

The Pilgrims Progress
John Bunyan

A Talk With Talkative
(Pg. 45, ¶2 - Pg. 49, ¶3)
(Reading For June 20, 2021)

Moreover, I saw in my dream, that as they went on, Faithful, as he chanced to look on one side, saw a man whose name is Talkative, walking at a distance besides them; for in this place, there was room enough for them all to walk. He was a tall man, and something more comely at a distance than at hand. To this man Faithful addressed himself in this manner.

FAITHFUL. Friend, whither away? Are you going to the heavenly country?

TALKATIVE. I am going to the same place.

FAITHFUL. That is well; then I hope we may have your good company.

TALKATIVE. With a very good will, will I be your companion.

FAITHFUL. Come on, then, and let us go together, and let us spend our time in discoursing of things that are profitable.

TALKATIVE. To talk of things that are good, to me is very acceptable, with you, or with any other; and I am glad that I have met with those that incline to so good a work; for, to speak the truth, there are but few that care thus to spend their time (as they are in their travels), but choose much rather to be speaking of things to no profit; and this hath been a trouble to me.

FAITHFUL. That is indeed a thing to be lamented; for what things so worthy of the use of the tongue and mouth of men on earth, as are the things of the God of heaven?

TALKATIVE. I like you wonderful well, for your sayings are full of conviction; and I will add, what thing is so pleasant, and what so profitable, as to talk of the things of God? What things so pleasant (that is, if a man hath any delight in things that are wonderful)?

For instance, if a man doth delight to talk of the history or the mystery of things; or if a man doth love to talk of miracles, wonders, or signs, where shall he find things recorded so delightful, and so sweetly penned, as in the Holy Scripture?

FAITHFUL. That is true; but to be profited by such things in our talk should be that which we design.

TALKATIVE. That is it that I said; for to talk of such things is most profitable; for by so doing, a man may get knowledge of many things; as of the vanity of earthly things, and the benefit of things above. Thus, in general, but more particularly, by this, a man may learn the necessity of the new birth; the insufficiency of our works; the need of Christ's righteousness, &c. Besides, by this a man

may learn, by talk, what it is to repent, to believe, to pray, to suffer, or the like; by this also a man may learn what are the great promises and consolations of the gospel, to his own comfort. Further, by this a man may learn to refute false opinions, to vindicate the truth, and also to instruct the ignorant.

FAITHFUL. All this is true, and glad am I to hear these things from you.

TALKATIVE. Alas! the want of this is the cause why so few understand the need of faith, and the necessity of a work of grace in their soul, in order to eternal life; but ignorantly live in the works of the law, by which a man can by no means obtain the kingdom of heaven.

FAITHFUL. But, by your leave, heavenly knowledge of these is the gift of God; no man attaineth to them by human industry, or only by the talk of them.

TALKATIVE. All this I know very well. For a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven; all is of grace, not of works. I could give you a hundred scriptures for the confirmation of this.

FAITHFUL. Well, then, said Faithful, what is that one thing that we shall at this time found our discourse upon?

TALKATIVE. What you will. I will talk of things heavenly, or things earthly; things moral, or things evangelical; things sacred, or things profane; things past, or things to come; things foreign, or things at home; things more essential, or things circumstantial; provided that all be done to our profit.

FAITHFUL. Now did Faithful begin to wonder; and stepping to Christian (for he walked all this while by himself), he said to him (but softly), What a brave companion have we got! Surely this man will make a very excellent pilgrim.

CHRISTIAN. At this Christian modestly smiled, and said, This man, with whom you are so taken, will beguile, with that tongue of his, twenty of them that know him not.

FAITHFUL. Do you know him, then?

CHRISTIAN. Know him! Yes, better than he knows himself.

FAITHFUL. Pray, what is he?

CHRISTIAN. His name is Talkative; he dwelleth in our town; I wonder that you should be a stranger to him, only I consider that our town is large.

FAITHFUL. Whose son is he? And whereabouts does he dwell?

CHRISTIAN. He is the son of one Say-well; he dwelt in Prating Row; and he is known of all that are acquainted with him, by the name of Talkative in Prating Row; and notwithstanding his fine

tongue, he is but a sorry fellow.

FAITHFUL. Well, he seems to be a very pretty man.

CHRISTIAN. That is, to them who have not thorough acquaintance with him; for he is best abroad; near home, he is ugly enough. Your saying that he is a pretty man, brings to my mind what I have observed in the work of the painter, whose pictures show best at a distance, but, very near, more unpleasing.

FAITHFUL. But I am ready to think you do but jest, because you smiled.

