

around people much like people about us.

One day a man was brought to Jesus who was possessed by a demon. He was blind and could not talk. Jesus healed him so that he could speak and see. The people who saw this miracle did not understand how this could be. Jesus had grown up in their area and they knew Him. But when they saw this happen to the afflicted man, they felt that the healing power had come from God. They saw this power as a sign of their Messiah they were expecting to come. We can see from this that in their hearts they were good because they were thinking and saying good things.

Another group of people heard what had happened. These men were Pharisees. These people were known by their strict observance of their ceremonies and customs. They were very strict in the outward forms, but they did not care about living out what they themselves taught. They did not like Jesus or His teachings because He showed them up for what they were—evil.

When the Pharisees heard about the miracle, they said Jesus had cast the demon out of the man by the power of the devil. Jesus called them a family of poisonous snakes. He asked them how they could say anything good when their hearts were so evil. Jesus went on to say that a good man's talk shows the good stored up in him; and the evil man's speech shows the poisonous things that are in him.

As in the time Jesus lived, so it is true today that evil men try to slander and put down the life and work of Christian people. This is because the life of the Christian is a witness against them and they feel condemned. They attempt to strike out at the Christian like the poisonous snakes that Jesus said the Pharisees were. The devil is working through people when they oppose God and His people. Satan slandered God to Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1, 4, 5).

Jesus was good and all that He said was right and good. In the Book of Luke, Jesus said a tree

is known by the fruit it bears. He said figs never grow on thorns, or grapes on bramble bushes. A good man produces good deeds from a good heart, and an evil man produces evil deeds from his hidden wickedness. Whatever is in the heart overflows into speech (Luke 6:44, 45).

How do you talk? Do you always say the right things at the right time? Our words are not only just expressions of our lips, but much more, they are expressions of our hearts and minds. Words we say show others what we are. Jesus wants us to follow His example in saying only good things. As Christians, we need to be careful that we speak only good things.

A wicked man may speak good things sometimes. But the true man shows through sooner or later. When emergencies happen, or when something exciting happens and he is off guard, he may say things he would never say at other times. What do you say when you hurt yourself or if you are surprised? As Christians, we may be tempted to say bad things. The devil wants to trip us up in this way. When these times come, we must reject them by praying for God's help. If a bad thought comes and we reject it, it doesn't hurt anyone. But if the bad thought comes and we continue to think of it, we hurt ourselves. And even worse, if we talk the bad thought to others, we have no control over how many people are affected by it.

The devil and our carnal selves may bring bad thoughts into our minds and we may say things we don't mean to say. But too often we speak without thinking. When we talk without thinking, we may get into trouble and hurt other people. We may forget what we said, but those who heard us say it may have been hurt severely. "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles" (Proverbs 21:23).

Jesus warned the Pharisees about talking without thinking. He said they would give account on the Judgment Day for every idle word they spoke.

He said their words now decide their destiny then. He said they would be judged by their words. The same is true for us today. We will give account for the words we say without thinking.

Words are powerful! Hitler said, "All important revolutionary events have been produced not by the written word but by the spoken word." King Solomon said, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21). But remember, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Jesus was explaining to the Pharisees and His disciples the reason for the bad speaking. Jesus wanted His disciples and the others to know what kind of people they would be living and working among. God told the Old Testament prophet, Ezekiel, what kind of people he would be preaching to. God told him that even though the people were like briars and thorns around him and he lived among scorpion-like people, he should not be afraid because he knew who they were (Ezekiel 2:6, 7). As Christians today, we should not be surprised if wicked men talk bad.

King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 12:18, "There is [man] that speaketh like the piercings of a sword." King David, Solomon's father, wrote in Psalm 140:3 about the evil men around him: "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips." This reminds us of the evil men that James wrote about in James 3:8. "But the tongue can no *man* tame, it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

No man can tame his own tongue, but God can and wants to. The only way for God to tame our tongue is for us to allow Him to tame us. We must give Him the control of our lives. The Apostle Paul in Romans 12:2 tells us not to act like the sinful people in the world, but to let God change our lives by first giving us a new heart and mind. Then we will know what God wants us to do and we will do (and say) things that are good, pleasing, and perfect.