

Seek Peace!

Roy Assanti—July 11, 2015

Good afternoon, brethren! How do we seek peace? *There are many ways!* Today I'm going to cover three steps and suggestions that may help.

1. We need to realize that offenses do come

Don't be surprised, expect them

2. You've got to get upset

Someone who says something hurtful and offensive, you're dreaming if you think that's not going to hurt, but you've got to 'blow off steam.' You must get it out of your system.

3. Here and there advice from God's Word

We're told offenses will come; don't be surprised, they will come!

Luke 17:1: "Then He said to the disciples, **'It is impossible that no offenses** will come, but woe *to the one* by whom they come!

It is interesting that amongst those that serve God and called by God, there is another presence there. In Matt. 16 Christ has got His face going toward Jerusalem:

Matthew 16:21: "From that time Jesus began to explain to His disciples that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem, and to suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and to be killed, and to be raised the third day."

Look at what the natural thing is for us to do. We want a good ending, good news. Here's Peter, the natural leader, the tough big-chested fisherman. I don't know if he had a big chest, but he sure did have the power of leadership, which is why he was chosen, and for his character.

Verse 22: "But after taking *Him* aside... [Can you imagine him taking Christ aside, probably had his arm around Him?] ...Peter personally began to rebuke Him, saying, '*God will be favorable to you, Lord. In no way shall this happen to You.*'" Come to Your senses! It isn't going to happen! Come on; cheer up!

What was the answer, v 23: "Then He [Christ] turned and said to Peter, **'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me...**'" It means that Satan suddenly had taken Peter by surprise, used those proclivities, abilities and talents of natural leadership that Peter had and used them against Christ. Christ said, "...**You are an offense to Me...**" Christ pointed the finger at the cause of the offense: *the presence of Satan deceiving Peter!*

"...because your thoughts are not *in accord*

with the things of God, but the things of men" (v 23). The things of God are pretty tough sometimes. God is not just a nicey-nice, goody-goody.

The way to salvation is difficult! We can't be like Cain who had his way of saying what is right and what is wrong and 'God, You've got to accept it.'

Were James and John called the 'sons of thunder' for no reason? Let's look at what happened. Christ was rejected and told to 'get lost, get out of here, we don't want to see You.' He was flatly rejected and it caused an offense.

Luke 9:53: "But they did not receive Him, because His face was *as if He were* going to Jerusalem. And seeing *this...* [it had an effect on James and John] ...His disciples James and John said, 'Lord, will You have us call fire to come down from heaven and consume them, as Elijah did?' But He turned *and* rebuked them, and said, **'You do not understand of what spirit you are'**" (vs 53-55).

If they were not of God's Spirit, what spirit was motivating them to make that judgment and interpret and understand Scripture, thinking they were just right? **"...You do not understand of what spirit you are."**

- What happens?
- What spirits are there?

Here's an observation from the Apostle John and inspired Scripture:

1-John 4:1: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." We have a variety of spirits that are not God's Spirit, God's inspiration and God's way.

God's way is not man's way. These are the things that are the forces that are at work within the fellowship of God's people.

I recall a time many years back, the minister decided that we would have a campout in the bush, the Australian bush! There was nothing there. I was just going cook some sausages on a barbeque and have tents and I could just see that no one was going to go. Who would want to go? Barbeques out in the sticks, sausages and a bit of stale bread and you 'rough it.' I thought differently! You're not going to get a good turnout.

I spoke about it with Manola and we just decided that we would give it a go and we offered to cater. At work we had bumper crop come in, so we charged \$20 for dinner Friday, breakfast, lunch and

dinner on the Sabbath, and breakfast and, I think, lunch on Sunday.

We had activities, sermons and so on. It was a great weekend and successful. We did that so that everyone could come together. We setup our kitchen in the wilderness, the whole bit and put everything on the back of a trailer. It was a bit of work to tie it all up, pack and we did it, and it really worked well and brought everyone together. We had people volunteer to do things.

Then we did year-by-year and about third or fourth year we were called into the back and the minister wanted to talk to us. There was an elder there, and I don't want to speak ill of him, but the elder and the deacon were there... I had put the price up to \$35; I thought I would rough it one or two times. It's easier if I have a van and with a little bit more I don't have to tie up everything carefully and put all the food in there and drive it there and then I've got a storeroom, as well.

Well, there were a lot of indignant comments. Do you have to have to have (???) at a campout. I'm in catering anyway, it doesn't cost much. All of this and no complaints. I thought: What do you want? *Portion control!* If you want portion control, I'll give it to you. You want to measure anything.

I understood that I was being accused of making bucks out of this turnout. My motto, the way I see it—I don't want to have a bad attitude personally—if I'm ahead I'll pay my expenses, that's great. If I've got extra, I'll turn it back in. But I was accused, in a sense, of making a buck out of everybody.

