

Wise Words

Behold Our God! – Read the Bible for Life Series #29

Select Passages from Proverbs
David Sunday April 29, 2012

Think about what we just sang:

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your Holy Word.
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness,

That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All Your purposes for Your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
Holy reverence, true humility;
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity...

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us—
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity...

(Keith & Kristyn Getty)

It's amazing that the God Whose voice created the universe speaks to us and by listening to His voice, the dead receive new life. Mournful, broken hearts rejoice. Humble souls believe.

It's amazing that God is still on speaking terms with our world. Though we have rebelled, though we have rejected Him, though we have spurned His Word and forsaken His counsel, God continues to speak in the world today. The God Who said, "Let light shine out

of darkness” still shines into our hearts with the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. He’s not giving the world the silent treatment.

Think about the kinds of words God uses. Words that bring us healing, wisdom, joy, encouragement, freedom, hope. He will never manipulate us with His words. He will never take pleasure in using words to hurt us. So we say, “Lord Jesus, to Whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” And we look forward to Him speaking to us.

The way God speaks to us—His people—is the way we are to speak to one another; the way we are to speak into the world. When you hear a Christian talk, you should be hearing echoes of God’s voice—echoes of God’s tone. When we look at the Bible’s instruction about our speech, it goes way beyond merely “Be nice.”

They serve hamburgers at Culvers and they’re nice when they serve you. They kindly say, “How are you doing? How’s your day going?” They know if they aren’t nice to us, we probably won’t return. But the Bible’s counsel on speech goes much deeper than that.

The Bible’s counsel goes like this. Ephesians 5:1: *“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.”* Let your words echo God’s words. Speak to one another—speak to the world—the way God has spoken to you. Imitate Him in your speech. Does your speech echo God’s speech?

We’re going to look at one of the most vital themes in the Book of Proverbs—our words. If you’ve been reading Proverbs with us in the Bible, you see that just about every chapter has something about words. This is a more thematic message than our normal sermons at New Covenant Bible Church and we’ll cover a lot of ground. I’m thankful for the many things I’ve read and heard from people like Derrick Kidner, Ray Ortlund, Tim Keller, Doug Wilson and Bruce Walke—different people are all filtering into this message. What I want to do is synthesize the basic Biblical teaching on our speech from the Book of Proverbs in two main points:

1. Guard Your Tongue
2. Guard Your Heart

Let’s look at these together as we explore Proverbs’ teaching on our speech.

1. Guard Your Tongue

First of all guard your tongue. Proverbs 21:23: *“Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.”* So if you guard your mouth and tongue, you keep your soul from trouble.

Why do we need to guard our tongues? Because words are powerful. We’re going to look at four reasons why we need to guard our tongues.

First of all because words can wound. Look at Proverbs 12:18: *“There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts...”* Once a sword goes into you, if it doesn’t kill you it does wound you permanently. Even if you pull the sword out, you pull out something vital in the process and leave a scar. Some people’s normal speech pattern is like this. It’s constantly accusing, belittling, manipulating, mocking, insulting, condemning. Their rash words wound other people and feel like the thrusting of a sword. Think of your rash words like razor blades flying out of your mouth, cutting into the flesh of other people. Every time you speak, another razor blade shoots forward. These words, because they’re like sword thrusts, can penetrate. It’s not so much what happens to us that affects us, it’s what happens in us that affects us and words reach into our souls.

So the old nursery rhyme really needs to be changed.

Sticks and stones may break by bones,
but words...can destroy my soul.

Rash words can wound. Proverbs 18:14 says, *“A man’s spirit will endure sickness, but a crushed (or a wounded) spirit who can bear?”* A wounded spirit is unbearable. Remember when you feel like you just have to say these words, then once you say those words you can never take them back and they can have a damaging effect that may be very difficult to remedy. A rash promise can create disappointed expectations. Rash statements can damage your credibility. Rash criticisms can sour your relationships.

As Americans, we pride ourselves in free speech. We’re people who can blurt out whatever we feel. We’re proud of that as a nation and value that freedom. One commentator has said, “When we become Christians, we enter a new culture where we surrender that right. We stop blurting out whatever we feel. We bring our words under the judgment of God’s Word.”

So the reason we need to guard our tongue, first of all, is because words can wound.

Then **secondly, words can kill.** Look at Proverbs 18:21: “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue.*” They’re under the authority—under the control—of the tongue. Death and life. I was talking to Pastor Huff this week and he said years ago, he heard someone say that every person you meet is carrying two buckets. A life bucket and a death bucket. Every word you speak is either going into the life bucket or the death bucket.

Our words have that power—life and death are in the power of the tongue. Sometimes it’s literally. You might remember Vince Foster (back in President Clinton’s White House) and the note he wrote right before he took his own life. He said these words: “Here [in Washington] ruining people is considered sport.” Words have killed people.

Proverbs 19:11 says, “... *the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.*” Underneath those words is a violent intent. That can happen internally. How many children have grown up hearing words like, “You’re ugly” or “I wish you were never born” and other similarly cruel words? They spend decades suffering with a wounded, broken spirit because of those words.

Think about the effect those words can have on a community. Look at the first phrase of Proverbs 11:9: “*With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor...*” And then look down several lines to verse 11, the second part reads, “...*by the mouth of the wicked it [a city] is overthrown.*” So words can destroy a community, whether it’s a city, a church or a family.

Listen to Proverbs 16:27-28: “*A worthless man plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire [like a wild fire that consumes everything in its path]. A dishonest man stirs up strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.*” If I were to ask us as Bible-believing Christians, “Is adultery a serious sin?” I think every hand would go up. Absolutely, adultery destroys families and relationships and communities. But do we realize that gossip can be just as destructive? Do we realize gossip can destroy churches and communities? Slander can destroy relationships.

