

Words

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Preacher: Jason Webb

- [0 : 00] Proverbs chapter 10. He who gives us the joy of our salvation also gives us words of wisdom for life, a life of joy and peace.
- And we're reading from Proverbs chapter 10 and picking up our reading in verse 17 and reading down to the end of the chapter. Proverbs 10 and verse 17.
- He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray. He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.
- When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value.
- The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment. The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it.
- [1 : 11] A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom. What the wicked dreads will overtake him, what the righteous desire will be granted.
- When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever. As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is a sluggard to those who send him.
- The fear of the Lord adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short. The prospect of the righteous is joy, but the hopes of the wicked come to nothing.
- The way of the Lord is a refuge for the righteous, but it is the ruin of those who do evil. The righteous will never be uprooted, but the wicked will not remain in the land.
- The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut out. The lips of the righteous know what is fitting, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse.
- [2 : 29] These words that our Lord spoke on the night of his betrayal in the upper room also apply to these words that we've just had read and we're now going to hear preached.
- When Jesus said, these things I have spoken to you so that my joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full. Let's hear his words.
- Well, we are back in the book of Proverbs.
- We saw last week what effect our wisdom or our foolishness has on our parents. A wise son brings joy to his father, a foolish son grief to his mother.
- So wise parents love their children. They love to see their children becoming wise. So I can speak for all the parents here now.
- [3 : 31] And young people, if you are wise, that brings us great joy. And when you are foolish, it brings us great sorrow. And I should say that it is so wonderful how God is teaching so many of you.
- And you are growing in wisdom. And that is a wonderful thing that God is doing in your life. And it does bring your parents joy. And hopefully us parents will remember that.

And when we see that in our children's lives, you can't and you don't live only for yourself. That's hard for young people to realize.

And so Proverbs says your wisdom or your folly has an effect on your parents. But it also has an effect on other people. No one has the luxury of just living to themselves, living without any sort of effect on others.

So young people, teenagers, you affect your parents. You affect each other. Your actions, your words, the way that you live, the way you carry yourself, it is going to do something to the people around you.

[4 : 48] That's important for you to know. That's important for you to realize that what you do does have an effect on other people. This next section that we're in, verses 17 through 32, it begins with another introductory proverb encouraging us to take to heart what we are about to hear.

And this time it's not your effect on your parents, but it's your effect on others, on what you do to others. Verse 17, he who heeds discipline, that's wisdom's discipline, or your parents' discipline, or the Lord's discipline.

He who heeds discipline shows the way of life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray. You notice this proverb is not about what your foolishness or your wisdom does to you, but what it will do to other people around you.

It affects others. The companion of fools comes to harm. And so how sad it is when you are that fool who is bringing others to harm.

So which one do you want to be? A faithful guide? A faithful guide to others that's showing them the best way to live, showing them the joy of the Lord? Or a fool?

[6 : 13] Jesus asked, can the blind lead the blind? What happens when a blind person leads a blind person? He said they both fall into a pit. They're both in trouble. But when you can see, thou you are ready to lead.

Now fools are always talking, but never learning. They're always professing to see, but they never really truly see. They're always trying to lead, but never taking to heart what the wise is saying to them.

They particularly don't like the discipline that comes from a wise man. So they never receive wisdom's discipline for themselves. So inevitably they lead others astray.

And so parents, do you want to show your children the way of life? Well, this proverb says, well, listen to Proverbs. Listen to what this book has to say to you.

Take it to heart. And if you do, even when it's correcting you, then now you're going to lead others in the way of life. You're going to show them the way of life.

[7 : 18] Now, this is good for me because as I'm going through this book, I'm trying to figure out how to best preach it to you and learn what it says so that I can speak it.

But what good will that do me if I don't actually take it to heart myself? So this proverb is especially for me as well.

It begins with me learning for myself. And so let's not go applying what we hear tonight to others before we apply it to ourselves. Fair enough?

Before we ever think about, oh, that is a good verse for them to hear, let's say, now do I need to hear this proverb for myself and do it? Now, that's the introductory proverb.

I hope you're ready. You see what's at stake? Other people are watching you. You're leading others to life or leading them astray. If you want to do good to others, then you need to be prepared yourself.

