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.” This is divine wisdom delivered within the Old Testament setting, not a command establishing the means of salvation for the New Testament believer. Nevertheless, the principle concerning humility remains entirely consistent with the instructions given to the Church. The verse does not forbid stating truthful qualifications, reporting legitimate accomplishments, or communicating necessary information about one's work. Paul himself defended the authenticity of his apostleship when circumstances required it. The proverb addresses the spirit of self-exaltation that delights in announcing personal greatness. There is a difference between telling people what has been accomplished and insisting they recognize how extraordinary the person accomplishing it must be. Some individuals cannot announce that they have completed a Bible study without turning the announcement into a parade celebrating their own dedication.

The Lord Jesus Christ condemned religious performance designed to attract admiration. Matthew 6:1 warns against doing alms before men “to be seen of them.” In the following verses, Christ describes hypocrites who desire public recognition for charitable activity. The immediate setting belongs to the Sermon on the Mount and must be understood within the Lord's teaching to Israel during His earthly ministry. Yet the moral exposure of religious vanity is unmistakable. The problem is not that good works may become visible. Matthew 5:16 speaks of good works being seen so that the Father in heaven may be glorified. The problem is deliberately performing religious activity for personal admiration. The difference concerns the object of glory. A Christian can distribute a thousand Bible studies and still be more interested in having people praise their author than understand their contents. It is possible to turn an otherwise useful ministry into a monument to the person operating it.

Philippians 2:3 provides a direct instruction to believers: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” The word *vainglory* describes glory that is empty, and few things illustrate empty glory more effectively than becoming intoxicated with public attention that disappears almost as quickly as it arrives. A man may receive an enormous amount of praise for a publication and discover that the audience has forgotten him by the following afternoon. Such recognition is not necessarily worthless, but it is terribly unstable as the foundation of a Christian's identity. Humility does not require pretending that faithful labor has accomplished nothing. It requires recognizing that every ability, opportunity, and spiritual blessing ultimately depends upon the goodness of God. **If a ministry becomes a stage upon which the servant continually advertises himself, the congregation may eventually remember the performer while forgetting the Saviour.**

3. Comparing Themselves Among Themselves: The Mathematics of Spiritual Foolishness

Second Corinthians 10:12 contains a statement that ought to be displayed above every collection of ministry statistics: “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” Paul was addressing the problem of self-commendation and the improper standards employed by those evaluating spiritual authority and ministry. His concern extended beyond a harmless comparison of numerical accomplishments. He exposed the foolishness of making other men the controlling standard by which spiritual service is judged. When individuals measure themselves primarily against one another, they substitute human competition for divine accountability. The result is a contest in which somebody must continually appear superior. One preacher compares congregations, another compares audiences, and a third compares the attention received by his publications. The Lord's approval becomes an afterthought while everybody examines the scoreboard.

Social media has made this particular foolishness almost irresistible. One Christian publishes a substantial Bible study that receives little attention, while another posts a brief statement that attracts thousands of reactions. Immediately the temptation appears to compare the two results and draw conclusions about personal worth, spiritual effectiveness, or divine favor. Yet those numbers do not establish the doctrinal quality of either publication. A false teacher may attract enormous attention. A faithful missionary may labor among a comparatively small population. A carefully prepared explanation of justification may receive fewer reactions than a photograph of somebody's breakfast. If popularity alone establishes spiritual value, the breakfast may have the stronger ministry.

Obviously, that is absurd. The world has no shortage of impressive numbers attached to spiritually worthless things. **A crowd can measure how many people are watching. It cannot measure whether heaven approves of what they are watching.**

The Lord Jesus Christ addressed the danger of comparing individual assignments when Peter questioned Him concerning John. In John 21:21, Peter asked, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” Christ answered in verse 22, “what is that to thee? follow thou me.” The passage concerns the risen Lord's personal dealings with His apostles, and its historical setting must be preserved. Nevertheless, the principle of attending to one's own appointed responsibilities rather than becoming consumed with another person's circumstances is unmistakable. A Christian should rejoice when another faithful servant reaches more people, publishes useful material, or receives opportunities for ministry. He should not turn the other person's blessing into a personal grievance. Galatians 6:4 likewise instructs believers to prove their own work rather than make comparison their source of rejoicing. The Christian must give account for his own stewardship. God did not appoint him to spend his life inspecting everybody else's measurements while neglecting the work placed before him.

4. Envy in the Ministry: When Another Man's Harvest Becomes Your Misery

Envy is a particularly ugly sin because it permits another person's blessing to become an occasion for personal bitterness. James 3:14–16 warns against bitter envying and strife, explaining that where such things exist, confusion and every evil work accompany them. Although James addressed the twelve tribes scattered abroad, his condemnation of envy is consistent with the New Testament instructions governing believers. Galatians 5:19–21 includes envyings among the works of the flesh. A Christian therefore has no biblical justification for treating jealousy as a harmless reaction to another person's success. The danger becomes especially serious when it develops between ministries that profess to serve the same Lord. One Christian rejoices publicly that another ministry has reached thousands of people, while privately resenting the attention it receives. Another begins searching for faults in a successful teacher because he cannot tolerate the teacher's influence. Envy can make a man investigate another servant's shortcomings with greater diligence than he studies his own Bible.

First Corinthians 3:5–7 provides the proper correction. Paul asks who Paul and Apollos are, identifying them as ministers by whom the Corinthians believed, as the Lord gave to every man. He then declares, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” The distinction is essential. Different servants perform different responsibilities, but the spiritual increase belongs to God. Paul continues, “So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” The apostle is not denying

the importance of faithful labor. He is denying the foolishness of exalting the servants as though the results originated independently from their Master. One man may introduce a person to Scripture, another may provide additional instruction, and still another may witness the moment of conversion. None possesses legitimate grounds for boasting that he independently accomplished what only God could accomplish.

Philippians 1:15–18 presents another instructive situation. Paul acknowledges that some preached Christ through envy and strife, while others preached from good will. He did not approve the sinful motives of those acting through contention, but he rejoiced that Christ was being preached. The passage concerns the proclamation of Christ, not an endorsement of false gospels or counterfeit doctrine. That distinction must be maintained. A Christian should never rejoice when people are being deceived through another gospel. But when the biblical Christ is faithfully proclaimed and sinners encounter the true gospel, personal jealousy has no righteous place in the response. Romans 12:15 commands believers to rejoice with those who rejoice. The success of another faithful ministry should encourage rather than embitter us. **If another man's faithful preaching makes you miserable because people are listening to him instead of you, the trouble is not in his congregation. It is in your heart.**

5. When the Audience Becomes the Editor of the Bible

Galatians 1:10 must be understood within Paul's defense of the gospel against those seeking to corrupt it. The apostle had already warned in Galatians 1:8–9 against anyone preaching another gospel. He then asked whether he sought to please men, declaring that if he yet pleased men, he should not be the servant of Christ. The issue was not whether a preacher should speak respectfully or consider how his words might be understood. It was whether human approval would determine the content of the gospel. Paul refused to surrender divine revelation to satisfy religious expectations. He knew that the truth concerning justification through Jesus Christ could not be modified to accommodate those who wished to combine grace with the works of the law. The same responsibility remains today. A Christian ministry cannot become faithful by allowing the audience to decide which biblical doctrines may be taught.

This is where the thirst for applause becomes doctrinally dangerous. A teacher discovers that certain subjects attract approval while others produce criticism. Messages concerning encouragement receive enthusiastic reactions, while clear teaching against sin, false doctrine, and religious deception receives resistance. Gradually, the uncomfortable subjects disappear. The Bible is still mentioned, but the selection of passages has become governed by the anticipated response of the audience. Second Timothy 4:3 warns that a time will come when people “will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall

they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." The temptation operates in both directions. Listeners desire teachers who satisfy their preferences, and teachers desire listeners who reward their performances. Before long, the congregation and the preacher have reached a comfortable agreement: nobody will disturb anybody with anything the Bible says that might become inconvenient. **When applause determines the sermon, the audience has become the preacher's final authority.**

John 6 provides a sobering contrast. After the Lord Jesus Christ delivered difficult teaching, many of His disciples turned back and walked no more with Him. John 6:66 records their departure. The following verse does not describe Christ hurriedly revising His message to recover their attention. Instead, He asked the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Peter responded by acknowledging that Christ possessed the words of eternal life. The historical and doctrinal setting of John 6 must be respected, particularly its relationship to Christ's earthly ministry and the audience He addressed. Nevertheless, the incident demonstrates that the rejection of divine truth by a large audience does not make the truth defective. A preacher must explain Scripture accurately and avoid unnecessary offense caused by his own misconduct, but he cannot remove the offense inherent in truth. **If a thousand people depart because the Bible has been faithfully taught, their departure does not authorize the preacher to rewrite what God has said.**

6. A Large Following Can Be a Blessing Without Becoming an Idol

There is nothing inherently sinful about desiring the Word of God to reach more people. Acts 2:41 records approximately three thousand souls receiving the word and being added after Peter's preaching. Acts 2:47 declares that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The historical setting concerns the beginning of the Church and the remarkable events surrounding Pentecost. Those circumstances cannot simply be reproduced through modern promotional methods. Nevertheless, the record demonstrates that numerical growth is not inherently contrary to God's purposes. The apostolic preaching reached multitudes, and the addition of believers was a cause for rejoicing. The problem begins when numbers are treated as the ultimate standard rather than understood as one possible indication of people being reached. A Christian can properly thank God for an expanding audience without imagining that an expanding audience automatically proves doctrinal faithfulness.