CHRISTIAN. God forbid that I should jest (although I smiled) in this matter, or that I should accuse any falsely! I will give you a further discovery of him. This man is for any company, and for any talk; as he talketh now with you, so will he talk when he is on the ale-bench; and the more drink he hath in his crown, the more of these things he hath in his mouth; religion hath no place in his heart, or house, or conversation; all he hath, lieth in his tongue, and his religion is to make a noise therewith.

FAITHFUL. Say you so! then am I in this man greatly deceived.

CHRISTIAN. Deceived! you may be sure of it; remember the proverb, “They say, and do not” (Mat 23:3). But the “kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (1Co 4:20). He talketh of prayer, of repentance, of faith, and of the new birth; but he knows but only to talk of them. I have been in his family, and have observed him both at home and abroad; and I know what I say of him is the truth. His house is as empty of religion, as the white of an egg is of savour. There is there, neither prayer, nor sign of repentance for sin; yea, the brute in his kind serves God far better than he. He is the very stain, reproach, and shame of religion, to all that know him; it can hardly have a good word in all that end of the town where he dwells, through him (Rom 2:23-25). Thus say the common people that know him, A saint abroad, and a devil at home. His poor family finds it so, he is such a churl, such a railer at, and so unreasonable with his servants, that they neither know how to do for, or speak to him. Men that have any dealings with him, say, it is better to deal with a Turk than with him; for fairer dealing they shall have at their hands. This Talkative (if it be possible) will go beyond them, defraud, beguile, and over-reach them. Besides, he brings up his sons to follow his steps; and if he findeth in any of them a foolish timorousness (for so he calls the first appearance of a tender conscience), he calls them fools, and blockheads, and by no means will employ them in much, or speak to their commendations before others. For my part, I am of opinion, that he has, by his wicked life, caused many to stumble and fall; and will be, if God prevent not, the ruin of many more.

FAITHFUL. Well, my brother, I am bound to believe you; not only because you say you know him, but also because, like a Christian, you make your reports of men. For I cannot think that you speak these things of ill-will, but because it is even so as you say.

CHRISTIAN. Had I known him no more than you, I might perhaps have thought of him as, at the first, you did; yea, had he received this report at their hands only that are enemies to religion, I should have thought it had been a slander—a lot that often falls from bad men’s mouths upon good men’s names and professions; but all these things, yea, and a great many more as bad, of my own

knowledge, I can prove him guilty of. Besides, good men are ashamed of him; they can neither call him brother, nor friend; the very naming of him among them makes them blush, if they know him.

FAITHFUL. Well, I see that saying and doing are two things, and hereafter I shall better observe this distinction.

CHRISTIAN. They are two things indeed, and are as diverse as are the soul and the body; for as the body without the soul is but a dead carcass, so saying, if it be alone, is but a dead carcass also. The soul of religion is the practical part: "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jam 1:22-27). This Talkative is not aware of; he thinks that hearing and saying will make a good Christian, and thus he deceiveth his own soul. Hearing is but as the sowing of the seed; talking is not sufficient to prove that fruit is indeed in the heart and life; and let us assure ourselves, that at the day of doom men shall be judged according to their fruits (Mat 13, 25). It will not be said then, Did you believe? but, Were you doers, or talkers only? and accordingly shall they be judged. The end of the world is compared to our harvest; and you know men at harvest regard nothing but fruit. Not that anything can be accepted that is not of faith, but I speak this to show you how insignificant the profession of Talkative will be at that day.

FAITHFUL. This brings to my mind that of Moses, by which he describeth the beast that is clean (Lev 11; Deu 14). He is such a one that parteth the hoof and cheweth the cud; not that parteth the hoof only, or that cheweth the cud only. The hare cheweth the cud, but yet is unclean, because he parteth not the hoof. And this truly resembleth Talkative, he cheweth the cud, he seeketh knowledge, he cheweth upon the word; but he divideth not the hoof, he parteth not with the way of sinners; but, as the hare, he retaineth the foot of a dog or bear, and therefore he is unclean.

CHRISTIAN. You have spoken, for aught I know, the true gospel sense of those texts. And I will add another thing: Paul calleth some men, yea, and those great talkers too, "sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals," that is, as he expounds them in another place, "things without life, giving sound" (1Co 13:1-3, 14:7). Things without life, that is, without the true faith and grace of the gospel; and consequently, things that shall never be placed in the kingdom of heaven among those that are the children of life; though their sound, by their talk, be as if it were the tongue or voice of an angel.

FAITHFUL. Well, I was not so fond of his company at first, but I am as sick of it now. What shall we do to be rid of him?

CHRISTIAN. Take my advice, and do as I bid you, and you shall find that he will soon be sick of your company too, except God shall touch his heart, and turn it.

FAITHFUL. What would you have me to do?

CHRISTIAN. Why, go to him, and enter into some serious discourse about the power of religion; and ask him plainly (when he has approved of it, for that he will) whether this thing be set up in his heart, house, or conversation?