- [8 : 18] Now, here we are, verses 18 through 32. It is another section, another unit that goes together. Maybe you were a little bit surprised last week when I covered 10 chapters, chapter 10, 1 through 16, as a kind of a cohesive unit.
- Because inside of all of these proverbs, the whole book of proverbs is clearly divided into seven major sections. I could show you that.
- And then even within this larger section of the Proverbs of Solomon that we see from chapter 10 all the way to 22, 16, I believe, there are other units that loosely hang together.
- They go together. They're sections of more or less cohesive units. Now, a lot of the unity is lost on it because, one, we don't know to try to look for it.
- But it's there. But we also miss a lot of it because these sections in these proverbs are hanging together a lot of times by a common sound or a common Hebrew word.
- [9 : 31] So there is obviously a fair amount of editing and arranging going on as whoever arranged these proverbs is putting it together.
- So that as you learned one proverb, it would jolt your memory, it would jolt your mind to another proverb that has to do with it or that sounded a lot like it. So they might only be loosely connected, but there is editing and there's arranging going on.
- Now, that would have helped if you're a teenager who knew Hebrew and you were learning all of this material and you were reading it and you were reviewing it and you were talking about it with your classmates, it would have helped.
- Unfortunately, we don't know Hebrew. And so some of it seems more random than what it was originally.
- Now, I'm going to try to do the best I can to preach the units as I see them, but not all the time. Are they completely clear to me? Or do I completely believe them?
- [10 : 40] I'm not sure of them all the time. And even if they hung together by the same sound, that doesn't mean that that's particularly helpful for us as I preach it.
- And so I'm not exactly sure how I'm going to do it and figure it out all the way through. But for today, what we have right here, this section in front of us, it is the arrangement and the editing does help us a little bit.
- And so I'm going to use it. Now, this section that I had read, verses 18 through 32, has a chiasmic structure. And I don't want your eyes to glaze over yet.
- Stick with me. It's a chiasmic structure. I don't want to get into the weeds too much, but that word comes from the Greek letter chi, which would look like an X.
- If you were to make an X, that's what the Greek letter chi looks like. Now, if you think of an X, the top of the X looks exactly the same as the bottom of the X, with the top and the bottom looking the same.
- [11 : 44] And that's roughly what we have here. This section of verses 18 through 32, it begins with a section on words, on speaking.
- That's verses 18 through 21. So I hope you have your Bibles open and you can just briefly look through that here. 18 through 21 is about words. You see lying lips, verse 18, where words are many.
- That's verse 19. The tongue of the righteous, verse 20. The lips of the righteous nourish many, verse 21. So 18 through 21 are these Proverbs that are about our speaking, our tongue, the words that we use and what we say.
- Now, then you look at the end. So that's the first section. You look at the end, you look at the last section, it's verses 31 and 32. And what do we have here? We have two more Proverbs about our mouth and our tongue, the tongue of the righteous, the lips of the righteous, and the tongue and the mouth of the wicked.

So we begin and we end with words. Then in the middle, there's a top and bottom section on the ways of the righteous and the wicked.

- [12 : 51] Verses 22 through 25 is all about how the way the righteous and the wicked live, what comes about, where their path is taking them, whether to hope or to disappointment, whether to life or to death, what they're doing, how they carry themselves.

So verses 22 through 25 is all about the way of the righteous and how they live, what they experience, and where they're going. And then in verses 27 and 30, we have the bottom half of that.

It's also about the way of the wicked and the way of the righteous and how they live and what they experience and where they are going. They're very similar Proverbs, not completely, they're not identical or anything like that, but they're similar theme.

So do you see the structure here? You have words and then you have ways and then you have ways and then you have words. And right in the middle, acting as sort of a, as a center verse, as the middle of this teeter-totter, as the middle of fulcrum, is verse 26.

And it's different than the other ones. It says, as vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is a sluggard to those who send them.

- [14 : 06] So the very middle here is this worthlessness of the sluggard. How distasteful, how annoying and irritating a sluggard is. So that's the section where it's the W, so to speak, of life.

It's the words, the ways, and then you have this worthless character, the sluggard. That middle verse is interesting because all of the rest of the Proverbs in this section, they cover the righteous and the wicked.

You see that again and again. You can look at that. All of these Proverbs talk about the righteous and the wicked. The wicked and the righteous. But right here in the middle, we get a word about how irritating and revolting the sluggard is.