Modern communication provides useful information about how many people encounter a publication, how widely material is distributed, and which subjects attract attention. Such information may assist a ministry in evaluating whether its resources are reaching readers. There is no reason to pretend that practical knowledge is automatically worldly. The apostle Paul employed available means of travel, correspondence, and public instruction to

advance the gospel. But statistics have limits. An impression does not establish that the material was read. A reaction does not establish that the message was understood. A follower does not necessarily represent a convert, and a convert cannot be identified merely by the enthusiasm displayed beneath a religious publication. Some people follow Christian accounts because they appreciate the teaching. Others follow because they disagree. Still others may never examine the material again. **A follower count records an audience; it does not maintain the Lamb's book of life.**

First Corinthians 4:2 declares, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” Notice the requirement. Paul does not say that a steward must possess the largest audience, produce the greatest number of publications, or enjoy uninterrupted public recognition. The requirement is faithfulness. A Christian with a large platform should use that opportunity responsibly, teaching sound doctrine, presenting the gospel, and refusing to exploit those who trust him. A Christian with a smaller audience should serve faithfully without resentment. Neither possesses authority to measure divine approval solely through numerical results. The Lord may employ one servant to reach multitudes and another to instruct a few people whose lives influence generations. Earthly visibility cannot establish the full significance of either assignment. A large ministry may be an extraordinary stewardship, but it remains a stewardship. **The audience is not the treasure entrusted to the servant. The opportunity to communicate God's truth to that audience is the treasure.**

7. When the Applause Stops, the Judgment Seat Still Remains

Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” This concerns the believer's accountability before the Lord Jesus Christ and must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment described in Revelation 20. The Christian's salvation rests upon the finished work of Christ and is received through faith, not earned through the quantity or quality of his ministry. Ephesians 1:13–14 identifies believers as sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Nevertheless, the security of salvation does not eliminate accountability for service. First Corinthians 3:11–15 describes the testing of works built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Some works endure, while others are consumed. A man may be saved while suffering loss concerning the value of his labor. That is a sobering consideration for anyone measuring spiritual success primarily through earthly recognition.

First Corinthians 4:5 adds another dimension: “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” The Lord's examination reaches beyond visible

accomplishments into motives concealed from human observers. A ministry may appear successful before an audience while being driven by pride, competition, financial ambition, or the desire for personal recognition. Another servant may labor faithfully with little earthly attention while demonstrating genuine devotion to Christ. Human observers cannot infallibly determine the final spiritual value of either ministry. The Christian must therefore resist the temptation to pronounce ultimate judgments based upon popularity. A crowded audience is not proof of corruption, and an empty auditorium is not proof of faithfulness. The Lord examines what men cannot see. **Heaven does not require a committee of admirers to verify whether a servant has obeyed his Master.**

This truth should affect the practical conduct of every Christian who communicates publicly. The servant should prepare his teaching carefully, verify his statements, rightly divide the Scriptures, and avoid manipulating his audience for personal advantage. He should refuse to exaggerate accomplishments, manufacture controversy for attention, or make followers feel spiritually obligated to continually praise him. He should also remember the responsibilities that do not appear in public statistics: his family, his local church, his private obedience, his prayer life, and his treatment of people who cannot advance his reputation. Matthew 23:5 describes religious hypocrites whose works were performed to be seen of men. The Christian must resist that temptation even when religious activity itself appears respectable. A man can become so occupied with displaying his devotion that he neglects the actual responsibilities devotion requires. **The greatest danger of a public ministry is not necessarily that people stop watching. Sometimes it is that the servant becomes so fascinated with being watched that he forgets whom he serves.**

Conclusion

The thirst for applause is one of the most subtle dangers facing Christians who maintain a public voice. It rarely begins with an open declaration that personal recognition matters more than Jesus Christ. It develops gradually through comparisons, disappointments, jealousy, and the increasing habit of measuring service through public response. A Christian begins by checking whether his teaching has reached people and eventually finds himself checking whether enough people have appreciated him. Another rejoices over ministry growth until another servant begins growing faster. A third remains doctrinally faithful until he discovers that certain biblical truths produce fewer reactions than comfortable religious sentiment. Proverbs 27:2 warns against self-praise. Second Corinthians 10:12 condemns foolish comparisons. Philippians 2:3 forbids vainglory. These instructions expose the spiritual danger before it fully develops. The Christian must

remember that an audience is an opportunity for service, not a throne upon which he has been invited to sit.

There must also be room for genuine encouragement. When a Christian publishes faithful biblical teaching and discovers that it has helped another believer, there is nothing wrong with rejoicing. When a gospel presentation reaches someone who has never understood salvation by grace through faith, thanksgiving is appropriate. When ministry resources are widely distributed, the opportunity should be used responsibly rather than dismissed as inherently suspicious. But the praise must ultimately be directed toward the Lord who supplies the truth and the opportunity. First Corinthians 3:7 declares, “So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” The servant may plant diligently, water faithfully, and labor until exhausted, but he cannot manufacture spiritual life through personal popularity. Neither should he despise another servant whose work receives greater attention. The Christian must learn to rejoice when Christ is faithfully proclaimed, even when somebody else receives the earthly recognition. **If the gospel is reaching people, the faithful servant should be more concerned that Christ is being heard than that his own name is being remembered.**

Ultimately, every follower, impression, reaction, and earthly accomplishment belongs to a world that is passing away. The applause of strangers may sound impressive for a moment, but it cannot justify a sinner, preserve a soul, or determine the final value of Christian service. The Lord Jesus Christ remains the only Saviour, and the gospel remains the message of His death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection the third day according to the Scriptures, as declared in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. That message deserves to be proclaimed faithfully whether ten people listen or ten thousand. The Christian must seek neither deliberate obscurity nor personal celebrity. He must seek obedience. Let the audience grow if God grants the opportunity. Let sound doctrine remain unchanged if the audience declines. Let another faithful servant receive recognition without jealousy. Let the Word of God govern what is published, and let the approval of Christ matter more than the applause of men. **The world measures a man by how many people follow him. God examines whether the man faithfully followed Jesus Christ. When the applause has faded and the audience has disappeared, the only approval that will finally matter is the approval of the Lord who called him to serve.**

9 of 10 — Social Media and the Christian Tongue — The Endless Scroll: Pornography, Secret Lust, Wasted Hours, and the Screen That Rules Your Life

Key Passage: 1 Corinthians 6:12 (KJV)

“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

Introduction

There is a remarkable little instrument sitting in the hands of modern civilization that can deliver the gospel of Jesus Christ to a stranger on the other side of the world, furnish access to thousands of pages of biblical instruction, connect families separated by great distances, and accomplish legitimate business in a matter of seconds. That same instrument can deliver pornography into a man's bedroom, introduce an adulterous conversation into his marriage, consume an entire evening that belonged to his family, and turn a professing Christian into a servant of appetites he would be ashamed to acknowledge before his congregation. The instrument itself is not the final authority over the person holding it. First Corinthians 6:12 declares, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” There is the issue. **A Christian may possess the liberty to use a device without possessing the spiritual discipline to prevent that device from ruling him.** The question is not merely what the screen can display. The question is what the person behind the screen has permitted to become his master.

Social media has become an extraordinary marketplace of human appetites. A person opens an application intending to read a message, examine the news, or publish a Bible verse, and suddenly discovers himself wandering through an apparently endless collection of pictures, videos, arguments, advertisements, and suggested accounts. One image leads to another. One curiosity becomes another temptation. One harmless glance becomes a deliberate search. Before long, the Christian who intended to spend five minutes checking his account has surrendered forty-five minutes to an electronic parade that accomplished absolutely nothing worth remembering. Worse still, some content is designed to stimulate sexual desire, and the opportunities for secret indulgence are almost limitless. The world has managed to place an adult theater, a gambling hall, a gossip market, and a carnival of vanity inside a device small enough to fit in a pocket. Then it congratulates itself because the entertainment is convenient. Convenience, however, has never been a reliable measure of righteousness.

