

# Conversation.

---

*1 and 2 Peter.*

## "Handfuls of Purpose" Part 3 (Miscellaneous, chapters 15 - 30).

*Let fall for eager Gleaners.*

*Thirty Addresses on Various Scripture Truths and Incidents*

by W. T. P. Wolston. M.D.

### CHAPTER 24 — CONVERSATION.

Let us consider a little the subject of conversation. What the apostle Peter has given us thereon in his epistles, is doubtless the outcome of that which the Lord said to him, on that memorable occasion, in John 21, when he received his public restoration.

His first commission was, "Feed my lambs." I have been struck, of late, in seeing how frequently Peter brings in this word conversation. A very important consideration is this: What is the practical outcome of the conversation of the saints? Without doubt its character will affect its results.

What a wonderful effect would be produced in this city if all you dear young men and women were thoroughly for God. What a power you would be. What a testimony too for Christ.

Peter bids us to be "holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1: 15), and then speaks of six varieties thereof. I will point them out.

#### 1. VAIN CONVERSATION.

"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your *vain* conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Peter 1: 17-21). There you have *vain* conversation, which is connected with fleshly religion. We must not understand it as being merely the talk of the lip. I think Peter uses it in a much larger way than that. What is the first thing he says? You have been brought clean out of that system of religion which suits the first man. You have been redeemed to God with the precious blood of Christ. The first thing,

therefore, the soul gets hold of in connection with conversation is this, you are out of the old state. You are delivered from that vain conversation. That is Judaism, which has been received by tradition from our fathers. What we have to do is to shake ourselves clear of everything religiously which does not suit God. That is the first thing.

## 2. HONEST CONVERSATION.

Now pass on to the next chapter. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation *honest* among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2: 11, 12). Now it is *honest* conversation. Beautiful that! Now what are we? Strangers and pilgrims. What is a stranger? A stranger is a person who is away from home. Where is our Home? It is the place where Jesus is. That is home. He is not here. He is up there, and we are here, strangers, and pilgrims. We are not at home, but we are going home. A pilgrim is a man going a journey, and the point of our pilgrimage is home — heaven. Peter says, If you really understand what the grace of God is, you are a pilgrim. A pilgrim is a man who is on a journey, with the idea of returning home. Paul was a pilgrim, as he says: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20: 22-24). That is the idea. You are away from home, but you are going home. Does your heart say, Yes, I am set for Him? On the road then you must have your conversation honest. You know we live in a very dishonest day. God says to you and me, See that you are honest. This is a word for all, but for men in particular. See that you have a heart, and a conscience, that is answering to the truth and light of God.

Now go further, and we find

## 3. CHASTE CONVERSATION.

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your *chaste* conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3: 1-4). Peter is here addressing women whose path might be very difficult. Cases are before his mind where the wife might be converted, and the husband unconverted. The husband might be won by the chaste conversation of his wife. That suggests the importance of the inside, the home-life. It is a fine word for a day like this. *Chaste* conversation! There is nothing of the nineteenth-century new woman there. Then we are all exhorted to

## 4. GOOD CONVERSATION.

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 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; having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your *good* conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing" (1 Peter 3: 8-17). This is to be outside in the world.

Just notice how often "good" occurs in this chapter (*see* vers. 10, 11, 13, 16). Do you know what a Christian is? A Christian is a person who is blessed, and is sent out to be a blessing. You have been blessed of the Lord, and you are set in this scene to be a blessing, as Peter puts it here. You bless the person that is opposed to you. You are the reproduction of Christ in the scene out of which He has been cast. Do you want to see good days, if the Lord tarry? Refrain your tongue from evil.

Here I think we come to the actual talk of the lips, and what the effect is on ourselves, as well as on others. The Lord sees, and hears all. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." The face of the Lord is as much against His own children, if they are doing evil, as it is against the children of the devil. Here he applies it in the practical walk of the Christian. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is *good*? Observe the good things here. Good days, follow that which is good, good conscience, and good conversation. My beloved, if you are doing good, following good, and feeding on good, you will see good days, and you will have a good conscience, and all the world will have to admit that yours is good conversation. More than that, God will yet so work that "they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."

Now pass on to the second epistle, where we read of that which must necessarily pain the saint of God, viz.:

##### 5. FILTHY CONVERSATION,

"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust

unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Peter 2: 4-9). God must and will judge evil, but ere He did it in Sodom He delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. If Lot had had a grain of spiritual sense, and devotedness to God, he would have kept close to his old-fashioned uncle, Abraham. But like many another young man he thought he would get on in the world, and where did he go? He first pitched his tent towards Sodom (Gen. 13: 12), and then he got inside it, and dwelt there (Gen. 14: 12).

God gave him soon after a solemn warning, for he was taken prisoner, by Chedorlaomer and his confederates, and lost all his property to boot. Then his old uncle came again on the scene, and set him free, but heedless of his warning, back he went straight to Sodom. Perhaps he thought he could improve that godless city, like many a Christian today, who seeks to whitewash this present evil world, in vain. Eventually God had to drag Lot out of Sodom (Gen. 19). But he only got his soul *vexed* with the *filthy* conversation of the wicked while in it.

Now there is no necessity for a saint today to be in Lot's case. He was willingly and of purpose in Sodom. We have to pass through the world, but there is such a thing as being preoccupied. I will tell you a cure for preventing the conversation of the wicked getting into your soul, and vexing it. Get preoccupied. If you are preoccupied with Christ, there will be no room for this to get in. There is an immense amount of moral filth all round about. Be occupied with Christ, and with the good, the honest, and the chaste conversation, and all the filthy conversation round you will not affect you. If you do this, you may meet with persecution, but you will find in the long run, that the world will not trouble you much. If you take your stand for Christ, you will very soon find what the world will do. It will shake you off. You will never get your soul really vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked unless you are hail-fellow-well-met with them.

## 6. HOLY CONVERSATION.

Now for the last point. "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all *holy* conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3: 8-14).

In speaking thus of the appearing of the Lord, Peter says, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all *holy* conversation and godliness?" That is beautiful! The saint, born of God, and filled with the Holy Ghost, walks in an atmosphere of love — holy love — and he goes through this scene with holy conversation. He lives in a holy atmosphere, and carries it with him. That is, he is one separated to God, with whom he walks, and radiates the impressions resulting from God's company all around him. I cannot seek anything better for you than that, while wending

your way to the heavenly land, and the day of manifestation, and reward, that your souls might know what it is to go through this scene in the power of the Spirit of God. With all affection would I press on you Peter's words, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, *be diligent* that ye may be *found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless*" (2 Peter 3: 14).

You see you have been delivered from "vain conversation" — the religion of men in the flesh — and you have no need to be vexed with their filthy conversation, because you are clear of it. You belong to heaven. And now what is to be your pathway? Honest conversation, chaste conversation, good conversation, and holy conversation. Well I repeat, if we were all really set thus to follow the Lord, I believe, beloved young friends, there would be a wonderful power in this town. Let us seek, with ever-increasing earnestness, the blessing of others. We are fully blessed ourselves, and are left here to be a blessing to others. May the Lord give us grace, each one of us, to set ourselves more simply and fully to follow Him.

We go to meet the Saviour,

His glorious face to see;

What manner of behaviour

Doth with this hope agree?

May God's illumination

Guide heart and walk aright;

That so our preparation

Be pleasing in His sight.