

The Power of Words

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[illegible]

Yeah, not just a natural cheerfulness. What else? I think we can elaborate on that. Add to it. Mark. Right. We're not in the business, this class isn't in the business of making sort of naturally gloomy people say these weird, uncharacteristic things that don't really flow from who they are, at least naturally. Anything else? It's not about even making people happy, at least not at its core. It's not about this just natural chippiness and we're going to spread that around. That's not what Christian encouragement is about. And so we gave this definition.

Christian encouragement is speaking the truth in love. Speaking the truth in love with the aim of building Christians up in Christlikeness. So the goal isn't happiness, it's Christlikeness. And as people become Christlike, eventually that's going to bring them to happiness. But that's not the immediate and the necessary goal. It's Christlikeness. The definition goes on, as we wait for the day of judgment. So it's in light of judgment. Christian encouragement will likewise involve speaking the truth in love to unbelievers, thus encouraging them to put their trust in Christ for forgiveness and salvation. And so we see that this matter of Christian encouragement is not solely directed towards believers. I mean, I think that's what we normally think about. And that's going to be a big, big part of what we are going to, we're going to talk about this, in this, this series.

But it also involves unbelievers. And we're going to encourage them to believe, to trust in Christ for their forgiveness and salvation. Now, what two biblical passages do we use to bring that definition together? Do you remember the first one? The first biblical passage. Ephesians 4.15, and this is what it says. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is Christ. And so Paul's command to believers breaks down into two parts, speaking the truth and how we do it.

[3:19] We do it in love. We speak the truth. And I showed you that in Ephesians, when Paul says truth, what does he primarily have in mind? The gospel. He wants us to speak the gospel to each other.

And so as we speak the gospel to each other, and we do it in love, it has the goal of building us up into Christ. It makes us Christ-like. And so that's the purpose. And I said that over and over again last week, and I want to emphasize it again now, that encouragement is not just about making people feel chipper and happy. And we're not just saying buck up, smile, and we don't give a good

reason for it.

Christian encouragement is about bringing the gospel into people's lives, about speaking the gospel into their situation. And now we went into a lot of detail, and I asked you guys to, what is the gospel? What does that include? And we talked about a whole bunch of things, justification, adoption, God's love, our sin, Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension. It's about Jesus' work.

That's what the gospel is. And it also includes, what does our response need to be? We need to repent and believe. It's God's promises. It's promised to be our God. It's the story of how we were saved.

And that's what we are to be speaking to each other. That's the matter, the subject of our conversation. And in the end, we're going to be like Jesus. And so as we come to bring the gospel more and more into our lives, and as we learn in each situation to speak the gospel to each other, and to hear and to believe the gospel and apply it, that's how we're changed. We're made more and more like Jesus. We grow up into him. So that was the first passage. What's the second passage? [5:27] Hebrews 10, verse 25. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as we see the day approaching. That coming day, that judgment day that we talked about in our memory verse, we talked about last week, is supposed to light a fire under us in the way that we encourage. There's supposed to be some urgency about this business of encouragement because that great day of judgment is coming, and we're going to face it all. And that encouragement is designed to prepare us for that day.

It's to get us ready for that day. And so again, it's not just about making us happy, chipper kinds of people. It's encouragement is designed. We are supposed to be speaking the gospel to each other in order to prepare us for the day when we will face judgment and we will see our deliverance.

Well, that's a summary of what we've talked about. And if you weren't here, I would suggest that you go back and listen to it. That's the foundation. And if you aren't understanding that aspect of what we're talking about, the rest of the series is going to sort of miss the point. So today we're going to be moving on to chapter two. And chapter two is entitled, The Power of Words. The Power of Words.

Now, Gordon Chang, the author, begins this chapter by saying that 1975 was a big year for him. I don't remember. I wasn't born in 1975. Maybe some of you were. It was a big year for him.

That year, he begins this chapter by saying he lent a small amount of money to his friend with the promise that that friend, his name was Chris, that Chris would promise to pay him back double the next day. So he lent him a nickel. And the next day he was going to pay him a dime.

[7:37] And if he didn't pay, he would have to pay double the next day. So the next day it would be 20 cents. And so on, until Chris paid him back. Now, Gordon, our author, he wasn't a Christian at the time.