The danger reaches much deeper than time management or the unfortunate consequences of distraction. Scripture identifies lust as sin, fornication as wickedness, and the surrender of the believer's body to unrighteousness as a contradiction of his position in Jesus Christ. Matthew 5:27–30 confronts the seriousness of lustful looking. Job

31:1 reveals a deliberate covenant concerning the eyes. Psalm 101:3 expresses a determination not to set wickedness before them. Philippians 4:8 establishes the character of thoughts that ought to occupy the Christian's mind, while Ephesians 5:15–16 commands the wise use of time. These passages expose the foolishness of a person who loudly condemns the immorality of the world while privately consuming the very material that feeds it. They also challenge the Christian who is so occupied with ministering to strangers that his own household receives whatever attention remains after the screen has finished with him. **A man may have ten thousand followers and still be following his flesh straight into spiritual defeat.**

1. Christian Liberty Does Not Include Permission to Become a Slave

First Corinthians 6:12 must be examined in its immediate context before it is turned into an excuse for whatever behavior a person wishes to justify. Paul is addressing believers at Corinth concerning the body, fornication, and the responsibilities belonging to those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ. The statement concerning lawful things is immediately qualified by two important considerations. First, not everything that may be lawful is expedient. Second, Paul refuses to be brought under the power of anything. The surrounding verses make the apostle's purpose unmistakable. Verse 13 declares, “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.” Verse 18 commands, “Flee fornication.” Paul is not establishing an unlimited religious liberty through which sexual immorality becomes acceptable. He is demonstrating that the Christian's freedom must be governed by his relationship to the Lord who purchased him.

The distinction between liberty and bondage is especially important when examining modern technology. A Christian may have every legitimate reason to own a smartphone, maintain a social media account, watch a useful presentation, or communicate with friends. None of those activities is inherently sinful. But what happens when he can no longer set the device aside without feeling compelled to examine it again? What happens when he repeatedly neglects prayer, Bible study, work, sleep, or family responsibilities because another collection of pictures demands his attention? Paul declares, “I will not be brought under the power of any.” That is a remarkably direct answer to the man who insists he possesses complete freedom while demonstrating that he cannot govern the thing supposedly under his control. **If you are free to use the screen but cannot freely put it down, you ought to reconsider who is actually exercising authority in that relationship.**

The chapter concludes with an even stronger declaration. First Corinthians 6:19–20 states that the believer's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost and that Christians are bought with a price. Paul therefore commands, “glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” This is not salvation through personal performance. The believer is saved by grace

through faith, according to Ephesians 2:8–9, and his position in Christ is secured through the finished work of the Saviour. But redemption establishes responsibility rather than removing it. The Christian's body is not merely a collection of appetites available for whatever entertainment happens to appear. It belongs to the Lord. His eyes, hands, speech, and conduct should therefore be governed by that ownership. The man who spends Sunday declaring that he belongs to Jesus Christ and Monday behaving as though his body belongs to pornography has a serious contradiction to confront. Grace has not made sin respectable. It has made obedience the proper response of the redeemed.

2. Whosoever Looketh to Lust: The Sin Begins Before the Physical Act

Matthew 5:27–28 records the Lord Jesus Christ declaring, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” The historical and doctrinal setting must be respected. Christ was speaking during His earthly ministry to Israel within the Sermon on the Mount, exposing the inadequacy of outward righteousness divorced from the true condition of the heart. He was not presenting a Church Age formula through which salvation could be earned by perfect control of the eyes. Nevertheless, the moral principle is unmistakable. Sexual sin is not limited to the outward physical act. A man may outwardly maintain the appearance of marital faithfulness while deliberately cultivating adulterous desires within his heart. God examines what the neighbors cannot see, and the absence of a public scandal is not proof of private righteousness.

Notice the precision of the Lord's statement. He identifies looking “to lust after her.” The passage concerns a deliberate direction of desire, not merely the unavoidable recognition that another person is physically attractive. A Christian may encounter an inappropriate image without seeking it. That is not the same thing as deliberately returning to the image, searching for similar material, and cultivating sexual fantasies through repeated viewing. The distinction matters because the world is filled with occasions of temptation, and Scripture does not require believers to pretend they possess no eyes. But it does require them to govern what they voluntarily pursue. A glance may be accidental. Continued indulgence becomes a decision. A man cannot excuse deliberate lust by claiming that the internet happened to place temptation before him when he has spent the previous twenty minutes searching for more of it. **The first image may have appeared without your invitation; the next fifty may reveal exactly what you invited into your heart.**

Matthew 5:29–30 continues with the Lord's severe language concerning the offending right eye and right hand. The figures communicate the seriousness of dealing with occasions of sin, not a command for Christians to mutilate their bodies as a means of securing

salvation. Removing an eye could never remove the sinful nature of the heart. The Lord's words expose the danger of treating sin lightly and the necessity of decisive action against what leads a person toward wickedness. Applied to modern technology, the principle is straightforward. If a particular account continually presents sexual temptation, stop following it. If an application repeatedly becomes an occasion for pornography, remove the application. If private browsing has become a doorway into secret sin, eliminate the opportunity rather than announcing another resolution you have no intention of keeping. It is better to lose access to an entertaining platform than surrender your conscience to what it provides. **A man who refuses to remove the occasion of temptation should not act astonished when temptation continues arriving at his door.**

3. I Made a Covenant With Mine Eyes: A Standard Older Than the Internet

Job 31:1 contains a statement of remarkable personal discipline: "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" Job was speaking within the historical circumstances of his suffering and his defense of personal integrity. His life belongs to a period preceding the Mosaic covenant, and his declaration must not be confused with a direct Church Age command concerning salvation. Yet the moral seriousness of his words is evident. Job recognized a connection between what a man deliberately permits his eyes to pursue and what his heart may subsequently entertain. He did not wait until adultery had destroyed his household before considering whether his thoughts required government. He established a standard beforehand. That is the difference between spiritual preparation and continual surrender. A man who waits until his desires have become overwhelming before deciding whether he should resist them has already surrendered considerable ground.

Psalm 101:3 provides another deliberate declaration: "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." David expresses a determination concerning the things he will voluntarily place before himself. The psalm also addresses integrity, wickedness, deceit, and conduct within the household. This is not a prophecy about television screens or smartphones, and no responsible interpreter should pretend David secretly described modern technology. Nevertheless, the principle applies naturally to every generation. The Christian must decide what he permits to occupy his attention. Some people will condemn pornography while continually following accounts that specialize in provocative images. Others insist that they oppose sexual immorality while spending their evenings watching entertainment built almost entirely upon the celebration of it. They are remarkably careful to avoid the final destination while faithfully traveling every road leading toward it. **If you know where a road leads, you cannot continually walk down it and claim innocence because you have not yet reached the last mile.**

These passages expose the necessity of practical boundaries. The Christian who repeatedly struggles with sexual material should not treat unrestricted access as though it were a sacred right. He may need content restrictions, changes to his accounts, the removal of particular applications, or appropriate accountability with a trustworthy person. Such measures are not substitutes for repentance, faith, or walking in the Spirit. They are practical decisions consistent with refusing to make provision for the flesh. Romans 13:14 commands, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." The man who keeps every pathway to his favorite sin conveniently available has made provision whether he admits it or not. There is little sense in praying to be delivered from temptation while carefully maintaining an electronic collection of invitations to return to it. **A guarded heart requires guarded choices, and a guarded choice sometimes begins by closing a door you have opened too many times.**

4. The Algorithm Does Not Care About Your Holiness

Modern social media systems are designed to present material that attracts and maintains attention. They commonly use information about previous viewing, interaction, searches, and expressed interests to determine what additional content may be displayed. There is nothing supernatural about this arrangement, and Christians should not invent mysterious explanations where ordinary technology is sufficient. But the spiritual danger is real. A person who repeatedly engages with suggestive material may find that similar material becomes increasingly prominent in his experience. An innocent curiosity can become a pattern, and a pattern can provide repeated opportunities for sin. The system does not examine whether the content agrees with Philippians 4:8 before offering another recommendation. It is not a pastor, a conscience, or a Bible teacher. **The algorithm may learn what holds your attention, but it has no obligation to care whether what holds your attention is destroying your testimony.**

James 1:14–15 provides the biblical framework for understanding the danger: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." James is not teaching that every unwanted thought or accidental encounter constitutes a completed sinful act. He describes the operation of personal lust and the progression toward sin. The essential issue is the human heart. Technology may furnish opportunities, but the individual remains responsible for his choices. A Christian who deliberately searches for pornography cannot transfer his guilt to a computer program any more than a drunkard can blame the existence of a tavern for every decision he makes inside it. External temptation is real, but so is personal responsibility. The believer must recognize the moment curiosity begins becoming

cooperation with sin. The time to resist is not after the conscience has been silenced through repeated indulgence. It is when the temptation first presents its invitation.