I remember that we went away on a holiday after that. I was steaming! I was upset. You give your heart and work hard, you bring people together and they accused me of making a buck. I would turn it anyway. It really, really got me where it hurt.

Prov. 12 tells you the way I felt. Perhaps when somebody does something to you that hurts and upsets you, you can't help it; you've got to be upset. It can kind of be like this:

Proverbs 12:18: "There are those who speak like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise heals."

The Revised Standard Version has it like this: "Some words are like sword thrusts!"

Imagine that! Have you ever been winded falling down and you can't catch your breath? That's the way an offense can be, it can really hit hard.

Here's a Biblical example, 1-Sam. 25. What

happens was that David and his 600 men were out in the wilderness and there was a very wealthy landowner. Apparently you have losses of sheep, losses of flock due to wild animals, people stealing them, whatever, but because David's men were there and David had given them specific instructions to guard this man's property. We're going to be neighbors and they looked after all his flocks and they were missing none of them.

What happened it was a feast day, a celebration. David sent ten of his young men over to Nabal and said, 'This is from *your son* David.' Notice the humility. 'I have looked after all your sheep now, I'm like your neighbor. Give to these men whatever you want to give.' Nabal turned around and scowled at them and accused David as a 'runaway.' People have runaway from their masters and he shouted at David's men. 'What am I going to give you what I have for my men?! From my employees I'm going to give to men and I don't know where they are from?!' They went back and told David. I wonder how they told him? They must have told David the way it was said to them.

It was an *offense!* It hit David! You don't want to put this guy who has 600 men under him, a fiery redhead, off, because this is what you get:

1-Samuel 25:13: "And David said to his men, '**Let each man gird on his sword.**' And they each one girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword..." Get your M-15s. A sword was used for a specific purpose. A military weapon/gun of today is used for one purpose. If he says to get their guns/swords and we're going down there, it's not in vain, they're going to use them.

"...And about four hundred men went up with David and two hundred stayed by the provisions" (v 13). Here is the self-talk of David. He was on his way for action and needed to let off steam. He was probably carrying on, absolutely infuriated.

Verse 21: "Now, David had said, 'Surely in vain I have kept all that belongs to this fellow in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *was his...*'" He could maybe lost a hundred sheep or more. I don't know what the losses were, but they were significant.

"...And he has returned me evil for good. So, and more also, may God do to the enemies of David, if I leave any of all that *is* his until morning—even one who pisses against the wall" (vs 21-22)—very graphic.

David could avenge himself. What if when we have been slighted in such a manner, equivalent to our day, what if we could take retribution?

It shows that a man, who was after God's

own heart, that this man turned around and he was going to do this Nabal and his household in, an inclination that we all have. We all have the same nature.

- If we could, would we be any different?
- If we could, would we also say, ‘payback time’?

That’s a natural inclination: to kick! When I’m driving and someone is driving slow and I need to overtake and there’s someone driving in the overtaking lane. They just sit there. Manola knows what I say: ‘Come on turkey!’

The thing is we can’t follow that nature. We can’t follow that nature, we can’t shove back. That’s not the right thing. I call it ‘Newton’s law of emotional kickback.’ Newton said, ‘Every action will be met with an equal and opposite reaction.’ Our job is to hold back that opposite reaction, because that is a natural law that kicks in. We need to hold it back.

It can happen inside God’s fellowship, but even outside. Inside there’s been a lot of offenses. We always have to have a balance. We can’t just call someone and say, ‘Please come back, there’s a part of my face you haven’t walked on, yet! Please, please, do some more! Kick me another time.’ That’s not the approach.

Matthew 7:6: “Do not give that which is Holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine...” Why? Because they won’t recognize any good that you give.

“...lest they trample them under their feet, and turn around and tear you in pieces” (v 6). That’s the balance that we have to have, but past offenses have hurt people.

I meant a fellow while I was walking in town and he was offended at the money that he gave to the Church. He counted it all—\$30,000. He said, ‘I didn’t have to do that.’ Well, unfortunately, he was of a different orientation, because he also said, ‘You don’t have to keep the Sabbath.’ He had gone way, way out. Unfortunately, he died in that state.

Situations like third tithe that was given, I met a lovely couple that had been married 33 years and should have been married 34 years. It was the third tithe year for us and we gave. Really, the government does handle helping the needy in this country. So, it really wasn’t required and to hear that it was sort of spent in a way that was just ‘scattered.’ That really did something to them. That hurt them and I can understand that.

There was a minister that told me firsthand that he was told by an individual who said that a minister was in his house 20 years before and he

said to him, ‘Your problem is that you are inane’—like brainless, nothing between the ears. He said that 20 years passed, but it was as if it were yesterday. That really, really hurt.