And it stands out. And it stands out to emphasize it. To put a point on it. And so here's this point. Young man, young woman, don't be a sluggard.

That's the very center of this section because they're the worst. It's like they're revolting. It's like drinking vinegar. I don't know if you've ever done that. If you really want a lesson on what Proverbs is like, go home and get a teaspoon of honey and know that wisdom is wise.

- [15 : 25] It's sweet as honey from the honeycomb. And then take a shot of vinegar and you'll realize that sluggards are revolting. This is what it's like if you hire a sluggard to do a job.

This is what it's like if you give a sluggard a job. It's irritating and painful like getting smoke in your eyes. So you're sitting around the campfire and the smoke just starts blowing in your face and you can't get away and your eyes are streaming and it hurts.

That's what a sluggard is like. So do you want people mad at you? Then be a sluggard. Sluggards irritate and they annoy.

You just want to spit them out. You just want to move away. You want to get away from them. So more than all that even than what bosses and teachers and parents think about sluggards, we have what the Lord thinks about sluggards.

Because this is the word of God. And this is conveying his heart and his mind for us. God finds sluggards irritating and revolting.

- [16 : 32] Why such strong words for the sluggard? Because I don't think anything gets to the heart of what's wrong and upside down about man quite like the slugger does.

How did God make man? He made man in his own image. To work. To rule. To have a purpose. To do something.

And to be something. But here the slugger takes the image of God. This high, glorious, wonderful thing that God has put into man to be the image of God.

And the slugger turns it into this wallowing waste of space. It's like the whole world is turned upside down. God makes man in his own image to work, to do, to count, to mean something.

And the sluggard is not doing anything. And so, young people, God gave you the high privilege of ruling for him.

[17 : 37] Ruling on the earth. Having dominion in his name. To have authority. To have honor. To have the dignity of planning and working and creating and doing something worthwhile.

Everywhere in the Bible, God never, never, ever says you need to get older until you can start to do something. Until your life matters. Until it's time to work. No.

A wise son gathers crops at harvest time. We've already seen that. A disgraceful son is sleeping. He's not doing what he's supposed to be. So, sluggards are just worse than worthless.

They're irritating. They're annoying. They're painful. So, God gives teenagers far more credit, far more purpose and dignity and respect than the world is giving you.

And so, don't waste it. Don't waste your life doing nothing. It's smoke in God's eyes.

[18 : 38] It's vinegar in his mouth. So, one of the first things that I look for just in a newborn Christian young person, teenager's heart is this.

Are they working? Are they doing their chores and the things that they're called to do? Their schoolwork, their chores. Are they doing it with a new kind of vigor and purpose?

A new reason. Because that is a sign. That is something that says, you know what? God is at work in this young person's heart. That's wisdom from heaven.

That's a sign that the life of God who works is at work in this young person's heart. So, I'm putting this first because in a chiastic structure, the middle point is the point of emphasis.

Not that nothing else is important or anything like that, but I'm emphasizing it because I believe this passage is emphasizing it. And Christian, we need, it's not just for young people, we need to take this proverb to heart.

[19 : 46] We're soldiers. We're hardworking farmers. We're called to six days of work and one day of rest.

That's God's appointed proportion and remedy for us. And work is our medicine, work is our food, and I need this. And more than that, I don't want to be smoke in my Lord's eyes.

Did he save me so that I could just slouch about? Did he save me so that I could be a sluggard? And so, I guess, I want him to come to the fire of my heart.

And I want my heart to be fervent. And I want it to be warm. And I want him to enjoy my heart. I don't want him to come to it like a campfire where he has to continually move his lawn chair because I'm constantly irritating him with my laziness.

Did he save me to slouch around? Well, that's the middle of the passage, the mountaintop. Sluggards are irritating and revolting, and so don't be one.

[20 : 49] That's the very simple lesson. Now, let's go back to the beginning and let's talk about words. Words. And this is all the further we're going to get. My intention was to get further, but there is just so much here that we're going to camp on this.

I think nowhere do we show our wisdom or our folly more so than in what comes out of our mouth. Now, why is that? It's simply because, and this is our very first lesson, I want you to see, is my words begin in my heart.

Now, for many of you, that is not new. Some of you need to take that on board for the first time, but my words begin in my heart. That is the truth underlying all of these proverbs.