The danger also includes private conversations that begin innocently and gradually become inappropriate. A married person may receive a friendly message, exchange ordinary pleasantries, and eventually develop a secret relationship characterized by flirtation, suggestive comments, or emotional intimacy concealed from the spouse. Such conduct cannot be justified merely because no physical adultery has occurred. Hebrews 13:4 declares, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” Ephesians 5:25 commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church, while Titus 2:4 instructs concerning the proper love of husbands and children. These responsibilities are not compatible with cultivating secret romantic attachments through private messages. The Christian should examine conversations honestly rather than waiting until an unmistakable scandal develops. **When a conversation must be hidden from your spouse because of its romantic or sexual character, the secrecy itself is warning you that the boundary has already been approached or crossed.**

5. Redeeming the Time: The Hours You Scroll Are Hours You Cannot Recover

Ephesians 5:15–16 declares, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Paul is addressing believers concerning the conduct appropriate to those who belong to Jesus Christ. The instruction follows his commands concerning separation from darkness, walking as children of light, and reproving unfruitful works. The word *circumspectly* calls for careful living rather than reckless movement through whatever circumstances happen to arise. Redeeming the time requires recognizing that earthly opportunities are limited and that believers possess responsibilities which cannot be postponed indefinitely. Social media presents a particular temptation because it rarely announces a natural stopping point. Another video appears. Another message arrives. Another controversy develops. Another collection of photographs demands attention. Before long, the Christian has surrendered an hour without making one deliberate decision concerning how the entire hour would be spent. **Time does not have to be spent committing some spectacular sin to be wasted. It can simply be spent accomplishing nothing.**

Consider the arithmetic of ordinary habits. A person who spends two unnecessary hours each day scrolling through entertainment has surrendered fourteen hours in one week. Over a year, that becomes approximately seven hundred thirty hours, equivalent to more than thirty full twenty-four-hour days. Those numbers do not establish that every minute spent online is wasted; legitimate communication, learning, recreation, work, and ministry

all have their proper place. But they expose how small daily habits accumulate into substantial portions of a life. A Christian may complain that he has insufficient time to read Scripture, pray, teach his children, assist his church, or accomplish necessary work while quietly donating hundreds of hours to entertainment he cannot remember. It is a remarkable contradiction to insist that a twenty-minute Bible study is impossible because of a demanding schedule while repeatedly discovering two hours available for meaningless videos. **A man usually makes time for what he has permitted to become important. His calendar often tells the truth long before his explanations do.**

Proverbs 6:6–11 directs the sluggard to consider the ant and learn diligence. Although the passage belongs to Old Testament wisdom literature, its condemnation of laziness is entirely consistent with New Testament instruction. Second Thessalonians 3:10 declares, "if any would not work, neither should he eat." Paul was addressing willful idleness rather than people genuinely unable to work. The principle is that believers should not deliberately neglect legitimate responsibilities. This applies to the person who allows endless scrolling to interfere with honest labor, necessary household tasks, or commitments already made to others. It also applies to the Christian who repeatedly sacrifices appropriate sleep because he cannot stop examining his screen. Rest is not laziness, and wholesome recreation is not sin merely because it is enjoyable. But recreation becomes disordered when it continually displaces duty. **If the screen receives your freshest hours and God, family, and necessary labor receive whatever remains, the problem is no longer entertainment. It is a reversal of priorities.**

6. Publicly Condemning Wickedness While Privately Feeding Upon It

Romans 2:21–23 exposes the hypocrisy of a person who teaches moral commandments while violating them. Paul asks, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" He proceeds to question those who preach against stealing while stealing and those who condemn adultery while committing it. The historical argument concerns Jewish reliance upon the law and the insufficiency of religious privilege to establish righteousness before God. Paul's purpose contributes to the larger demonstration that both Jews and Gentiles stand in need of justification through faith. Nevertheless, the moral contradiction is unmistakable. A person who condemns sin publicly while deliberately practicing it privately is guilty of hypocrisy. This truth applies directly to Christians who maintain impressive public reputations for opposing immorality while secretly consuming pornography, exchanging inappropriate messages, or cultivating the same desires they condemn in others. **A man does not become righteous by preaching against the sin he intends to enjoy after everybody else has gone to bed.**

The secrecy of a behavior does not determine its moral character. Proverbs 15:3 declares, “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” Hebrews 4:13 likewise teaches that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. These passages destroy the comforting illusion that private misconduct somehow escapes divine examination. A Christian may clear his browsing history, erase messages, conceal applications, or maintain separate accounts, but none of these actions alters God's knowledge. Concealment may prevent discovery by other people, yet it cannot convert wickedness into innocence. The conscience itself may become increasingly dull when sin is repeatedly excused. First Timothy 4:2 speaks of a conscience seared with a hot iron in the setting of religious deception. The Christian should not confuse his decreasing sense of alarm with increasing freedom. Sometimes what he calls peace is merely the result of having ignored the warning so frequently that he no longer wishes to hear it.

The proper answer is not despair, public theatrical confession, or the assumption that a genuinely saved believer must earn salvation again after falling into sin. First John 1:9 declares, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The passage addresses walking in fellowship with God and refusing dishonest claims concerning sin. The Christian's eternal salvation rests upon the finished work of Christ, while fellowship and conduct require honest acknowledgment of wrongdoing. Repentance must be more than announcing regret while preserving every convenient opportunity to repeat the offense. Where sin has damaged a marriage or involved harm to others, honest accountability and appropriate repair may be necessary. Where a person has become deeply entrenched in destructive habits, trusted pastoral counsel or qualified professional assistance may help him implement responsible safeguards without replacing biblical responsibility. **The answer to secret sin is not to become more skillful at hiding it. The answer is to stop defending what God has already condemned.**

7. Ten Thousand Followers and a Neglected Family at Home

First Timothy 5:8 declares, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” The immediate context concerns family obligations toward widows and the proper responsibilities of relatives, so the verse must not be carelessly detached from its setting. Nevertheless, it establishes the seriousness of household responsibility. Provision involves the faithful discharge of legitimate duties rather than merely possessing religious intentions. A Christian may maintain a large audience, publish biblical material regularly, and receive considerable public recognition while neglecting the very people God has placed nearest to him. His spouse receives distracted answers, his children encounter repeated interruptions, and

ordinary family responsibilities are postponed because somebody on the internet has asked another question. There is nothing wrong with public ministry, but public ministry does not cancel private responsibility. **A thousand strangers may admire your devotion while the people under your own roof are wondering when they will receive some of it.**

Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers not to provoke their children to wrath but to bring them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Colossians 3:19 instructs husbands to love their wives and not be bitter against them. These commands are not suspended because a Christian possesses an active ministry or a demanding online audience. Children require more than occasional religious quotations from a parent who remains otherwise occupied. They need instruction, attention, correction, encouragement, and the visible example of biblical conduct. A spouse should not have to compete continually with notifications for ordinary conversation. Family worship should not become an inconvenience squeezed between social media arguments. The Christian who publicly teaches the importance of the home ought to demonstrate that importance through his conduct. It is an extraordinary arrangement when a man can write five thousand words explaining biblical fatherhood but cannot find fifteen uninterrupted minutes to listen to his child. **The children do not need another public sermon about attention nearly as much as they need the attention of the parent preaching it.**

The same principle concerns the local church and the responsibilities of those who serve within it. First Timothy 3:4–5 requires a bishop to rule his own house well and asks how a man who cannot govern his own household shall take care of the church of God. The passage concerns qualifications for pastoral office, not a blanket declaration that every difficulty within a family disqualifies a Christian from ordinary service. Nevertheless, the relationship between household faithfulness and public responsibility is unmistakable. A ministry should not become a respectable excuse for neglecting the duties Scripture plainly commands. Neither should the Christian abandon legitimate ministry merely because family members occasionally desire more recreational attention. Wisdom requires proper priorities rather than surrender to every competing demand. Technology can assist those responsibilities through communication, teaching, and useful resources. But it must remain a servant, not a rival authority. **The screen is useful when it helps a Christian fulfill his calling. It becomes dangerous when he begins sacrificing his calling to keep the screen satisfied.**