There was another case where at a Feast site a member went to fix the flowers and she notice the bar. She had worked in a bar. It was equal to a commercial bar it was stocked up so well. Where did that money come from? *It came from the membership!*

Offenses can happen, and they will come! I remember one of the things that late Herbert W. Armstrong said and it stayed with me: ‘*If we look to men we will be hurt! We will be offended! But if we look to God and we give to God then there is no offense!*’

The point is, we will be disappointed, but the lesson is not to be a man-pleaser. Don’t do things to please people. ***Do things to please God!***

We may get upset and we need to let off steam and get it out of our system when we’re offended. Don’t bottle it in whatever you do. Think it out! Let it out!

There was a situation at a Feast one time when our boys were young. What happened was a member said, ‘Look, my son is so responsible. If ever you need your boys looked after, he’ll look after them. No problems at all. He’s mature!’ So, we said okay and let him mind our boys. The mother was a type of person—I found out after—that if her children said ‘jump’ she would say, ‘How high do I jump?’ That’s my interpretation, and you’re getting a one-sided story on that one, but that’s what I observed.

So, a ruckus happened; someone else came in and he lost control and it was a bit of a problem. Well, was the mother upset! It wasn’t her son’s fault! It got to the minister and the minister started to tell of a situation and I think it was an end-of-year report and he told a few things and put it in there. At the end of it he said, ‘I hope we have a better report next year.’ That was the one and only report that he gave! He said that we had some problems, like having children look after children. It happens at the Feast sometimes. Then he said that it represented a gross absence of leadership, especially from the father. That’s me!

What happens was that she went and really filled his head and told him all about it. Well, I wasn’t going to say anything to her because aside from everything, I understand that mothers are like she-lionesses. They love their children. Her husband was a good friend, a level-headed fellow so there was no talking there.

I had listened to that report about ten times,

and said, ‘Yep! That’s me!’ You can’t help it; it really hurts. One of things is you need to talk about it. I talked to Manola, obviously, and I talked to a good friend. We just talked about it and understood what was happening. I cooled down.

Psalm 4:4—from the *Expanded Bible*: “When you are angry [are disturbed; tremble], do not sin. Think about these things [Meditate; Speak to your heart] quietly as you go to bed [on your bed].” Get it out of your system. Think about it, but don’t do the wrong thing. Feel the pain, go through the situation, but don’t do the wrong thing. Don’t sin! Why?

There are many reasons. I wonder if there are times when we should step back and gain an overview of our calling and why we’re breathing, why we’re called? Why we’re here? Why we were born?

James 1:18: “According to His own will, He begat us by *the* Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all His created beings.” A tremendously exalted calling for the humble.

Verse 19: “For this reason, my beloved brethren, let every man... [here’s the advice, because you have a tremendous calling]: ...^[#1]**be quick to hear,** ^[#2]**slow to speak,** ^[#3]**slow to anger,** because man’s wrath does not work out God’s righteousness. Therefore, having rid yourselves of all filthiness...” (vs 19-21)—causes anger wrongly placed. Remember, we don’t think that which is Holy to the dogs, or unto the swine. He calls it filthiness.

“...and all *the* abounding of wickedness around you, then in meekness accept for yourselves the **implanted**... [it’s not natural] ...**Word**, which is able to save your lives” (v 21).

Pacemakers are implanted. It’s not something we have; it’s something that is put into us. In other words, ***God’s Word is implanted in us!***

The thing to realize also is that if we look around our world today, peace is not what is about us. The ‘bad guys’ are all over the place.

I remember seeing this film about the Mafia and it was a particularly graphic situation where these two men had to strip down to their underwear and the scenes that followed showed them systematically clubbed with what looked like metal baseball bats; without mercy or compassion, just clubbed unconscious. They were made to dig a big hole and they just kicked them in there still alive and buried them.

That’s the kind of thing that is about us. Roy, you picked something pretty rough there. Does anybody see the news about what’s happening in the

Middle East and the graves/holes and people are shot and they fall in there if they don’t conform to the desires of ISIS. It goes on! It’s terrible! And it’s reflected in the people around us. It’s bad news! It’s not giving and helping. There was another simple situation.

I’m in a supermarket of all places and there’s this fellow and he’s got his trolley (shopping cart) and moves diagonally so you can’t get by him. You have to wait and it’s done purposefully, ‘you walk around me.’ These things are around us, offensive behavior. There’s pride, cynicism, anger. Listen to the politics and the way they attack each other and recently what they’re doing; accusations and counter accusations; you come clean. They just stop short of name-calling. But they do it in a very skillful manner.

I’ll give you a comparison. One time I was on the Gold Coast and I loved to go out early in the morning and just look at the ocean, meditate and think about some Scriptural principle. Here I am rejoicing and happy and I go right into Surfer’s Paradise and I get a nice cup of coffee. And this fellow, who looked like he had a rough night, who came over and he was broke. He was going to ask for something, and I asked him if he wanted some breakfast.

