

95. We Should Defend Our Neighbor, Speak Well of Him, and Put the Best Construction on Everything.

Charity shall cover the multitude of sins. 1 Pet. 4, 8.

He whose heart is filled with true love can easily cover the faults of his neighbor and speak well of him. For instance, if you had been overtaken in a fault and others would speak of it and condemn you for it, would you not like to have some one get up and speak a word in your favor? Or if some one were to accuse you of something of which you are innocent, would you not be thankful if some one would protect you against such false accusation? Now, this very same thing you should do for your neighbor. "Plead the cause of the poor and needy." Or, if some one would belittle you and speak to others of your faults and frailties, would you not be very much pleased if some one would praise your *good* deeds and qualities and speak well of you? Very well; this, then, is something that you ought to be willing to do for your neighbor. Or if you had spoken in a careless way, so that your words may be construed to have an evil meaning and a friend would stand up and explain that you did not mean to say such and such a thing, would not that be very agreeable to you? Then remember that you ought to be such a friend to your neighbor when others twist his words and misconstrue them.

This does not mean, however, that we should not speak of sins and shameful deeds that have been openly committed. If sins have become public, we certainly must speak of them publicly, and they must be judged and condemned publicly by those who are called to do so. But here in the Eighth Commandment secret sins and frailties of the neighbor are meant, such sins and frailties as are probably known only to you. In such a case we should charitably cover our neighbor's frailties and not make them known to others.

But shall we call black white? Shall we say that his sins are good deeds? O no! "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone," says Christ. "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye, which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Gal. 6, 1. But do not tell others! Charity covers the neighbor's faults and sins of weakness.

Prayer.

Almighty God, faithful Father, enable us by Thy Holy Spirit above all to think well in our hearts of our neighbor and to defend him and speak well of him; indeed, in all things to use our tongue for the promotion of his bodily and spiritual welfare. May our tongue ever be an instrument of truth and love and seek Thy glory. Grant that we may learn to have compassion on all, to cover our neighbor's frailties and faults, to forgive sincerely, and that at all times and upon all occasions we may show the fruits of faith. Amen.

True charity feels sad
At cruel condemnation,
True charity is glad
Of truthful conversation.
It covers every fault,
In love it will not cease,
Enduring all assault
And seeking Christian peace.

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