Conclusion

Philippians 4:8 establishes an appropriate standard for the Christian mind: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of

good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Paul is not commanding believers to become ignorant of wickedness or incapable of examining difficult subjects. He is directing their thoughts toward what is consistent with righteousness and spiritual excellence. The Christian cannot reasonably insist that his mind is governed by this instruction while deliberately filling it with pornography, lustful entertainment, malicious speculation, and hours of worthless distraction. What a person repeatedly chooses to contemplate matters. The believer must therefore examine what occupies his attention rather than merely what appears on his public profile. A clean religious appearance is not a substitute for private obedience. **If the mind is continually fed upon corruption, a Bible verse displayed above the feeding trough does not make the contents wholesome.**

Galatians 5:16 declares, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." The following verse identifies the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. This is not a promise that genuine Christians will never experience temptation or struggle with sinful desires. It establishes the proper means of Christian conduct through dependence upon the Holy Spirit rather than surrender to the flesh. The believer must bring his choices under the authority of Scripture, reject the occasions of sin, and exercise the discipline required to walk consistently with his position in Christ. That may require changing habits, removing sources of temptation, establishing limits upon screen time, repairing neglected relationships, and giving proper attention to prayer and the Word of God. None of those actions earns eternal life. Salvation remains the gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ. But the saved man is called to live as someone who has been redeemed. **Christian liberty was never intended to make a believer comfortable in bondage. It was given to a man who now belongs to Christ and ought to live accordingly.**

The final issue is not whether a smartphone, computer, or social media platform is inherently wicked. These instruments can distribute the gospel, strengthen believers, preserve useful instruction, and reach people who might otherwise never encounter biblical truth. The issue is whether the Christian possesses the judgment and discipline to employ them without surrendering his eyes, his mind, his family, and his time to their demands. First Corinthians 6:12 remains decisive: "I will not be brought under the power of any." That is the standard the believer must recover. Let the screen serve the work of God rather than become an instrument of secret rebellion. Let the eyes refuse what feeds lust, the mind reject what cultivates corruption, and the household receive the attention Scripture requires. Let the passing entertainment of this world never become more precious than the responsibilities of a life redeemed by Jesus Christ. **A man may carry the entire internet in his pocket and still possess less mastery over his conduct than a**

child who knows when to put a toy away. The Christian must remember that the screen was made to be operated by his hands, not to become the master of his heart.

10 of 10 — Social Media and the Christian Tongue — A Light in the World's Loudest Tavern: Leaving a Testimony That Outlives the Timeline

Key Passage: Matthew 5:14–16 (KJV)

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Introduction

There is something remarkable about a Christian entering the world's loudest tavern with a Bible in his hand and a message that the world desperately needs but frequently despises. Around him are thousands of voices shouting about politics, attacking strangers, advertising foolishness, celebrating wickedness, spreading rumors, and competing for the attention of an audience that will forget most of them before tomorrow morning. Everybody has something to say. Everybody wants to be heard. Everybody possesses an opinion, and a remarkable number of people have confused possessing an opinion with possessing wisdom. Into that confusion steps a believer who has been entrusted with the words of eternal life. He does not possess a message invented by a religious committee, approved by popular opinion, or manufactured to satisfy the latest cultural appetite. He possesses the inspired Word of God and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 5:14–16 presents the picture of light shining before men. The Christian must understand that his responsibility is not to compete with the darkness for attention. His responsibility is to make the truth visible.

The extraordinary opportunity presented by modern communication should not be underestimated. A man sitting at his kitchen table can publish a biblical explanation of salvation that reaches someone in another country before his coffee gets cold. A struggling Christian can discover an encouraging passage of Scripture while facing circumstances he has not discussed with another living soul. A person confused by false doctrine can encounter a carefully written Bible study that answers questions he has carried for years. Technology can distribute truth with a speed and reach previous generations could scarcely have imagined. Yet the same technology can become a magnificent monument to

human vanity. Christians may spend more time counting followers than studying Scripture, more time arguing with enemies than teaching sincere questioners, and more time defending their own reputations than proclaiming the reputation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have become so busy announcing that they are lights in the darkness that they have forgotten to illuminate anything. **A lighthouse does not need to advertise how important it is. It needs to shine where the ships can see it.**

This final consideration brings the entire subject of Christian communication into focus. The issue has never been merely whether a believer should maintain a social media account, answer an opponent, publish a correction, or avoid an argument. The greater issue is whether his public conduct faithfully represents the Saviour whose name he carries. The Scriptures condemn the unbridled tongue, gossip, slander, foolish contention, false teaching, envy, personal vanity, secret lust, and the wasting of precious time. Yet those same Scriptures command believers to proclaim the gospel, teach sound doctrine, encourage one another, expose dangerous error, and remain faithful in a crooked world. The Christian must neither abandon his witness because the world is hostile nor compromise his testimony by adopting the world's methods. He must learn to speak with conviction without becoming quarrelsome, correct error without becoming dishonest, and use public opportunities without becoming intoxicated with attention. **The question is not whether the world notices the Christian. The question is whether the world encounters Jesus Christ through his faithful testimony.**

1. A City Set on a Hill: The Light Was Never Intended to Be Hidden

Matthew 5:14 records the Lord Jesus Christ declaring, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” The historical setting is important. The Lord was addressing His disciples during His earthly ministry to Israel, delivering the teaching commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. The passage belongs within the kingdom instruction presented by Israel's Messiah and must not be carelessly converted into an explanation of how a sinner earns salvation during the present Church Age. Nevertheless, the illustration establishes a clear principle concerning visible righteousness and the testimony of those who belong to God. Light is not useful because it admires itself. Its usefulness lies in what it illuminates. A city occupying an elevated position cannot easily conceal its presence, and a candle placed upon a candlestick serves those who need illumination. The Lord's illustration concerns conduct that directs attention beyond the individual toward the Father who is glorified.

The final statement of Matthew 5:16 is especially significant: “that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Notice who receives the glory. The visible conduct belongs to those being addressed, but the glory belongs to God. That distinction

exposes one of the greatest dangers of public religious activity. A Christian may begin with the sincere desire to communicate truth and gradually become more interested in having people admire the person communicating it. The Scripture is displayed, the religious language is correct, and the audience appears enthusiastic, but somewhere along the way the servant has become the main attraction. Second Corinthians 4:5 provides the proper correction: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” A ministry that spends most of its time advertising the minister has misunderstood the assignment. **The candle was never commanded to convince the household that it was magnificent. Its responsibility was to provide light.**

Ephesians 5:8 supplies direct instruction concerning believers during the present Church Age: “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” Paul does not command Christians to manufacture spiritual light through personal goodness. He identifies their changed position in the Lord and commands conduct consistent with that reality. Philippians 2:15 likewise speaks of believers shining “as lights in the world” amid a crooked and perverse nation. The Christian's public testimony should therefore reflect the truth of his relationship to Jesus Christ. This does not require constant religious performance, artificial language, or the pretense that believers never experience difficulties. It requires honesty, righteousness, and faithfulness to Scripture. A Christian should be recognizable through more than religious slogans attached to his profile. **If the only difference between a Christian account and an unbelieving account is the Bible verse printed beneath the name, something has gone terribly wrong with the witness.**

2. Preach the Gospel to Every Creature, Not Your Personal Opinions to Every Stranger

Mark 16:15 records the Lord's commission: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” These words were spoken by the risen Christ to His disciples in the historical setting following His resurrection. The book of Acts records the unfolding transition as the gospel went forth, and the later Pauline epistles provide the doctrinal explanation of salvation and the Church's position in Christ. The Christian must respect those distinctions rather than carelessly combining every instruction without considering its audience and setting. Nevertheless, the worldwide proclamation of the gospel is unmistakable. The message concerns Jesus Christ, not the political preferences, personal accomplishments, or opinions of the messenger. The Christian possesses extraordinary opportunities to reach people who might never attend a church service or approach a preacher. Those opportunities should be used with seriousness rather than surrendered to endless entertainment and unnecessary controversy.

