

## Words and Writing

by Patch Blakey

Words are an incredible creation. We frequently take them for granted. But they are so powerful for both good and for evil. The *sine qua non* in such a discussion is Jesus Christ, the Word of God. The Apostle John wrote (via words) that all things were made by Jesus Christ, and without Him, nothing was made of all that exists (John 1:3). This parallels the first chapter of Genesis in which it is recorded that all of creation came about through God speaking it into existence.

King David wrote, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward" (Psalm 19:7-11).

Isaiah recorded this about God's word, "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

In responding to Satan during His temptation in the wilderness, Jesus stated three times, "it is written" (Matt 4:3-11) and then quoted Scripture to resist the devil's temptations.

Yet James wrote to the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad and also to us with regard to our

sinful use of words, "And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell" (James 3:6). But as we all know, speaking is not the only means to abuse others with our words.

In his discourse, *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine wrote,

"Now, the art of rhetoric being available for the enforcing either of truth or falsehood, who will dare to say that truth in the person of its defenders is to take its stand unarmed against falsehood? For example, that those who are trying to persuade men of what is false are to know how to introduce their subject, so as to put the hearer into a friendly, or attentive, or teachable frame of mind, while the defenders of the truth shall be ignorant of that art? That the former are to tell their falsehoods briefly, clearly, and plausibly, while the latter shall tell the truth in such a way that it is tedious to listen to, hard to understand, and, in fine, not easy to believe it? That the former are to oppose, to melt, to enliven, and to rouse them, while the latter shall in defense of the truth be sluggish, and frigid, and somnolent? Who is such a fool as to think this wisdom? Since, then, the faculty of eloquence is available for both sides, and is of very great service in the enforcing either of wrong or right, why do not good men study to engage it on the side of truth, when bad men use it to obtain the triumph of wicked and worthless causes, and to further injustice and error?"

Classical Christian education seeks to train generations of godly rhetoricians; men and

women who are competent at using words well to the glory of God. While it is absolutely necessary to speak fittingly in every situation, it is even more important to write in such a way that one's words can be read, properly understood, and applied over the constraints of distance and time. If we want our children and subsequent generations to positively influence the world for Jesus Christ, they must master the use of words, not only in their speech, but also in their writing.

We are very thankful for those authors in this issue of *Classis* who have graciously offered their thoughts and experiences on teaching students to write. My sincere hope is that ACCS teachers will find these articles to be thought-provoking and beneficial.

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