The waitress came over and he ordered a big breakfast and we were yakking away. Eventually, the big breakfast comes and he ate it. But he wanted me to stay. Someone would do something like that and then you leave. ‘You’d do that for no reason? I doesn’t make sense, you’ve got to stay.’ *No, I’ve got to get back! Enjoy!* And I left. There’s a comparison. It doesn’t happen! But if that happened in our society what would they report in the news? Can anybody recall any good news? Someone who did something fantastic? Helped? It comes through every now and then, but it is not...

What about a good movie that left you uplifted, achieve and do something to help someone? Or is it because this guy gets shot and here’s this fantastically replicated corpse with the cuts, missing limbs, the whole bit. Is that what we see?

That’s what we’ve got, a lot of negative energy! This negativity is not the way for one within whose temple the Father and Christ have made Their home. It’s not for one to conduct themselves the same way as the world. ***We have the indwelling of power, light, energy; it’s there, we’re plugged in!***

We’re talking about not pushing back. We’ve got to be careful not to answer in kind. There are two examples that we’ve just discussed. Which

example do you want to follow? What should you do here?

Proverbs 26:4^[transcriber's correction]: “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.”

If we follow these negative examples we're no better. The thing is, we've got to do things differently.

I'll tell you another story that happened years back when I was going to school. I remember that this guy was a big fellow and he was riding down a hill with his bike, and he was going from one side to another. He looked so goofy. So, I gave him a smile and did a thumbs up to him and followed him down the road. He took it as an offense! He stopped down the road started to walk up in the same fashion, to the left and to the right holding his bike.

I thought: here is big trouble! He come up and looked at me and I said, ‘Sorry, I thought you were a mate.’ He said, ‘That’s all right.’ And turns around and walks back and was happy. “...Do not answer a fool according to his folly...” If he came in for trouble I wasn't going to give him trouble. But a good word just turns it away.

Even in the fellowships I ask: Am I answering someone rationally? Am I being rash? We have to think about what we say. When you're hit with an offense, you need to feel the assaulting shockwave of the offense. You need to be careful because it will seize control of the emotional stabilizers and it shakes you and moves you into dangerous waters of inappropriate reaction and response.

What we have to do rather is let off steam! Don't hold it in! Our first reaction is going to be rough. It is going to be rough. If we're going to be mad and stomp around. Do it!

We have to remember that when we're in that state of mind, when we've been hurt, when we've been upset, you need to remember Rom. 12:18. Here's the implanted word, the conduct:

Romans 12:18: **“If possible, as much as is your part, be at peace with all men.** Beloved, do not avenge yourselves; rather, leave *this* to *God's* wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine! I will recompense,” says *the Lord*” (vs 18-19).

One of my sons was in a business and he was really used and abused by his business partner. I told him, ‘They are going to cop more than you. You have a raw deal, get out of the business. I know you've lost money, but get out of the business, because they are going to cop worse than you.’ You know what, over the years, that is exactly what

happened. They got a raw deal.

The next thing is, after you've let it out, you need a close friend to talk to, to say things with, to go over it.

(go to the next track)

Think about it first, stomp around—depending on how bad it is—lay it up. It's valuable; it's almost invaluable to have a friend.

Australian POWs in the Japanese camps in the last war were the best survivors, everything being equal, because they had their mates/friends. They were in twos and threes and would do everything for each other. If one was sick and needed more food, they would give of their food for their mate/their friend. When you don't have enough calories to eat and you give all the food you have, you're actually putting yourselves in danger.

If your fellow needed it more, then they gave it to him. If they were sick... I've read about cases where the friends having dysentery and they would clean them up, carry them, help them. What this did it gave them a lot of heart and strength, just to look at one another and know that someone was there for you, they were there for each other.

Ecclesiastes 4:9: “Two *are* better than one... [this is a principle] ...because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him *who is* alone when he falls, for he does not have another to help him. Again, if two lie *together*, then they have warmth; but how can one be warm *alone*?” (vs 9-11).

In a sense, as it is in the physical world, so it is in the emotional, mental state. We've been together and helping one another boost our confidence, boost the end result. It's kind of like two batteries. It's a physical reality that each individual battery might contribute a unit of one. However, when they're together, they yield a unit of four or five. Again, that's a physical law!

Verse 11: “Again, if two lie *together*, then they have warmth; but how can one be warm *alone*? And a man may prevail against him who is alone, yet, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (vs 11-12).

I have my twos and threes—friends—and sometimes when I'm talking to someone I will say, ‘This is my first reaction about what I am feeling’; so that I lay the ground rules.