But what exactly is the gospel? First Corinthians 15:3–4 answers: “how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the

third day according to the scriptures." There is the message. Jesus Christ died for sinners, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. Romans 1:16 declares, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Paul identifies the gospel, not the eloquence of the preacher, as God's power unto salvation. A Christian can publish inspirational sayings until his fingers wear out, but if sinners never hear who Jesus Christ is and what He accomplished through His finished work, they have not received a clear presentation of the gospel. **A religious account that talks about everything except salvation may be extremely active while remaining tragically silent about the one message that can save a soul.**

Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes the means of salvation: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Salvation is not earned through water baptism, church membership, religious ceremonies, personal improvement, or a lifetime of attempting to maintain enough righteousness to satisfy God. Romans 4:5 declares that God justifies the ungodly who believe on Him. The sinner must understand that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished what human effort could never accomplish. This is why false gospels must be corrected and why Christian communication must never sacrifice doctrinal clarity for popularity. A message that tells people to become better citizens without telling them how to be saved may improve their earthly conduct while leaving their eternal condition unchanged. **The world does not merely need better advice, stronger opinions, or more respectable behavior. It needs the gospel of Jesus Christ, because no amount of earthly improvement can substitute for the new birth.**

3. Sound Doctrine Must Be Carried by a Sound Testimony

Colossians 4:5–6 declares, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." The immediate setting concerns Paul's desire that God would open a door for the Word and enable him to make manifest the mystery of Christ. The instructions concerning conduct and communication therefore appear in connection with gospel witness. Notice the relationship between walking and speaking. The believer's manner of life should be consistent with the message he communicates. Paul does not suggest that correct doctrine excuses corrupt behavior or that gracious conduct requires doctrinal compromise. Both responsibilities belong together. The Christian must know what to say and how to say it. A man who possesses the right answer but delivers it through dishonesty, unnecessary cruelty, or personal vanity may damage the very testimony his answer was intended to establish.

The expression “seasoned with salt” is particularly instructive because modern religion has confused gracious communication with the complete removal of biblical conviction. Salt possesses a distinct character. It is not sugar, and the apostle did not command believers to make every truth pleasantly agreeable to those who reject it. Scripture commands reproof, rebuke, correction, and separation from false doctrine where necessary. Second Timothy 4:2 declares, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” Notice that rebuke is joined to longsuffering and doctrine. The correction must be biblical, and the manner must remain governed by the Lord's instructions. A Christian can expose baptismal regeneration as false without inventing personal accusations against the person teaching it. He can condemn wickedness without behaving wickedly. **Salt gives the message its proper character, but pouring an entire salt barrel into somebody's eyes is not what Paul meant by gracious speech.**

First Peter 3:15 adds, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” Peter addressed believers facing suffering, opposition, and the need to maintain a faithful testimony. The command does not require Christians to possess an instant answer to every imaginable question, but it certainly encourages readiness to explain their hope. The passage also identifies the manner of response. Meekness is not weakness, and fear does not mean surrendering biblical confidence. The Christian should speak with reverence before God and proper restraint toward those receiving his answer. There is no virtue in pretending uncertainty where Scripture speaks plainly. Neither is there virtue in treating every mistaken person as though he were deliberately attacking the throne of heaven. **Truth does not become stronger because the messenger becomes obnoxious. The Bible already possesses authority without borrowing any from the Christian's temper.**

4. Answer the Sincere, Correct the Deceiver, and Refuse the Endless Circus

Second Timothy 2:24–25 declares, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.” Paul is not instructing Timothy to abandon sound doctrine or surrender to religious deception. The surrounding context includes serious warnings concerning profane babblings and false teaching. The servant must therefore distinguish instruction from contention. Some people genuinely desire to understand the Scriptures. Others have inherited false teaching and need someone to explain the relevant passages carefully. These individuals deserve patience and honest answers. The Christian should remember that he also had to learn what he now understands. A sincere question is not an insult to

the authority of Scripture, and genuine confusion is not automatically evidence of rebellion. **If every difficult question receives an angry answer, the Christian may succeed in frightening away the very people he claims to desire to teach.**

But the Scriptures also establish limits. Titus 3:9 commands believers to avoid foolish questions and contentions that are unprofitable and vain. Verse 10 instructs concerning a heretic, “after the first and second admonition reject.” Romans 16:17–18 warns against those causing divisions contrary to sound doctrine and instructs believers to mark and avoid them. These passages must not be misused to silence sincere disagreement or protect a preacher from legitimate correction. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that continued engagement is not an unlimited obligation. A person who repeatedly promotes a false gospel, disregards clear biblical answers, and returns with identical accusations may no longer be seeking instruction. He may simply be consuming time and using another Christian's audience to distribute confusion. A final biblical correction may be appropriate, but endless argument is not evidence of greater faithfulness. **The Lord commanded His people to contend for the faith, not to provide a permanent debating service for everybody determined never to receive it.**

This requires particular wisdom concerning public correction. A false doctrine taught publicly may require public examination so that sincere readers understand the biblical answer. Galatians 2:11–14 records Paul confronting Peter because Peter's conduct publicly compromised the truth of the gospel. Yet Matthew 18:15–17 addresses personal offenses through a progression intended to gain the offending brother. Different circumstances require different responses. A Christian should not publish private correspondence merely to embarrass someone, nor should he permit public doctrinal error to remain unchallenged simply because the teacher demands privacy. Evidence matters, context matters, and motives matter. The objective is not to create a spectacle but to establish truth. When a question has been answered, a falsehood corrected, and no useful discussion remains, the Christian may simply walk away. **Sometimes the finest testimony left beneath an argument is the Scripture already presented and the absence of another unnecessary reply.**

5. All Things to All Men Does Not Mean Compromise With Every Man

First Corinthians 9:19 records Paul declaring, “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.” The following verses describe his willingness to accommodate the circumstances of different people without surrendering his responsibility before God. He addressed Jews within their familiar religious setting and Gentiles according to their circumstances, seeking opportunities to communicate the gospel effectively. Verse 22 concludes, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all

means save some." Paul was not claiming personal power to regenerate sinners. He was describing his willingness to employ lawful methods so that people might be reached through the gospel. His approach demonstrates that faithful ministry can adapt its methods without altering its message. The preacher's responsibility is not to make every person comfortable with the truth, but to remove unnecessary obstacles that might prevent him from hearing it.

Modern technology provides a clear application of that principle. A Christian may communicate through written essays, brief public statements, recorded teaching, personal correspondence, or other lawful means suited to the people he hopes to reach. A carefully prepared study may help someone who enjoys examining Scripture in detail. A concise explanation may answer a simple question. A private conversation may provide encouragement to someone unwilling to describe his circumstances publicly. None of these methods requires changing the gospel or weakening biblical doctrine. But the Christian must recognize that adapting communication is different from compromising truth. Paul did not become a worshiper of idols to reach idolaters, nor did he preach justification through the law to obtain Jewish approval. Some modern ministries apparently believe reaching the world requires becoming indistinguishable from it. That is not evangelism. It is surrender dressed in fashionable clothing. **The fisherman may change his location to reach the fish, but he does not need to jump into the water and become one of them.**

Second Corinthians 4:2 identifies the proper standard: "But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." The Christian must not manipulate Scripture to increase attention, manufacture sensational claims to attract readers, or employ deception under the excuse that a larger audience might eventually hear the gospel. The apostolic method requires the honest manifestation of truth. A ministry may employ excellent presentation, careful writing, useful illustrations, and modern communication without becoming dishonest. There is nothing spiritual about producing careless material merely to demonstrate indifference toward public response. But neither is there anything spiritual about decorating falsehood until it becomes attractive. **The Christian's methods may change with the available instruments, but the message must remain anchored to the unchanging Word of God.**

6. The Testimony Behind the Screen Must Agree With the Testimony Upon It

James 3:9–10 exposes the contradiction of using the tongue to bless God while cursing men made after His similitude. The chapter concludes that such things ought not so to be. The Christian who publicly teaches righteousness must therefore examine his own conduct

rather than assuming that accurate teaching automatically excuses personal disobedience. A man can condemn gossip while privately circulating accusations. He can rebuke lust while secretly consuming pornography. He can preach against pride while becoming consumed with the number of people who admire him. He can explain biblical patience while behaving like a man who has never encountered the word. The audience may see only the carefully prepared publication, but God sees the person behind it. **A Christian testimony is not merely what a man displays when the congregation is watching. It is also what he becomes when the screen is dark and the audience has departed.**

First Timothy 5:8 establishes the seriousness of household responsibility, while Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. These obligations do not disappear because a Christian possesses a public ministry. A man may reach thousands of strangers through biblical teaching while neglecting the wife and children God has placed within his own household. That is not a commendable arrangement. Neither should Christians despise legitimate public ministry merely because family responsibilities require attention. Wisdom involves fulfilling both according to their proper place. Ephesians 5:15–16 commands believers to walk circumspectly and redeem the time. The servant of God must therefore examine whether social media assists his responsibilities or continually interferes with them. **If a man can answer fifty strangers in an afternoon but cannot listen to his own child for five uninterrupted minutes, his problem is not a shortage of communication opportunities. It is a shortage of properly ordered priorities.**