So he had no problems with the fact that it was usury. It was excessive interest. But he did think that people ought to keep their promises. He believed that much, and he was an unbeliever.

And so a week went by, and Chris hadn't paid. And now the amount was up to \$6.40. Okay? And then another week went by. And now the total was \$819.20.

Now, at the end of the month, Gordon said, you know what? Enough's enough. We're just going to cut this off. If you will give me the \$2 million that you owe me, we'll call it even.

Well, that's a funny story that illustrates the point of this chapter. And the point is, is that words are powerful. They're powerful. Words matter.

[8:54] Have you ever had to eat your own words? When you eat your own words, they generally don't taste very good. Have you, has your tongue ever gotten you into trouble? It's taken you places that you never meant to go. Your words took you there.

It made you do things that you never wanted to do. And so, let no one miss the point. This is the Bible truth that's all over the Word of God.

The words of a man are his measure. The measure of a man. They're powerful to judge us. Our own words will judge us. And they're powerful to condemn us.

They're even powerful to save us. What does James say? James says that though the tongue is a small part of the body, it makes great boasts.

And in James 3, he's not saying that the tongue is naturally arrogant and proud. I mean, he's saying that though it is small, it can rightfully say a lot for itself.

[10:10] That it is powerful. And let no one confuse its size for its power. Because even though it's very small, it can do great things.

So, I want you to turn to James chapter 3. And we're going to read the first 12 verses. And I'm going to ask you, when we're done, what kind of things, good and bad, does your tongue do?

James 3, 1 through 12. Now, he begins by saying, Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers.

Because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man.

Able to keep his whole body in check. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example.

[11:17] Although they are large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.

Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. First, consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire.

A world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person. It sets the whole course of his life on fire. And it itself set on fire, is itself set on fire by hell.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man. But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil full of deadly poison.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father. And with it we curse men who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.

[12:19] My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

So let me ask you, what kinds of things, good and bad, what about this passage shows us that our tongue, the organ in which we use words, is powerful?

What are some of the things that our tongue does? It speaks evil. What else does the tongue do? It boasts.

Okay. What else? Praises God. Reaches into the heavens and praises God. What else does it do? Roger. Okay. Destroys reputation, ruin him for life. What else? What else shows that the tongue is powerful, that words are powerful?

[13:26] Can you tame it? What kind of animals can we tame? Tigers? Lions? But you can't tame that little piece of meat in between your tongue.

It's untameable. What else does the tongue do? What else does the tongue do? It sets the whole course of a man's life.

And if it's evil, it sets the whole course of a man's life on fire. It brings them into hell. The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boast.

It can rightfully say a lot for itself. It directs the whole man. It's like the rudder of a ship. That tongue, the words that you say, it leads you where you're going to go.

It's a wild stallion. It's untameable. It leads us into trouble. But also with it, we praise God. We do something very great. Now, obviously, James is emphasizing that the tongue is evil by nature.

[14:40] Our tongues are evil, but the point I want you to see is that our words are powerful. The things that we say for good or for evil are powerful.

Sometimes even the smallest words can do wonderful, terrible, awesome things. Chang tells the story of a man that he knows.

And that man's mother was dying in the hospital. And he was sitting by her side as she was slipping into the next world. And moments before she lost consciousness for the very last time, she took a hold of his shirt, pulled him forward, leaned into his ear, and whispered two words, You're adopted.

And it was a truth that hurt far more than any lie. So with two words, everything that that man knew to be true about himself, about who he was, about his identity and his family, it was destroyed.

His history was totally warped. The things that he thought he knew and his life would never be the same because of those two words.

[16:02] Words are powerful. Hopefully in a month or two, Steph and I will stand before an Ethiopian judge and she'll ask, Do you want to adopt this boy? And we will say, Yes.

And with one word, everything will change for that boy. Words are powerful. He's going to go from having no family to being in a family, from a third world country to a superpower, from not having a

mom and dad officially to forever and ever having a mom and dad, from poverty to riches, from one world to another, from being fatherless to being set in a home.

And words are amazing because they can change people's lives. Or think of the two words that you said before God and before these many witnesses. You said, I do.

You only said them once. And every day from that day to this has been changed because of what you said. So, consider the power of words.

Consider the power of words over children as they grow up. As you say to them over and over again things like, You're so smart. Or, What a klutz.