One of my good friends died last year. He was someone who would slap me up if I needed slapping up, and I'd give it to him if he needed. But good, bad, the whole bit, we would share, and we gained a lot of strength and help from that. Many

times he was down. ‘Why does this have to happen to me?’ His wife suffered from schizophrenia for over 30 years. Why?

I got through giving him an explanation so that he was prepared. He has been prepared more than me, more than any other to deal with people who have had this milady. He was being prepared for a specific place for him.

We do need that friend that we can speak to. We have our wives/husbands. I have my wife and I have friends in different areas and there are different things that we share, a one-on one, confidentiality. I know if I’m going to be told, *I’m going to be told!* That’s what you need, someone who will really tell you the truth. There’s no problem with it.

What Friends are For (song; chorus):

Keep smiling
Keep shining
the encouragement
Knowing that you can always count on me,
for sure
That’s what friends are for
For good times and bad times
I’ll be on your side forevermore
That’s what friends are for

We need a close friend or two to help us make it through:

- someone we can tell anything to
- who cares for us
- who is for us
- who will tell us the truth
- who will cry with us
- who will smile with us
- who will laugh with us

We need that close friend.

John 15:12: “This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: **that one lay down his life for his friends**” (vs 12-13). A great gift!

What would you give for your friends? I was really surprised listening to a news clip about a disc jockey in America. He had heard that Elvis Presley had given a Cadillac to this friend of his. Just gave him a Cadillac. This big shiny new car! He started saying, ‘Man, I wish he would have given me a Cadillac!’ He was going on about how he would have loved to have this Cadillac.

Well, the phone rang and this guy answers the phone and it was none other than Elvis Presley himself. His words were, ‘You got it, man! You’ve got it! This is Elvis Presley here.’ And, yes, he got a Cadillac.

What about the ‘samaritan’ in Auswitch? I call him a ‘samaritan’ as a specific term, but he was actually a Catholic priest. What happened was that this man was singled out; his name was Maxmillian Kolbe. He was prisoner #16770 in Auswitch on Aug. 14, 1941.

Maximilian Kolbe was a Polish priest who died as prisoner 16770 in Auschwitz, on August 14, 1941. When a prisoner escaped from the camp, the Nazis selected 10 others to be killed by starvation in reprisal for the escape. One of the 10 selected to die, Franciszek Gajowniczek, began to cry: *My wife! My children! I will never see them again!* At this Maximilian Kolbe stepped forward and asked to die in his place. His request was granted...
(<http://auschwitz.dk/Kolbe.htm>)

Let’s read what Christ was actually giving, the great Creator God Himself under the Father.

Verse 13: “No one has greater love than this: **that one lay down his life for his friends**. You are My friends, **if** you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, because the servant does not know what his master is doing...” (vs 13-15). Christ was called *The Lord and Master!*

Christ was bringing them up to His level; “...But **I have called you friends** because I have made known to you all *the* things that I have heard from My Father” (v 15).

Christ’s close friends who were there with Him—He was on His way to be killed—and He was going to be sacrificed as a lamb to the slaughter. Look at what was happening to His friends that were around Him:

Luke 22:24: “And there was also an argument among them, *even* this: which of them should be considered *the* greatest. And He said to them, ‘The kings of the nations lord over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But *it shall* not be this way *among* you; rather, **let the one who is greatest among you be as the younger, and the one who is leading as the one who is serving**” (vs 24-26). It’s the reverse of our thinking. It’s not what seems right to a man, not the way of man.

This is God’s way, v 27: “For who *is* greater, the one who is sitting *at the table*, or the one who is serving? *Is* not the one who sits *at the table*? But **I am among you as One Who is serving**.” That is an attitude that we need to always have: *humility in our relationships*, and we’re always to remember as we’re instructed: ***a little here and a little there from God’s Word; advice from God’s Word.***

I want to say that one of my past pet loves has been exercising, lifting weights, and one of my favorites was the bench press. You sort of had this weight come down on your chest and you push like crazy and you have these various strategies to bench press. You have to fill your lungs with air and you have to be buoyant and use all your muscles across the chest.

We studied the books and magazines and routines. There were isometric exercises where you just pushed against until your muscles burned and shook against a stationary object. The isotonic was the big deal where you have a heavy weight and push like crazy and it hit against the bar to stop the weight and it would come down.

There were a lot of strategies and I got up to a bench press of 270 lbs. I didn't make the 300 lbs. that I wanted to do.

I guess, in a physical way, the effort that's involved to push a weight and get stronger can be compared to the effort to stop a negative reaction, and react properly. Sometimes it can knock us down, but we've got to get up.

Matthew 10:16: "Behold, I am sending you forth as sheep in *the* midst of wolves. Therefore, **be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.**" That is the way! I wonder sometimes before Adam was deceived, as was the nature of animals, whether that really was the nature of a serpent? Whether a serpent really was harmless, but very wily.

