

PRIDE GOETH BEFORE DESTRUCTION, AND AN HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE A FALL

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The person with a contentious spirit has no place in the kingdom of God in time or in eternity. Paul warns against even seeming to be contentious:

"But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (1 Corinthians 11:16).

The repercussion of a contentious spirit will have its effect in determining the eternal destiny of the one who possesses that spirit. In listing some of the works of the flesh, Paul includes: "enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings" And he adds, "And such like: of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:20, 21).

"Only by pride cometh contention" (Proverbs 13:10). The person who is "exhibiting an often perverse and wearisome tendency to quarrels and disputes" may be suffering from "*I*" trouble. The self-righteous Pharisee who "stood and prayed thus with himself" in the temple was suffering from the malady of "*I*" trouble:

"God, *I* thank thee, that *I* am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. *I* fast twice in the week, *I* give tithes of all that *I* possess."

His "put down" attitude toward the publican who confessed, "God be merciful to me a sinner," brought him no higher. Jesus taught,

"I tell you, this man (the publican) went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exhalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

The advice of the Scriptures to control the tongue is ignored by those with a "haughty spirit." They will claim that in a good relationship one can say anything with impunity. This is like believing a healthy person can swallow anything without harm— including poison! The scriptures remind us so often, concerning our tongue, that God is listening. It is often easy to see this flaw in others and if we

could see ourselves as others see us, we would probably deny it. It is hard to say the right thing at the right time but harder still to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment! And, often what we do speaks so loud that others cannot hear what we say!

A well known gospel preacher of a bygone generation whose name was the same as that great statesman and inventor Benjamin Franklin once wrote some comments that every Christian would do well to think about in reference to his speech.

"The opponents of the truth will catch every unkind or unpleasant word; every unlovely expression or harsh sentence, and comment on it, in the absence of argument, and even divert attention from the main matter. We should, then, simply study how to present the truth, in the clearest, most agreeable and acceptable manner; how to show people the truth, convince them and enlist their souls in it. This is the great matter to study, and not how to avoid differences and not discuss them at all. We are studying how to practice this, and we desire all the friends of the Lord to study it and give the adversary no advantage" ("Speak Pleasantly," *A Book Of Gems* by Benjamin Franklin, p. 179).

**A word once spoken can return no more;
A wise man sets a watch before the door.
The bird in hand, we may at will restrain,
But being flown, we call her back in vain.**