[17:17] Or, Good job. Or, Leave me alone. Over and over again as you say those things, they change your child.

They build bridges. They build walls. They build roads that your children will live on and travel on for their entire life. And so, words are powerful. That's the first point.

Now, our second point is this, that words reflect character. Words reflect your character. Now, we can all think of cases where trusting someone, trusting what they said, turned out to be the exact opposite of a good idea.

It turned out to be a totally bad idea. And where we'd have to say that, or we'd want to say anyways, that their words were empty. They weren't powerful.

They didn't do what they said. But that's not exactly right. I want you to imagine a situation. So, let's say you get a new boss.

[18:25] And he tells you that your job is perfectly safe. Your job is fine. There's nothing to worry about. And so, you go on and you live and you make decisions based on that.

And six months later, your boss brings you in. The boss had told you that your job was perfectly safe. And he says, despite your good performance, they're letting you go.

And you protest and you say, but I thought my job was safe. You told me, you told me that I didn't have anything to worry about. And the boss says, well, circumstances have changed.

Things are different now. Or, some, something. Or, I never said that. Some excuse. And their words turned out to be powerless or empty.

And the question is, but is that really exactly true? Were the words empty? Were they really powerless? Not really.

[19:31] Because that promise that that boss gave you back then, six months ago, it did work good things for you at the time. You made decisions based on that.

And you felt comfort because of what your boss told you. The words were still powerful. The problem was that, the problem was not in the words. The problem was in the character of the boss.

The words weren't powerful. The boss just turned out to be untrustworthy. The words reflected his character. And so, the problem was the person speaking, not the words said.

So, what did Jesus say? Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. And so, if our words are unreliable and devious, what does that say about us?

that we are unreliable and devious. And if our words have power and they have integrity and we go through with what we say and you can count on those words, they're strong words, then that speaks volumes about our own integrity, our own character.

[20:50] Now, doesn't the book of Proverbs continually illustrate this and show this, this connection over and over again. Harmful, dangerous, empty words are spoken by fools.

And wise, healthy, trustworthy, dependable, good words are spoken by the wise. So, turn in your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 7. Proverbs chapter 7 and verse 10.

we're going to take a case study. Case study of words and character.

These are the words of an adulteress. Verse 10, we're going to read through verse 22. Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent.

She is loud and defiant. Her feet never stay at home. Now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner, she lurks. She took a hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said, I have fellowship offerings at home.

[22:08] Today I've fulfilled my vows. So I come out to meet you. I looked for you and I've found you. I've covered my bed with colored linens from Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

Come, let's drink deep of love till morning. Let's enjoy ourselves with love. My husband is not at home. He has gone on a long journey. He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till

full moon.

With persuasive words she led him astray. She seduced him with her smooth talk. All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter and like a deer stepping into a noose.

Adulterers use words that trap men, that trap women. They use words as traps for fools.

Now this adulteress and all adulterers are not silent. They speak words. They're loud. They're defiant. She's talking. She's talking and she's persuading.

[23:16] She's seducing. But her words are like the halter around an ox on an ox and it's bringing him to slaughter or setting a trap for him like for a deer's foot and her words are traps because her heart is deceitful.

it reflects on her. Now turn over to Proverbs 13 and 14. You have the contrast here. You have words that bring people into death that are traps for them that kill them and then you have words that bring them life.

Proverbs 13 and 14. The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life turning a man from the snares of death. So wise people are speaking words that actually do the exact opposite of the fool.

It brings them into life. It rescues them from the trap. It overflows in a man's heart and life and peace. Turn to Proverbs 12 6.

Back a couple pages. Here we have it again. the words of the wicked lie in wait for blood. So they're murderous.

[24:35] But the speech of the upright rescues them. So you have words that murder and words that deliver. Proverbs 12 18.

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. So foolish men, out of their foolish, sinful hearts, bring words that destroy people, that pierce people like a sword and brings death to them.

But wise men, out of their wise heart, speak words that actually bring life, that are a fountain of life, that brings healing, and not death.

So empty words don't reflect badly, poorly, on the words themselves. They reflect on the character, the integrity of the speaker.

So words reflect who we are. And that's exactly Paul's closing argument in Romans 3 when he's talking about total depravity.