In our world, as it is today, the analogy is that serpent has to sneak up on its prey. There are some serpents that just have to lie there camouflaged until a mouse or a prey goes past them, and then WHACK! and get them.

We have to exercise patience and a subtle ability to know what is going on around. Yet, we have to be harmless, not predatory, not striking, but peaceful. Know what's going around, understand what's happening. But at the same time have a heart of peace. We have to hold back, push that weight a little further. It's not easy to get a record to do something you haven't done before. It's a challenge, an opportunity.

Hold back and then answer with respect. There's a difference in offering someone, for no reason at all, a complimentary breakfast, as opposed to standing in the way in a supermarket so people just have to walk around you. There's a difference in the attitude.

Proverbs 15:1:3: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." Again, that's stating Newton's law of emotional return: every action gets an equal and opposite reaction, whether it's a soft answer or a grievous word.

Verse 2: "The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours out foolishness. The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good. A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life, but perverseness in it crushes the spirit" (vs 2-4). The same point is put forward again and again.

I wonder when we speak do we count the result? Do we calculate what's going to come back to us? In the past I've had correspondence that was challenging. How do I answer? Sometimes I write out an answer, and I scrap it and write out another answer. No, that's not going to do the job, and I do it again. I might get up to four or five. Think about it! You have to weigh those words. What will they yield you? Still, if I don't come up with the yield that I should have, the response that I should have, I just don't answer. You've got to have the right result.

Verse 4: "A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life, but perverseness in it crushes the spirit." It's just like 'a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold and settings of silver,' something precious or of great value.

This is God's way, in God's realm, the Father of lights is held in great, great, awesome respect. We might just say a simple prayer, even over a meal, and we mention the name of the Father. We give respect to the Father as Christ directed us to. We need to imitate what's good, what's promising, what's unifying, what we have in common. We need to build bridges with one another.

Just a point of God's mind: Have you ever thought when Christ had to be taken away—He was in the Garden of Gethsemane—He said, 'Have we got any swords? We've got two, that's enough!' Understand what went on in those times. When we talk about swords, we're talking about M-16s or a rifle. Swords were not used to kill beasts, they were used to kill people. It was a military weapon.

You would think that Christ would know what Peter was going to do with that sword. Peter happened to have it. He was a big tough guy. Do you think that Christ understood this man's temperament? *I think He would have absolutely known exactly what Peter was going to do!* If He knew that Peter was going to deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. If Christ knew that He would have known what the swords were going to do.

When they came to arrest Christ was Malchus going to cop it in the ear? Was Peter going to slice Malchus' ear off? *or* Do you think maybe right in the middle of the crown? *Peter was going to*

do him in, it looks like, and obviously the action of aversion Peter chopped his ear off.

Let's step back a little bit. In the resurrection these people are brought up and they were there and they were taking Christ to His death. How hard would it be for them to come to grips with what they had done? Think about it! Could it be that Christ knowing, and the Father knowing before hand, said, 'Okay, let's have a couple of swords.' And when these people said, 'What have we done, we led You to die, what have we done?' Couldn't Christ say, 'Yeah, but we had two M-16 guns/we chopped your ear off. How are you to blame? How were you to know?'

It's almost as if God gave them an excuse. It's a little bit of a side issue, but it's something to consider. Again, what we're saying is what is good? What is promising? Give people leeway. Help them, assist them, don't be so taken. I'm amazed how many times that I actually miss the mark. Because it's our nature and we've got to be on the defensive, not to bite back, not to strike back, but to see how we can sow some good.

Ephesians 6:10: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in *the* Lord, and in the might of His strength. Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (vs 10-11). Don't we know that Satan is amongst God's people deceiving. We have to test the spirits and watch what we do. It can almost be like a bit of a chess game.

Verse 12: "Because we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities *and* against powers, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual *power* of wickedness in high *places*. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God..." (vs 12-13).

We need to rebuke when we have to, instruct according to God's Word, but we shouldn't be a striker. Sometimes I get communication that is more like a swift punch. I think: What did you say that for? You have to hold back. We need to exercise the compassion, but at the same time temper it, understand the company that you're with. If you are outside you do not give what is Holy to the dogs or swine. You don't offer what is right, your pearls: what God gives us; that nature, that spirit.

Remember the pearl merchant that finds one of great value. It's what God has given us, His down payment, His Spirit. So, we've got to watch and, obviously, not be foolish.

Proverbs 16:11: "A just weight and balance *are* the LORD'S; all the weights of the bag *are* His work. *It is* an abomination for kings to commit

wickedness, for the throne *is* established by righteousness" (vs 11-12).

There's a balance there. We've got to weigh up what we say and how we say it. We've got to kind of weigh the words in a balance and see what they bring back. Seek the right result. Weigh your words before you send them out on a mission.

