

## Loss

When Paul Laurence Dunbar died in 1906, his mother left the room exactly as it was on the day of his death. His final poem was on his desk, handwritten on a notepad. After his mother's death, friends discovered that Dunbar's last poem had disappeared. His mother had made his room a shrine, not moving anything, and over time the sun had bleached the ink on the page until it was invisible. The poem was lost forever.

This story illustrates that if we get frozen or bogged down in our grief, we may lose a lot of life that is important. I believe that the apostle Paul realized this truth when he encouraged the Thessalonians with this piece of advice. He said, "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus" (1Thessalonians 4:13).

Paul reminded them that there is hope beyond our loss, allowing us to live life to the fullest. Let's not miss out on the important part of life and lose not only our future, but the beautiful contributions of those we love and mourn.

## Preachers Must Avoid the Dirty Dozen

There are some things that intelligent people around the world resent as cheap and dishonest. While these deceitful things are common in practice, honorable men despise them and seek to avoid them. Gospel preachers above all others should eschew these practices and always avoid them.

Sophistry is the use of "deceptively subtle reasoning or argumentation." It is to use adroit, subtle reasoning that is specious and fallacious. Those resorting to sophistry seek to deceive their hearers by pretending to be brilliant and wise above them. We must speak the truth and lie not (1Tim. 2:7).

Nit-picking describes the person who picks at small, insignificant points in another person's life, work, or speech hoping to find something to discredit them. He overlooks all the good in hope of finding at least one point he can criticize, no matter how small.

Caviling is to raise trivial objections to that which others say, do or propose. When a dishonest soul cannot show good reasons why a proposition should be rejected he will resort to caviling.

Railing is to revile, or scold in harsh, insolent or abusive language. In a discussion or argument, when all else fails the railer raises his voice and attacks his opponent with harsh, abusive language. We are bound to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

Haggle means to annoy or exhaust with wrangling. There are some who can never accept defeat. Even if proven wrong, they will still argue and refuse to yield. False pride leads many into haggling about a lost point. Honesty demands that we acknowledge the fact if our adversary proves us wrong (1John 1:8-9).

Rhetoric is normally a good word, but sometimes means "insincere or grandiloquent language." Sometimes when a man has nothing to say, or a weak argument, he attempts to hide that fact by the use of big words, flowery or technical terminology hoping his audience will not recognize the poverty of his reasoning.

Spinning is a relatively new term used to describe what politicians, lawyers, activists and journalists do when they want to make error look good or truth look bad. This modern definition has not yet made it into my Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, but we hear it almost daily in news broadcasts. In days past this practice was called lying. Now it is accepted as the way to cloud embarrassing information or to downplay the success of your opponent. A new professional group has emerged who are identified as spin-meisters whose job it is to deceive the gullible public. Isaiah said, "Woe to them that call evil good and good evil" (Isa. 5:20).

Illogical is a state or condition that prevails when we do not observe the principles of logic, when our communication or reasoning is senseless. No teacher will be taken seriously who is illogical or irrational in his teaching.

Shallow describes the man lacking intellectual depth. He is superficial in his knowledge, his reasoning and approach. The man of God must study, i.e., give diligence to show himself approved unto God (2Tim. 2:15). Our sermons, our classes, our reasoning with false teachers must never be shallow. Diligent study keeps one from shallowness.

Egotistical describes the person who takes himself too seriously. He or she overestimates their beauty, their intellectual attainments, their brilliance, their worth, their talent, their greatness. This vice all preachers must studiously avoid. It is one evil fruit of false pride which God hates (Prov. 8:13).

Carping is fault-finding. No matter how good the other person may be, no matter how correct his conduct, no matter how civil his speech, the carper will not rest until he has found some fault. He manifests the same attitude when someone else has a project or a proposal. He cannot bear to see another's success, thus is driven to find some fault, be it real or imagined.

Blustering describes a man whose speech is boastful and loud but without meaningful content. Paul said, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. That ye may know how ye ought to answer each one" (Col. 4: 6).

Pompous suggests a sense of self-importance, one who is excessively elevated or ornate or showy. We are warned not to think more highly of our selves than we ought to think (Rom. 12:3). These are thirteen vices to avoid, a baker's dozen. Let us never forget Paul's exhortation: Foolish talking and jesting which are not befitting, "let it not even be named among you as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3-4). (John Waddey)

## A Moments Wisdom

When a good man suffers, all who call themselves good must suffer with him.  
(Euripedes)

A sharp tongue may sever a good friendship.

The Christ we will not share, we cannot keep.

It is more important to get in the first thought than the last word.

Don't be yourself; be what you ought to be.

I was never of any use until I found out that God did not intend me to be a great man.

There is no king who has not had a slave among his ancestors, and no slave who has not had a king among his.

The people to fear are not those who disagree with you, but those who disagree with you and are cowardly to let you know it.

The old believe everything; the middle-aged suspect everything; the young know everything.

Someone has put it consecutively: Apron strings, heart strings, purse strings, harp strings.

Search seven times before you suspect anyone.

When you meet a man, you judge him by his clothes; when you leave, you judge him by his heart.

We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done.

There's no better exercise for the heart than reaching down and lifting someone up.

You can't have bread -- and loaf.

He who has a sharp tongue soon cuts his own throat.

Don't resent growing old; many are denied the privilege.

Well behaved children learn from well behaved parents.

Kindness is a hard thing to give away; it always comes back.

Excuses are so small that we can be seen every time we try to hide behind them.

Defending our faults shows that we have no intention of quitting them.

Almost any system will work if the people behind it will.