[25:49] How do we know that men are sinful, unable to rescue themselves, that they're wicked in every way? He goes to what they say as his closing argument.

Listen to Romans 3. There's no one righteous, not even one. There's no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away and have together become worthless.

That's their quality. That's their character. They're worthless. There's no one who does good, not even one. Now, Paul, how do you know that? Where's your proof? Where's your evidence?

And he says, look at their mouths. Look at the words that they say. You can see their character by what they say. Their throats are open graves.

Their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Do you see the progression from their throats to the tips of their lips to their entire mouths are full of death and poison and evil.

[27:04] Their throats are open graves. So, imagine looking down a person's throat. This is what James says. You know, there's this pipeline from their mouth to hell. Paul is saying the same thing.

Look down their throats and what do you see? At the bottom of who they are, you see a grave. You see death. And out of the overflow of their hearts, they speak.

And what comes out of the grave of a man's heart? Just wickedness, death. And so, our words reflect what we are by nature.

Our hearts by nature are dead, and our words reflect our character. They're dead words. They kill. They're poisonous. Now, the power of words, they reflect our character.

They're the mirror, which we can see what's going on in our heart. You'll know them by what they say. life. But, finally, there are words that give life.

[28:16] So, we've seen the power of words. We've seen that words reflect character. They reflect on us. They show who we are. And then, we see that there are words that give life.

And these are gospel words. Now, remember at the very beginning, we said, or he said, 1975 was a big year for him. he was promised two million dollars. That's a big deal.

But it was also the year his friend, Gordon's friend, Ian, explained the gospel to him. It was the year that someone for the first time told him about the gospel.

And, brothers and sisters, praise God, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. They bring, the gospel brings life.

life. Now, I have a question. Who told you the gospel? Who told you the gospel?

[29 : 20] Many of you have believed? You've repented? Someone explain the gospel to you. I'd like to hear who that was. Okay.

What was his name? Stan Wirtz. Wirtz? California. California. Lou heard the gospel from a guy named Stan.

There. Dave Hunt. Where were you? Hometown. Heard the gospel. Who? Ed.

Walter Chantry. We just saw him, didn't we? Your spiritual father. Who? I want to hear.

Dennis. Bob Heaney. How did you hear that? You heard that gospel is powerful. Someone behind, Jim. Dave David Sullivan.

[30 : 23] He was a pastor at church in Napanee. Okay. He was my neighbor. Your neighbor spoke to you the gospel and what happened?

Yeah. There's other stories. Mom. Dennis Pollack spoke the gospel, changed my mom and dad's life.

life. Who else? John Heaney. John Heaney spoke the gospel into my life, changed my life forever.

Who else? Roger. What year was that? Okay.

praise God. Ed, another one. Yes. We are going there.

[31 : 39] That goes back to what Ed said. There's going to be this connection. reading the word of God. The speakers were different, weren't they?

We could go on. We could go on and you could think about who told you the gospel? Where were you at? What was your situation? But the word was powerful by God's grace.

His spirit spoke into your heart. The ultimate speaker was God. And he said words into your heart that showed your sinfulness, that showed his willingness to forgive.

He spoke powerful words to make you new. and you believed. And you went from death to life.

From hell to heaven, from being alone, to being in God's family, and orphan to belonging with all your brothers and sisters here. And this is where I want to stop by saying this.

[32 : 52] Remember what encouragement is about. It's about speaking the gospel to each other.

Those people spoke the gospel into your life, and it had a powerful effect. And when we encourage one another, we take up that sword of the spirit.

We depend upon the spirit as we speak the gospel to one another to change us. And so remember, the power of encouragement is not our own words.

It's not our own abilities. It's not our native chippiness. The power of encouragement is the power of God. It's the gospel. And it ultimately isn't up to us.

It's God's work. It's his gospel. And wherever his gospel is believed, wherever it's heard and applied and obeyed, it brings life, it brings hope, it brings peace, it brings holiness.

And so what we're talking about when we're talking about encouragement is speaking that truth, those words that bring life into one another's lives. And so that's what we want to do as we go and we think about how we can apply this encouragement.

[34 : 04] We want to remember that the power of encouragement is the power of words, and the power of gospel words is the power of God himself. So we should go encouraged and confident in what we're about.

well, that's all the time we have. We are dismissed. Thank you.