

April 26, 2001

Dear Friend,

If you squeeze a tube of toothpaste and black ink comes out of it, did ink, instead of toothpaste, come out because you squeezed the tube or because there was black ink in the tube? The obvious answer is, because there was ink in the tube. In Matthew 12: 33-34 Jesus says, "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks."

No one ever says evil things because of what has been done to him or her. People say evil things and do evil things because evil is in them. No one ever makes another person curse or lie or slander or criticize or condemn. We are not "crabby" because we didn't get enough sleep or because we don't know where the money to pay the rent is coming from. We don't say mean things because others are mean to us. When we speak evil we are doing so because we want to, because we delight in saying evil.

There are no "throw away words". God is paying attention to every word we utter. Jesus said, "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12: 36-37, *NOTE: Jesus uses the word "careless" to show that even the words we say we don't mean will be judged. We mean every word we say when we say them.*) The reason God pays attention to words is because they reveal hearts. Our great need is not better discipline but new hearts that love speaking truth, goodness and kindness and hate speaking evil, hate filled words. Our words show that we love and need someone or something other than God himself. Our words expose the idolatry of our hearts. This means that God "squeezes your tube" so you will see the black ink and do something about it (Heb. 12: 7-13). If your tube is never squeezed, you'll never know there is black ink inside.

What are we to do? First, we do not blame others for the evil we speak and do. We do not say our doing evil is understandable because of what has been done to us. Second, we must repent of, not simply the evil words we have spoken, but the evil loves that fill our hearts and cause us to speak and do evil. When you curse a family member for their insensitivity to your needs you are simply declaring that you love and need the family member's kindness more than you love and need God's kindness in Christ. So we mourn and repent of our despising of God (Psalm 51:4). Third, we cry out for new hearts. We go to God's word and look for promises to hold fast to and ask the Holy Spirit to give us the faith to believe God's promises more than we believe the promise of sin. We fight, every day to believe the promise that to have Christ and to be mocked and ridiculed by everyone else is infinitely better than being treated with kindness by others but to not have Christ. Fourth, we talk with other Christians and tell them of our sins and ask for their prayers and their encouragement (James 5:13-16, Heb. 3: 12-14). Finally, out of the fullness of God's love for us, we speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15, 25). We speak words that build up, according to the need of the moment (Eph. 4:29). We do this because we have new hearts that love to speak this way, even to those who curse us.

Praying for new hearts revealed in healing tongues,