Private integrity also includes honesty concerning ministry accomplishments, financial dealings, personal conduct, and the treatment of those who cannot offer public recognition. Proverbs 11:1 declares, “A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.” Although given within Israel's Old Testament wisdom literature, the moral principle of honest dealing remains consistent with New Testament teaching. A Christian ministry should not exaggerate results, manipulate supporters, or create false impressions concerning its accomplishments. Neither should criticism automatically be treated as persecution. Sometimes a legitimate question deserves a legitimate answer. Sometimes a mistake must be acknowledged and corrected. Genuine humility does not destroy spiritual authority; dishonesty does. The man who claims biblical infallibility for his own explanations has confused the authority of Scripture with the limitations of its human teacher. **The Bible is perfect. The person teaching it is not. A faithful servant should possess enough humility to recognize the difference without surrendering one word of God's truth.**

7. The Timeline Will Disappear, but the Lord Will Examine the Testimony

Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” This concerns the believer's accountability before the Lord Jesus Christ and must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment described in Revelation 20. The Christian's eternal salvation rests upon the finished work of Christ, received through faith, not upon the quantity of his publications or the approval of his audience. Nevertheless, the believer's service remains subject to divine examination. First Corinthians 3:11–15 describes works being tested upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, with some enduring and others being consumed. A person may accumulate extraordinary earthly attention while producing little of lasting spiritual value. Another may serve faithfully with almost no recognition. **The judgment of the crowd is temporary; the judgment of Christ is neither ignorant nor impressed by appearances.**

There is also a remarkable permanence associated with words once released into public circulation. A publication may be copied, shared, preserved, translated, or encountered years after its original appearance. A careful gospel explanation may reach someone its author never meets. A sound Bible study may help believers long after the writer has departed this life. But the same possibility applies to false accusations, doctrinal error, and reckless statements. Deleting a publication does not guarantee that its consequences disappear. Matthew 12:36 records Christ's warning concerning idle words within His confrontation with the religious opponents who maliciously misrepresented His works. That historical context must be respected rather than carelessly confused with the Judgment Seat of Christ. Nevertheless, Scripture plainly demonstrates that human speech is morally serious. Christians should communicate with the understanding that words can outlive the immediate conversation. **An internet account may close in a moment, but the influence of what was published through it may continue long after its owner has forgotten the password.**

The believer's expectation reaches beyond the present world. Philippians 3:20 declares, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” First Thessalonians 4:16–17 describes the Lord's coming for His Church and the catching away of believers to meet Him in the air. This blessed hope must remain distinct from the Second Advent and the establishment of Christ's millennial reign according to the prophetic Scriptures. The Church's expectation is not that social media will finally become righteous, that human civilization will perfect itself, or that the world will eventually applaud biblical truth. The believer awaits his Saviour. That expectation ought to influence the manner in which he uses every remaining earthly opportunity. He has no

reason to spend his life fighting for recognition that will soon become meaningless. **When the trumpet sounds, the Lord will not need to consult the follower count to identify those who belong to Him.**

Conclusion

The Christian possesses an extraordinary opportunity to speak in a world filled with spiritual darkness, but that opportunity carries corresponding responsibility. He must guard his tongue against anger, insults, gossip, slander, dishonesty, and the temptation to turn every disagreement into public entertainment. He must distinguish sincere questions from deliberate provocation, correct false doctrine through Scripture, and refuse to waste his life in endless contention. He must resist the desire for applause, the temptation of secret immorality, and the surrender of precious hours to meaningless distraction. These are not merely suggestions for maintaining a respectable public image. They are matters of biblical obedience. Ephesians 4:29 commands communication that ministers grace unto the hearers, while 2 Timothy 4:2 commands the preaching of the Word through reproof, rebuke, exhortation, longsuffering, and doctrine. Both responsibilities must govern Christian witness. **The Christian does not have to become silent to remain righteous, and he does not have to become unrighteous to speak with courage.**

The gospel must remain central because the gospel alone addresses man's greatest problem. The world does not merely need more agreeable conversations, improved relationships, or better public conduct. It needs salvation from sin through the Lord Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares His death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection according to the Scriptures. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is the gift of God, received through faith and not earned by works. Romans 10:17 declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” A Christian who employs modern communication faithfully should therefore make the Word of God central rather than allowing his personality, popularity, or political opinions to occupy the position belonging to Christ. He may teach thousands or encourage one struggling believer. He may correct a dangerous falsehood or answer a private question. **The size of the audience does not determine the worth of faithful testimony, and the absence of applause does not diminish the authority of the message.**

One day the arguments will end. The controversies that consumed entire afternoons will be forgotten. The impressive statistics will cease to matter. The followers will move on, the accounts will disappear, and the names of people who once commanded extraordinary attention may survive only as faint memories in a world already occupied with something else. But Jesus Christ will remain the eternal Son of God, the crucified and risen Saviour, and the coming Lord whose Word cannot fail. The Christian should therefore use every

legitimate opportunity to make Him known while refusing to surrender the testimony that belongs to His name. Let the Bible be opened, the gospel be proclaimed, falsehood be corrected, the sincere be instructed, the weary be encouraged, and the wickedness of the world be exposed according to Scripture. Let the Christian speak with conviction, walk with integrity, and remember whom he represents. **When the world's loudest tavern finally closes, nobody will care who won the most arguments, collected the greatest applause, or attracted the largest crowd. The question that will matter is whether, amid all that noise, somebody heard the truth about Jesus Christ. The greatest testimony is not that the world remembered the Christian's name, but that through his faithful witness, somebody came to know the name above every name.**

Conclusion — Social Media and the Christian Tongue

Witnessing in the World's Loudest Tavern

We have reached the end of this ten-part series, and if there is one thing that ought to be settled beyond dispute, it is that the Christian tongue does not cease to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ simply because it begins operating through a keyboard. James 3:5 declares, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" We have examined that fire from practically every direction. We have seen how anger becomes railing, how disagreement becomes personal warfare, how gossip becomes slander, and how an unverified accusation can travel around the world before the truth has even put on its shoes. We have considered the Christian who cannot resist another argument, the religious performer who must humiliate somebody before an audience, and the man who has somehow persuaded himself that defending God's Word gives him permission to disobey it. We have confronted political obsession, the thirst for applause, secret lust, and the remarkable ability of a little glowing screen to consume hours that God never promised we would have tomorrow. And through it all, one truth remains standing: **The problem has never been that Christians have too many opportunities to speak. The problem is that too many have forgotten whose authority is supposed to govern what they say.** A man may possess the largest Christian platform in the world, but if his tongue is governed by pride, bitterness, dishonesty, and the flesh, he has simply constructed a larger pulpit from which to advertise his disobedience.

Let me make something unmistakably clear. I am not interested in producing a generation of timid Christians who apologize for believing the King James Bible, refuse to identify heresy, and mistake silence in the presence of wickedness for spiritual maturity. God

forbid! Jude 3 still commands us to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Second Timothy 4:2 still declares, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." False doctrine needs correction. Another gospel needs exposure. Those who deny the deity of Jesus Christ, corrupt salvation by grace through faith, or deliberately twist Scripture to deceive the ignorant should not expect faithful Bible believers to sit quietly while their error spreads. But neither should a Christian imagine that every insult deserves retaliation, every disagreement requires a public spectacle, or every fool must be entertained until somebody finally dies of old age. Proverbs 26:4–5 teaches us that there are circumstances when a fool must be answered and circumstances when answering him merely makes us foolish ourselves. **Biblical courage knows when to stand. Biblical wisdom knows when to stop. And biblical maturity refuses to confuse the satisfaction of having the final word with the responsibility of faithfully proclaiming God's Word.**

We have also confronted something that can become particularly dangerous among those engaged in public ministry: the appetite for recognition. There is nothing wrong with rejoicing when biblical teaching reaches thousands of people. There is nothing shameful about wanting the gospel to travel farther, Bible studies to reach more homes, or sound doctrine to become available to people who have never received proper instruction. That is one reason we labor, write, publish, and continue placing the Scriptures before the public. But Galatians 1:10 asks a question no Christian with an audience can afford to ignore: "do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." The moment the approval of strangers begins determining our doctrine, our decisions, or our willingness to speak plainly, something has taken the place reserved for the Lord. Followers are not the measure of faithfulness. Impressions are not conversions. Applause is not the approval of God. A man may have ten thousand people congratulating him for a message that contains almost no biblical substance, while another faithful servant receives little recognition for teaching the truth. **Heaven does not determine spiritual value by counting how many people clicked a little symbol beneath a publication. God is interested in faithfulness, not the numerical decoration surrounding it.** We must never become so occupied with being noticed that we forget the One we were called to make known.