Look at what God says, Isaiah 55:10: "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from the heavens, and does not return there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, and gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater." That's what water does. Water also symbolizes in God's Word *God's Spirit!*

Verse 11: "So shall My Word be which goes out of My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall certainly do what I sent it to do. For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break out before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands. Instead of the thorn, the fir tree shall come up; and instead of the brier, the myrtle tree shall come up; and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial, for an everlasting sign *which* shall not be cut off" (vs 11-13).

God sends forth His Word like the water and it yields to Him. He looks at what He sends out and what comes back to Him.

I guess the comparison for us is what are our actions and our words, bringing back to us? Is it a briar? A thorn? *or* Is it a fir tree? A myrtle tree? What are we getting back from our actions? We've got to beware of crocodile replies.

Someone shoves you or you get one in the guts, your natural reaction is to come back with a snap decision, a snap reaction. Watch it! We've got hold back and push that weight up a little further and say, stop and think about it. Get it out of your system, talk to a good friend. The first reaction should not be what would be normal to come back to the one who sent forth the word that is equated to a sword-thrust that hurts and wounds. Rather we should heal.

Remember, 'the tongue of the righteous brings healing.' It also says in Scripture that we shall give account for every idol word. 'I told you; did you study? Did you learn? Did you understand what I said?'

Proverbs 15:28: "The heart of the righteous studies to answer, but **the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.**" Ask:

- Am I righteous?
- Do I study how to answer?

or

- Am I of the other side and just spit it out?
- Do you hold back?
- Do you push that weight just a little further and don't say anything?

In looking at about 20-odd translations and the studies how to answer. There are other ways in how to answer. Some studies how to answer:

- ponders
- reflects before answering
- thinks before speaking
- think before answering
- reflect
- meditate
- careful considers how to answer
- ponders the answer
- weighs its answer

Rather than coming back with a crocodile snap response, the implanted word that we spoke about is it, that's the direction:

- think
- slow to answer
- slow to anger

When you pray, sometimes you feel like kneeling down and you saying to God, 'I love Your ways!' Think about it. There are times when we feel inspired, we're close to God, we just kneel down and say things like this:

Psalm 119:97: "O how love I Your law! It is my meditation all the day." I love to think about what You tell me, like pearls of wisdom.

Verse 105: "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." That's the way David put it.

Verse 106: "I have sworn, and I will perform it... [I will do Your will. That's the way I want to live; I'll perform it.] ...that I will keep Your righteous ordinances."

Verse 111: "I have taken Your testimonies as an inheritance forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart." I love it! I want to do Your will! I want to serve You!

Verse 112: "I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes always, even to the end."

Even though we don't think about it, and even though it's not articulated, if God knows how many hairs there are on top of our head. He knows what's beneath in our mind and heart. Still, I wonder, somewhere lurking in the depths of our being is there something like this: *there's stupid over there and he's giving me hassles?*

There is another example. There was a Pharisee and a publican that went into the temple

to pray. The Pharisee was a guy that fasted, served God, obeyed God and knows the Scriptures. He was not an adulterer. He tithed of everything that he had. He wasn't like 'that over there, that thief, that lousy, good for nothing.' Isn't that what was going on there? Notice, it's the person who has a lot of knowledge and understanding of God's way that is not justified in that example.

We've got that nature! We can't help it! James puts his finger on it. Let's not just say that we have to be right and have the last say and that's it, 'because this is the way I am.'

Here's a fantastic picture and comparison, James 3:7: "Now then, every species of animals and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind." Not only now in circus shows and whatever back then, "...has been tamed..."

Verse 8: "But **the tongue**... [what comes out of our mouth is what defiles us, not what goes into] ...**no human being is able to tame**... [we have hold back, push back that weight; not giving in is the attitude we need to have] ...*it is* an **unrestrainable** evil... [you can't hold it back] ...full of death-dealing poison."

That is the nature we have and what causes the problems. That is what causes Satan to have an advantage and to get in even amongst the disciples of Christ to use Peter's strengths to try and attack Christ. Christ had to rebuke Satan, not Peter.

Verse 9: "With it we bless God *the* Father, and with it we ourselves curse people who are made in *the* likeness of God. From the same mouth comes out blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so! Does a fountain pour out of the same opening sweet *water* and bitter *water*? My brethren, can a fig tree produce olives, or a vine produce figs?... [one way or the other. Christ said that we're neither hot or cold, but lukewarm] ...In the same way, no fountain *can* produce salt water and fresh *water*" (vs 9-12). That's how hard the task is, and that's how tainted we all are.

One of things we need to do is to *guard ourselves, guard our minds*. The commandment says to 'love your neighbor as yourself.' You must love yourself. If you don't have a respect for yourself how can you respect your neighbor? There are two ways to it. Remember a balance. If you don't love yourself you don't love your neighbor. If you love yourself you love your neighbor.