Every proverb where it talks about us speaking, there is the implication, there is the assumption that what I am saying comes out of my character.

It comes out of my heart. I don't talk, I don't say anything that wasn't first in my heart. Now, you see it most clearly in verse 20 with this comparison.

[22 : 04] Look at verse 20. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value. He doesn't say the tongue of the wicked is of little value.

He is able to take the x-ray and say the heart of the wicked is of little value. Now, that comparison of the righteous, the wise person's tongue and the wicked person's heart, it only works if my tongue is such an accurate representation of my heart that to hear the words that are coming out of my mouth is to have a view of my heart.

And so, my tongue is such an accurate mirror and barometer of my heart that you can measure the value of my heart by the words that I say.

You can see what is inside of a person by what they say. Mark 7. Jesus has this very interesting or this intense debate with the Pharisees about what's clean and unclean.

And, you know, that is something the Pharisees were extremely interested in. They were extremely interested in ceremonial cleanliness of, okay, now I went to the market and I was out there in the market and there might have been some Gentiles and they might have been unclean.

[23 : 30] Some of this food might have been unclean and so when I come back I have to wash my hands before I eat. I have to wash my hands and all this concern about cleanliness of my dishes and of my food and of my hands and so they're all concerned about what you put inside of you.

And they're saying that's what makes you unclean before God. And Jesus says, listen to me, everyone, and understand this. So he's going to give us some wisdom and some understanding and he wants our full attention.

He says this, nothing outside a man can make him unclean by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean. Now his disciples, they didn't understand that.

That was not the paradigm that they were used to thinking about. And so he says, are you so dull? You're not thinking hard enough. What comes out of a man makes him unclean?

For from within, out of men's hearts come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly.

[24 : 41] I found it very interesting that he said folly comes out of your heart. But there's other things. So what really matters is not the ceremonial cleanliness or uncleanness.

It's about your heart. So what comes out of your heart? Deceit, he said. Now look at verse 18. It's talking about lying lips and slander.

That's malice. Verbalized is what slander is. What comes out of your heart? Deceit, slander, and folly. Folly on the lips comes out of a person's heart.

So you see someone running their mouth or saying something that is foolish. That's not a mere cognitive problem. It's a heart problem is what Jesus is saying.

And that's why Proverbs 4.23 is such an important verse. Above all else, guard your heart. That's why the theme of Proverbs is the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

[25 : 42] It's a heart condition, a heart situation. It's a heart stance that is where wisdom begins. It's where wise words begin. Now, it's very interesting that the next story in Mark chapter 7, he just got done talking about this cleanliness and uncleanness and what you say and how that really is important.

I think Mark now puts two stories together to show us exactly the wisdom of someone who is unclean ceremonially, at least according to the Jews.

it connects to this whole clean and unclean business and what comes out of you. Because Jesus goes up to the city of Tyre and he has this conversation with a Greek woman, a Gentile.

She's unclean. Unclean as can be. She's not part of the community. She doesn't live, she doesn't fear the Lord as far as, you know, she's not worshiping the Lord or anything like that.

she's not ceremonially clean in any way, at least as the way of the Pharisees. But she does come begging, she comes begging Jesus to please, my daughter is possessed by a demon.

[26 : 55] I need you to heal her. I need you to rescue her from this demon. I need you to drive this demon out of my daughter. Now, you remember, Jesus has this little back and forth with her.

He first ignores her and then he says, you know, it's not right to give to the children to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs. And she comes up with this answer.

She comes up with these words. And remember, out of the heart comes folly or wisdom. But this woman doesn't have folly on her mouth.

She has wisdom. And she goes toe-to-toe with the Lord, so to speak, in this battle of wits and faith. And she says, yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.

That answer is so humble and so on point. I just wonder what could have Jesus said to that? It was so clever, so humble, so heartfelt, so wise.

[28 : 03] where did that come from? You know, she didn't have three days to think of that response. She didn't have a long time to think of what she would say.

All that wisdom was there. That was in her heart. That humility, that need, that faith, everything. And so when Jesus squeezed her, and that's what that was, what came out was this wise answer.

And Jesus said, for that response, you get what you want. For that response, I will heal your daughter. You can tell Jesus is so pleased with her wise faith.

And who is she? She's not a Pharisee. She's a Gentile far away, and yet the Lord has taught her wisdom. And so when it comes to words, before any other question, the question that we have to ask ourselves is what is the shape of our heart?

