

Gracious Speech

Joe Slater

Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one (Colossians 4:6).

Oh, how I wish I could say honestly that I have always followed Paul's directive given above! But alas, such is not the case. I'd like to think I've improved over the years, but I have work yet to do. James, the Lord's brother, was spot on when he said the tongue is an unruly, untamable evil, full of deadly poison (James 3:8).

When Paul wrote to the Colossians, he was under house arrest in Rome. He had just asked the brethren to pray that God would open a door for the word, *"that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak"* (4:3, 4). Whether talking to the guard to whom he was chained, or to visitors, or to Caesar, Paul knew there was a right way and a wrong way to present the truth.

Likewise he urged the Colossians to act wisely toward those outside of Christ, and to speak with grace (vv. 5, 6). Was he saying to soft-pedal the gospel or compromise the truth? No indeed! But mark this down: Truth can be presented kindly. You need not be ugly to be plain. If someone is offended, be sure it is because of God's word, not because you spoke rudely. There is nothing "conservative" about being hateful or nasty.

A church interviewed two men for a preaching job. Both men preached about Hell, using exactly the same Scriptures and making exactly the same points. The church hired the second man, and the first asked, "Why?" The brethren explained: "You both preached the truth about Hell. The second man sounded like he was sad that people were going there; you sounded like you were glad!"

Let our words be seasoned with salt. Salt makes certain foods taste better. When people hear gracious speech it leaves a good taste in their mouth, as it were.

SOUND DOCTRINE

Our Sunday morning studies from 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus have brought to our attention the necessity for "sound" doctrine. Paul also speaks of doctrine that is not "sound." When he does so, a subtle, yet important change takes place. He speaks of "strange doctrines" and "doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 1:3 & 4:1).

Did you catch it? Sound doctrine is always spoken of as a singular, all other doctrine is plural. The important point here is that doctrine that comes from God, doctrine that is true and sound (literally healthful), is one.

Have you ever heard someone ask about, or talk about, "church of Christ doctrine"? It's as if they think every church has its own distinct doctrine – that is, there are many different doctrines – and that this is OK. Well, it may be true that differing doctrines distinguish one group from another, but it is definitely not OK. Far from it!

If the doctrine which I hold and believe, practice and proclaim, is not the "sound" (true) doctrine of God found in the Bible, then I am embracing something else, what Paul calls "strange" and demonic.

Obviously, I dare not be found by God promoting, teaching, encouraging, or even tolerating anything but "sound" doctrine!

--David Deffenbaugh (Oklahoma City, OK) via *Old Paths*

"ASK ME ABOUT MY CHURCH"

"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).

"My Church is a Great Place to Be" declared the t-shirt. I was in the checkout line at a supermarket, and I noticed these words on a lady's shirt as she walked by. Wondering which church she attended, I discreetly turned to see the message on the shirt's reverse. Rather than displaying a particular church location, I was pleasantly surprised to see "Ask Me about My Church" emblazoned on the back!

I have no idea what she believes, but she has my admiration. Such a statement indicated she was ready - at a moment's notice - to tell what she believed about her church and her faith. By displaying such a message, one may assume she was unashamed and possessed the ability to defend what she believed. It also placed her on the defensive and opened the door to ridicule. Not all questions are innocent; they are often destructive, foolish, or even mean.

In I Peter 3:15, Peter admonishes believers to *"sanctify the Lord God" and "to always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you."* But in reality... how many have the ability - or would even be willing? I hope to one day order such shirts and distribute them where I worship. How many would wear them? Who would be up to the challenge? Would you?

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

[NOTE: Did you cringe when you read, "my church"? I know, Jesus owns the church. But "my church" isn't **only** about ownership. Paul spoke of "my gospel" three times; does anyone think he owned it? If I mention "my high school," does anyone think I own it? Then why the fuss over "my church"? It's about association, not ownership! -- J.A.S.]