Proverbs 4:23: "**Above all guard the door of your mind with diligence**... [don't be lackadaisical about it] ...for out of it *are* the issues of life."

Some people that I have known, because they have suppressed self and done things for others—helped others—suddenly burnout and just go astray. The alternate reading is **guard your heart**. You can't just be all for the other person. It's got to be a balance, equal.

Proverbs 4:23 *Revised Standard Version*: "Keep your heart with all vigilance... [urgent] ...for from it flow the springs of life." When you get the balance right, then it's a balance. You can't hate yourself.

Proverbs 13:20: "He who walks with wise *men* shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

RSV: "He who walks with wise men becomes wise, but the companions of fools will suffer harm." Watch who you hang around with!

We have a very diligent cat and she catches nice little things for us. Sometimes they are smelly things. You can get that if a cat has picked up something that stinks and puts it on your doorway, the cat is also going to stink, as well.

"...companions of fools will suffer harm" when you bring them in amongst brethren. So, make sure that you serve Christ and the Father Who dwell within that particular person.

I want to tell you about a person and I will not name. This person is deceased. Wherever she goes there were problems. It was pow-wows and the things that would come out of her mouth and the way she took it, it was a real tug 'o war. In speaking to her, 'here I go again,' and she would know it. She was faithful to God. She obeyed!

One of her granddaughters was a lovely person. And this person never gave her love, always hard on her and judgmental. It came that she was sick and dying and for the first time this granddaughter saw something her 'nan' that she could feel love. This hard exterior was starting to dissipate.

The jewel that was being formed started to come out. You could just see this rough diamond, all the dirt on the outside, all the black was starting to peel, and that jewel that we have treasures inside earthen vessels, inside vessels of clay, was starting to come out.

She wrote this moving poem about her 'nan.' She wanted her 'nan' to know 'I love you, I can feel your love.' But her 'nan' was dying and she died. It's almost like some people may be a rough as guts—terrible, lousy—but God is working something within them. That treasure is being formed.

Doesn't it say about the sheep and the goats: *I was stranger and you took me in! I was naked and you clothed me! I was in prison and you visited me!* 'The things you did to Me, because you did it to someone within whom I and the Father dwell.' Even if they were obviously obnoxious.

So, when you're served a hard serve, a hard nut, don't miss the opportunity to crack it and win over a friend. It's going to be to our credit if we do it. In balance we should have that positive approach.

- Why do it?
- Why put up with it?
- Why, when someone gives you one in the guts, do you have to hold back?

In this world we love to celebrate life, and there are certain points of life that when we have a child that's a year old it's a special little darling. It might be someone who reaches a milestone like 50 years, 60 years or 90 years of age. We celebrate life. But there's one very special date with destiny that we all have that is special and unique to each and every one of us, especially and specifically those of us who have God's Spirit dwelling within us.

That is the day of our death! The day that we die! Bear that in mind. The day that you will breathe your last. It's a very special and moving time!

2-Timothy 4:6: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." That's the Apostle Paul and he knows—and has known for a while—wherever he went it was imprisonment and trials that awaited him.

Verse 7: "I have fought a good fight..." He can look back at his life and say, 'I've done it! I've endured to the end!

"...I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.... [I haven't been deceived] ...From this time forward... [looking at the time that he's going to die] ...a crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day—and not to me only, but also to all who love His appearing" (vs 7-8). It's going to be time when that will be the case for us.

This is something to us is far off. It may not be as far off as we may think. But to us, because our mind is on life, overcoming, on daily activities. We don't know when the day will come when we will breathe our last. However, let's come back to the present:

Galatians 6:9 "Now, we should not lose heart *in* doing well because we who do not faint will reap in due time. So then, **as we have opportunity, we should do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household of**

faith” (vs 9-10).

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in It's Original Order a Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter (except where noted)

Scriptural references:

- 1) Luke 17:1
- 2) Matthew 16:21-23
- 3) Luke 9:53-55
- 4) 1 John 4:1
- 5) Proverbs 12:18
- 6) 1 Samuel 25:13, 21-22
- 7) Matthew 7:6
- 8) Psalm 4:4
- 9) James 1:18-21
- 10) Proverbs 26:4
- 11) Romans 12:18-19
- 12) Ecclesiastes 4:9-15
- 13) John 15:12-15
- 14) Luke 22:24-27
- 15) Matthew 10:16
- 16) Proverbs 15:1-4
- 17) Ephesians 6:10-13
- 18) Proverbs 16:11-12
- 19) Isaiah 55:11-13
- 20) Proverbs 15:28
- 21) Psalm 119:97, 105, 111-112
- 22) James 3:7-12
- 23) Proverbs 4:23
- 24) Proverbs 13:20
- 25) 2 Timothy 4:6-8
- 26) Galatians 6:9-10

RA:bo

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