What's the condition of our heart? What are the desires and the loves? What is the idol? What is the fear? What is, what is driving my heart?

[29 : 18] Is it the fear of the Lord? Because remember, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. is that the shape of your heart? Have you been so conditioned and trained by God and God's word?

Have you put yourself under this word, under the teaching of this word? Have you put your mind, is your mind set on things above like Colossians 3 talks about where Christ is seated at the right hand of God?

And so your mind is there, your heart is under the word, you are now sitting under this discipline, and when it says, you know, you need to stop that or change that, I'm stopping that and I'm changing that, I'm sensitive to the word of God.

And so by his grace and his love, has he come in and begun remodeling your heart where you're responding with sensitivity to this word?

because as we respond sensitively to this word, that's changing our heart, that's changing our character, that's giving us wisdom so that when we are put into the vice and when we are squeezed in a difficult situation like that woman was, what comes out of us is wisdom.

[30 : 32] What comes out of us is not some, I thought of a good answer five days later, it was, what comes out of me was a wise answer because the heart, my heart is wise.

Now, I want you to see if that's the condition of your heart, if you're living in the fear of the Lord and you're guarding your heart and you're putting your mind under the word of God, what is that going to look like when you talk?

What is that going to look like when you talk? If you see verse 20, it says, what's going to come out of you is choice silver. What's going to come out of you is valuable.

What comes out of you is refined silver. Proverbs are like apples of gold and settings of silver. And so you're saying just the right thing and you're making it beautiful when you say it.

It's not only truth, it's elegantly put there so that no one would want to refuse it. What's going to come out of you is like the very word of God.

[31 : 38] You're not going to be prophesying or anything like that, but what you say is going to be godly and just like the word of God. Psalm 12, verse 6, the words of the Lord are flawless.

Like silver purified in a crucible, like gold refined seven times. Have we been experiencing that in difficult times where I've come to this word of God and you know what? Here I am in a very difficult position and a place and you know what?

I have found this word to be true and helpful and life-giving. I have found it to be that. And I have found no place and no way where I could pick out something and say, you know, that doesn't quite help me.

That doesn't quite sit right. That's not quite true. It's purified seven times. Now that's wisdom. Not when I'm bringing out my ideas and my thoughts, but when I'm thinking God's thoughts after him and my thoughts and my heart are so shaping my words that what comes out is beautiful.

Verse 21 says, those words will nourish many. The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment.

[32 : 54] the fruit of the righteous, the fruit of the righteous, their lips nourish all who eat from them.

Again, righteous people think about what they're saying. They want to nourish the people that they're talking to. Wise people, righteous people, Proverbs is saying they have an agenda when it comes when it comes time to talk because their love is full of knowledge and depth of insight like we saw this morning and they ask themselves, is this word necessary?

Do I need to say this? And is it nourishing? Is it wholesome? Ephesians talks about let the words that come out of your mouth.

Let nothing come out except what is wholesome. It's fitting for building others up. What a strict criteria. I'm not going to speak unless my words actually lift someone up.

I wonder how much that would silence me. So building others up. Or are your words caustic, acidic, unhealthy?

[34 : 16] Verse 32, we jump down to that last verse in this section. It says, the wise know what is fitting, but fools only what is crooked and twisted. So fools go into a conversation without any kind of agenda except to speak and be heard.

There's too much of that. I'm here to talk and I'm here for me. You can tell when you're in a conversation where the other person is not listening.

Where they're just waiting to respond. Waiting to say something. But the righteous, the wise say, you know, I don't have to talk. I don't have to.

But if there's a chance to bless this person, I'm going to bless them. If there's a chance to encourage them, I'm going to encourage them. If there's a chance that I can put some soul food into them and build them up spiritually, then I'm going to do that.

But you see, their agenda is, again, guided by love and humility. Humility. Humility. If you're humble, then you won't think. You just won't think that people are just dying to hear what you have to say or are interested in it as you are.

[35 : 28] Fools think people are as interested in what they have to say as they are in saying it. And so there's no end to it. Verse 10-19 says, When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.

He who holds his tongue is wise. Again, if anyone considers himself religious, James says, yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue.

He deceives himself and his religion is worthless. If your religion doesn't include having a tight rein on your tongue, then your religion isn't doing anyone any good.