And what about the private life behind the public testimony? That question deserves more than a passing consideration because it is possible to maintain an impressive religious appearance while secretly cultivating the very wickedness we condemn before others. A Christian may preach against sexual immorality while deliberately filling his eyes with pornography. He may condemn adultery while maintaining inappropriate private conversations. He may lecture strangers concerning family responsibilities while his own

spouse and children receive whatever attention remains after another evening of scrolling. First Corinthians 6:12 declares, "all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." That ought to settle the matter concerning the screen that has become its owner's master. The Christian may legitimately use technology, but he must not permit technology to govern his appetites, consume his responsibilities, or furnish convenient pathways into secret sin. Ephesians 5:16 commands us to be "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Every hour spent serving the Lord, instructing believers, caring for family, or fulfilling honest responsibilities is an hour that may possess lasting value. Every hour surrendered to pointless controversy, endless entertainment, and deliberately cultivated lust is an hour that cannot be recovered. **A man who teaches thousands about biblical priorities while continually neglecting his own household has not demonstrated that public ministry is more important than private obedience. He has demonstrated that he needs to practice what he has been preaching.**

There is another matter I want to leave firmly established, because it concerns how we treat the people who encounter our ministry. Not everybody who disagrees with us is an enemy, and not everybody who asks a difficult question is a troublemaker. Some people are genuinely seeking the truth. Some have been raised under false religious teaching and are struggling to understand what the Bible actually says. Some are newly saved believers who have never learned to rightly divide the Word. Others may be hurting, confused, discouraged, or afraid to admit how little they understand. Those people deserve patience and honest instruction. Second Timothy 2:24–25 declares, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." But that same Bible also commands us to avoid foolish contentions, reject persistent heresy after proper admonition, and refuse participation in disputes that accomplish nothing but strife. I will gladly answer a sincere biblical question. I will defend the gospel against false doctrine. I will correct an error when Scripture requires it, and I will acknowledge a mistake when the Bible demonstrates that I have made one. But I will not pretend that a Christian must surrender his entire life to people whose only ambition is to provoke another argument. **Our commission is to preach the gospel, not to operate a twenty-four-hour customer service department for the professionally offended.** Sometimes the most faithful thing we can do is state the truth, leave the Scriptures standing, close the conversation, and return to the work God has placed before us.

Now consider the tremendous privilege that remains before us. We live in a world where a single biblical message can reach people across oceans, national boundaries, and languages without the author ever leaving his home. What an opportunity to proclaim the gospel! What an opportunity to explain the Scriptures, expose deception, encourage weary

believers, and point lost sinners toward the Lord Jesus Christ! Romans 1:16 declares, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The message has not changed. First Corinthians 15:3–4 establishes that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. The sinner does not need a religious performance, a political victory, or another inspirational speech about becoming a better person. He needs to understand that he is lost, that Jesus Christ accomplished what he could never accomplish, and that eternal salvation is received through faith in the finished work of the Saviour. That is the message worth publishing. That is the truth worth defending. That is the reason a Christian should be willing to stand in the world's loudest tavern without surrendering to its wickedness. **We are not there to prove that Christians can shout louder than everybody else. We are there because amid all that noise, somebody may be desperately searching for the truth that can save his soul.**

And finally, there is a day coming when all the arguments, accusations, statistics, and public recognition associated with this present world will amount to very little. The platforms will change. The controversies will disappear. The people who once demanded our attention will move on to something else. The impressive follower counts will become meaningless, and the names of individuals who commanded enormous audiences may be forgotten by the very people who once applauded them. But the Lord Jesus Christ will remain exactly who the Scriptures declare Him to be. His Word will remain true. His finished work will remain sufficient. His promises will remain certain. And every believer will stand before Him at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." That examination concerns the believer's service and must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment of the lost. Our salvation rests securely upon Jesus Christ, but our earthly service remains a matter of serious accountability. I want our words to have accomplished something more lasting than winning arguments and collecting applause. I want our teaching to have strengthened believers, our corrections to have defended biblical truth, our encouragement to have helped those who were struggling, and our gospel witness to have pointed sinners to the only Saviour. **When the world's loudest tavern finally closes, the greatest testimony we could leave behind is not that everybody knew our names, admired our arguments, or followed our accounts. It is that through our faithful witness, somebody heard about Jesus Christ, believed the gospel, and received everlasting life. Let the world forget the messenger if it must, but may it never be said that we failed to proclaim the message.**


SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CHRISTIAN TONGUE
Witnessing in the World's Loudest Tavern
THE HOLY BIBLE KING JAMES VERSION
1 THE CHRISTIAN TONGUE IN A DIGITAL WORLD
James 3:5; Ephesians 4:29
The tongue reveals the heart; the keyboard does not erase accountability.
Words can build up or tear down, encourage or corrupt, help or destroy.
Speak that which edifies, ministers grace, and honors the Lord.
2 ANGER, INSULTS, AND PERSONAL ATTACKS
James 1:19–20; Proverbs 15:1
Be slow to wrath and quick to hear; anger seldom produces the righteousness of God.
Righteous rebuke confronts error with Scripture; personal vengeance only satisfies the flesh.
A soft answer turns away wrath; harsh words inflame the fire.
3 GOSSIP, SLANDER, AND UNVERIFIED ACCUSATIONS
Proverbs 6:16–19; Proverbs 11:13
God hates a lying tongue and those who sow strife among brethren.
Do not spread a charge until the facts are established and the matter is proven.
Protect the reputations of others; repeating a rumor makes you part of the sin.
4 ANSWER THE QUESTION OR WALK AWAY?
Proverbs 26:4–5; 2 Timothy 2:23
Answer sincere questions with patience, gentleness, and the Scripture.
Do not imitate a fool or fuel circular disputes that produce only strife.
Give the truth clearly, then refuse endless arguments with those determined to contradict it.
5 REBUKE BEFORE ALL OR SPEAK PRIVATELY?
Matthew 18:15; Galatians 2:11–14; 1 Timothy 5:19–20
Personal offenses and misunderstandings are often resolved privately and biblically.
Public false teaching or conduct that damages Christian testimony may require public correction, as Scripture demonstrates.
Examine the evidence, maintain proper motives, and seek restoration, not humiliation.
6 CONTEND FOR THE FAITH, THEN BLOCK THE HERETIC
Jude 3; Titus 3:9–11; Romans 16:17
Earnestly contend for the faith and expose false gospels and destructive doctrine.
Teach the honestly confused with patience and Scripture.
After clear instruction, refuse further disputes with persistent heretics; it is wisdom to end the conversation.
Blocked
7 WHEN POLITICS BECOMES YOUR GOSPEL
Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1–4
Our conversation is in heaven; our ultimate hope is the Lord Jesus Christ, not a political party or earthly leader.
Pray for all in authority and for the righteousness of the nation, but do not make political battles the controlling purpose of your testimony.
No government, election, or politician can save sinners; only the gospel can.
8 THE THIRST FOR APPLAUSE: FOLLOWERS, ENVY, AND COMPARISON
Galatians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 10:12
Seek to please God, not men; popularity is not the measure of faithfulness.
Do not compare your ministry, platform, or influence with another; envy and resentment corrupt the heart.
Use the audience God provides, but refuse to compromise truth merely to increase engagement.
125K Followers
240K Likes
18K Comments
9 THE ENDLESS SCROLL: PORNOGRAPHY, LUST, AND WASTED HOURS
1 Corinthians 6:12; Job 31:1; Ephesians 5:15–16
Guard your eyes and mind; do not welcome or linger over that which awakens lust.
Refuse to be brought under the power of constant scrolling, digital distraction, and addictive content.
Redeem the time for prayer, the Word of God, your family, and the duties God has given you.
10 A LIGHT IN THE WORLD'S LOUDEST TAVERN
Matthew 5:14–16; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4
Use every opportunity to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ–His death, burial, and resurrection according to the Scriptures.
Let your testimony point to Christ, not merely to your opinions, personality, or platform.
Speak with conviction, walk with integrity, and leave a testimony that will outlive the timeline.
SPEAK TRUTH • REBUKE ERROR • GUARD THE TONGUE • REDEEM THE TIME • PROCLAIM CHRIST
The aim is not to win the loudest argument—but to leave a faithful testimony to Jesus Christ.
VERSEQUEST MINISTRIES