And you're just deceiving yourself. You're performing a magic trick and you're falling for your own trick. That's all that is. Now, wise people have a tight steering wheel.

You've been in the cars where they have the tight steering wheel and you just move it a little bit and the car moves. The fools have this really loosey-goosey steering wheel and it's just going all over the place. Keep a tight rein on your tongue.

[36 : 32] Wise people take to heart what we saw in Proverbs last week, that the power and the danger and the weight of words because, you know, they've felt the sting of other people's words and they've learned from that and they've said, I don't want to do that to another person and they've known the regret of speaking too much and they have the, they've been, they've thought about it and they've said, you know, looking back and thinking back, I shouldn't have said that.

You know, they've slapped themselves in the head and said, what an idiot talking to themselves and so they know to keep a tight rein on their tongue. When words are many, sin is not absent and so I'm going to speak carefully.

I'm going to speak sparingly. Just as an aside, pray for us pastors. This is one of the downsides of and dangers of being a pastor.

We have to speak and we speak a lot and it's just dangerous. James talks about that. Don't presume.

Not many of you should presume to be teachers. Someone said, words are like sheep. The more there are, the greater the chance one will go astray.

[37 : 49] So, I'm going to keep my flock small because once I, once it starts multiplying, I'm going to lose some. 2920 Proverbs, do you see a man who speaks in haste?

There's more hope for a fool than for him. You speak in haste. You don't think about what you're saying. You just talk. You react. You emotionally react or you don't really clarify.

You don't think about what you want to say. You don't plan what you have to say. No, you just let it go. You're in a hurry. There's more hope for a fool than for him. Why? Because this man is so in love with his own words that he has no timer or place or space in his heart to listen and learn.

See, a fool might, just maybe, might learn something. But this guy, who's so busy talking, is never going to be able to learn anything. Charles Bridges wrote this, that the fool talks forever upon nothing.

Not because he's full, but because he's empty. Not for instruction, but for the pure love of talking. The fool goes on and on because his ears love to hear his mouth.

[39 : 08] His ears love to hear his mouth. That line is worth the price of admission. that's folly.

And what Proverbs is saying is, is that it's sure to lead to sin. And what I want to say is, is if somehow, miraculously, it doesn't lead to sin, it's still pride.

pride. It's still pride and arrogance in the heart that ends up with a lot of words coming out of your mouth. Job had to tell his would-be wise man counselors, if only you would be altogether silent for you, that would be wisdom.

I like that. And maybe you need to take this to heart. And I do. And I mean, take that to your heart.

It's not going to be enough to just say, I'm going to keep my mouth shut. If that's what it is, then I'm just going to be silent. We have to go further because we have to ask ourselves, we have to dig down into our hearts and we have to ask, why do I feel like I have to talk so much?

[40 : 21] Why do I feel this compulsion to say the things that I say sometimes? In verse 18, it's talking about this secret hatred in your heart.

What is there going on in my heart that makes me want to slander and shade the truth when I'm talking about someone? That proverb is an interesting one because in Hebrew throughout verse 18, you see it there.

He who conceals his hatred has lying lips and whoever spreads slander is a fool. That's interesting because in that proverb, the Hebrew S sound is repeated.

So it's it's kind of like the slimy snake slid slyly down the slanted slope. Part of the meaning is in the sound.

What are these slanderers like? They're hissing behind people's backs. They're serpents going behind people's backs talking, whispering.

[41 : 29] It's hiss, hiss, hiss. And so go further and what's going on in my heart that makes me think and feel like I need to talk about that person like that? You know, whatever is going on in your heart, let me give you the answer and the remedy in the place where the fear of the Lord comes into our heart and begins to teach us wisdom and it's the gospel.

You know, it's not just self-control. It's not just saying I'm going to clamp down on my mouth and never say the wrong thing. That won't work because if it doesn't get to the heart, I'm not going to have the self-control.

And there are times when I do need to talk. So it's the gospel that changes heart. We need a heart change.

And what does the gospel do? How does that change the way I, my heart, so that I speak differently? Well, the gospel humbles me because the gospel puts us all on a level playing field.

There's none righteous. No, not one. Not even you. Not even me. And the gospel humbles us. It puts us all together on this playing field, level playing field.

[42 : 50] And so I'm not better than you. I'm not. And I don't have any right to talk bad about you then. And I've sinned.

And I know my sin. And my sin is so grievous. It is so aggravating. It is so appalling that I could never, ever make it right. No amount of wisdom, no amount of words, no amount of anything that I ever could do would make it good enough or wise enough to make it all better.

and the gospel comes to us as weak, unable to do the right things because we don't have the heart for it.

We've got a distaste for what is right. And I'm weak and I'm foolish. I'm confused and I'm blockheaded when it comes to spiritual things. I'm blinded.

And that's me. I'm a weak. And this is me. I'm a weak, foolish sinner with a strong, wise Savior.

[43 : 57] That's it. Here I am. Here he is. In the gospel of grace, Jesus came to me and when I was like that and he comes with grace, not that hissing.

He didn't come with the serpent's mouth of saying, let me tell you what this person did. He didn't stay away and whisper condemnation about me to others. The exact opposite.

You know, he actually came right in close and he made me right. I deserve condemnation but he made me right and so I'm justified. I'm justified.

I'm right with God. And so God isn't putting me in the scales any longer saying, well, you don't measure up. You just don't measure up. I'm not constantly being evaluated in that sense of like, well, God might throw me away today.

God might just be done with me today. Where you've been weighed and measured and found wanting. He isn't saying that. I'm right with God. I'm robed in the righteousness of Christ.

[45 : 04] Now, what that means for our words is this. I don't need to talk to others to let them know that I'm right, that I'm good.

I don't need to talk to make others think I'm smart or holy. I don't need to slander or bring others down in order to sort of lift me up because I'm justified in the sight of God.

so I don't need to use my words to somehow justify myself to you to make me look good in front of you to make me look wise and smart and isn't that behind so much of our speaking?

I'm trying to impress. I'm trying to come off as smart. I think I'm clever and I need to say something. No, I've been loved with unconditional, unfailing love and so now I can go into the conversation not with all my armor and my protection and my mask on to try to appear a certain way but I can use my words in a disinterested way where I'm not, I don't have to be self-interested.

I don't have to go into this conversation saying, well, here's what I got to get from this. I want this person to think I'm smart. I want to do this. No, I can go into this conversation and say, I want to nourish them.

[46 : 28] I can love them with my words instead of using my words to love myself. So I started out by saying my words come out of my heart.

The gospel is what makes my heart good. Not when we know it up here but when it is down here. When I am actually feeling and knowing the love of God, when I am feeling and living and the experience of the forgiveness of sins and the justification that I have through Jesus Christ, I don't have to practically try to work out some sort of righteousness and justification with my words among all of you.

And what that does is that purifies my heart and it purifies my mouth. It gives me the humility. It gives me courage. It gives me the ability to say, I don't need to talk now or okay, now is a good time to speak.

And it makes me a fruitful tree nourishing others instead of a snake biting others. So faith in Jesus.

Real, everyday, commonplace, in the moment, faith is what makes me wise. That's the fear of the Lord. That's what that is.

[47 : 50] And the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And so, brothers and sisters, if we want to be wise in the way that we speak, in the way that we work, in the way that we live, and so we don't want to be a sluggard, we want to be wise.

Well, how do you do that? You put on Jesus Christ. You believe the gospel, every part of it. You put on your gospel robes and you wear them and you work out of them and you speak out of them.

And you can tell when you're talking too much or when you're hurting others, you know, I'm forgetting the gospel.

I'm forgetting who I am. I'm forgetting how Jesus found me. I'm forgetting how He loved me. And when I start thinking about those things again, that's going to change my heart. That's going to change my words.

Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for these words that do produce joy in us when we believe them and when we obey them.

[48 : 56] And that would be my prayer for all of us, that the things that we have heard tonight would go down into our heart and Holy Spirit, that you would make them to bear fruit in my heart and in my life.

That the word that we heard would not be like rain on the sidewalk that just bounces off and then runs away. But the rain would fall in our hearts and find our hearts soft and pliable to your truth.

And I pray that all the things that we heard, that most of all, we would find our feet and our hearts and our hands moving closer and closer to Jesus and taking Him to ourselves.

And that as we live with Him and live in the goodness of being united to Him and everything that He's done for us, that you would make us wise, wiser day by day.

This I pray. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Well, we'll forego our evening, our closing hymn. We're dismissed. Amen.