You’ve probably heard the story of the woman who came to her pastor and confessed she was having trouble with gossip. The pastor, wanting to help her grasp the gravity of her sin told her to go home, tear open a down pillow and dump the feathers out of an upper story window and then come back. When she returned, the pastor told her, “Now go back into the city and pick up all the feathers.” “I can’t,” she said, “they’ve blown all over town.”

“And so has your gossip. Your gossip has been carried all over the place and you can’t take it back,” replied the pastor.

Thirdly, words can heal. One of the things that draws me in as I’ve been looking at the Book of Proverbs is the effect that our words can have for good on other people. We read Proverbs 10:11—look at what it says: *“The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life...”*

When I was in Uganda, I spent time watching the people. It was always the women who were going out early in the morning with buckets on their heads. They go to the well and collect water because in a dry and arid place where you can find fresh, flowing water, that’s the life of the community. If that water supply gets cut off, the community dies. That’s what our mouths are to be like in our community. As God’s people who are righteous in Christ, our words and speech are supposed to be like a fountain of life for the people with whom we come into contact.

There’s a beautiful picture at the end of Ezekiel about miraculous waters streaming forth from the sanctuary of God. Ezekiel 47:9 states, *“Everything will live where the river goes.”* Wherever that river goes, there will be life. Jesus said that refers to His Holy Spirit. If we’re thirsty, we’re to come to Him and drink. As we’re drinking in the words of life from Jesus, streams of living water flow forth from our inner-most being to a world that is desperately in need of words from God. Beautiful words, wonderful words of life that we as God’s people can share with a needy world.

Proverbs 10:21 says, *“The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.”* Literally, they shepherd many. We all have pastoral lips if we’re righteous. Pastoral lips—shepherding lips—that are meant to provide for and lead others and give counsel to others and revive others. So our tongues can become a very useful part of our bodies. If we’re walking with God, our tongues can become a source of heavenly manna wherever we go, feeding many.

We’ve already looked at the first part of Proverbs 12:18—*“There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts...”*—but look at the second part: *“...but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”* So our words can thrust into a person and eviscerate them but our tongues can also be used by God to bring healing where it seems like healing is impossible. God can give us words that bind up even the most vicious wounds.

Look at Proverbs 12:25. I love this one—I think all of us have experienced this. *“Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down...”* Worry is striking at the very core of your being. Anxiety is knocking you out of commission. You can't even think straight; you're so concerned and burdened. Then someone comes with a personal word—a kind word, a pleasant word, a sweet word, a timely and thoughtful word—that restores you with encouragement and hope. Whereas anxiety was weighing you down, that good word comes and lifts you up and makes you glad (12:25b). That good word might not change your circumstances but that good word gives you the courage to endure those circumstances with joy.

Can you think of any illustrations of that in your own life where you've been burdened and God has used someone to speak a word to you that made you glad again? That revived you and lifted you up? That's happened in my life many, many times. I'm so thankful for the power words have to heal.

Look at Proverbs 16:24. *“Gracious words are like a honeycomb...”* which doesn't mean a whole lot to me because I don't like honey but I do like things that are sweet. It says, *“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”* Oh how we need these gracious words, these good words. They are like food and air and water and sweetness to our souls.

So think about it. Where can you start? If you realize your tongue has been used to hurt someone else, what are some gracious words you could start with to become an agent of healing now? Let me give you three gracious words that are the most powerful words to use if your tongue has been used to hurt and harm. Here are three gracious words that can become like a honeycomb to someone else: “I am sorry.”

Do you use those words frequently? I think my kids would probably tell you a week doesn't go by very often when they don't hear their mom or dad need to say we're sorry about something. We need to say that in our relationships with one another. In our marriages. In our life together as a community. They are words that need to come from our lips frequently. If we realize we often stumble in what we say, then I think we need to be ready to say “I'm sorry” pretty often too.

Francis Schaeffer says,

“This is one way that love can become visible through God's people. When I realize I have failed to love my Christian brother, I go to him and say, ‘I'm sorry.’ ... It may sound simplistic to start with saying we are sorry and asking

forgiveness, but it is not. This is the way of renewed fellowship, whether it is between a husband and wife, a parent and child, within a Christian community or between groups. When we have shown a lack of love toward the other, we are called by God to go and say, 'I'm sorry...I really am sorry.' If I am not willing to say, 'I'm sorry,' when I have wronged somebody else—especially when I have not loved him—I have not even started to think about the meaning of a Christian oneness which the world can see. The world has a right to question whether I am a Christian. And more than that... if I am not willing to do this very simple thing, the world has a right to question whether Jesus was sent from God and whether Christianity is true."

(Francis Schaeffer, *The Mark of the Christian*)

Schaeffer is commenting on Jesus' words in John 13:35, "*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*" If they don't ever see us apologizing to one another—making wrongs right—how can they see we are one in Him? More than that, he said if I'm not willing to do this very simple thing, the world has a right to question whether Jesus was sent from God and whether Christianity is true.

"I'm sorry." Those are healing words—that's a start. And they can become sweet to the soul and like a honeycomb.

Then the **fourth reason** we need to guard our tongues is that words will reap a harvest. **Words will reap a harvest.** Proverbs 18:21 again says, "*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.*" This is speaking about those who study how to use the tongue and the effect of words; those who think carefully about how their words can be used to benefit others. There will be a harvest in our lives from our words and our lips will yield, according to Proverbs, one of two harvests. Either a poisonous harvest or a wholesome harvest. Either life or death. There's no middle path here. Just two extremes. Our tongues can either be the worst of evils or our tongues can be the best of blessings. James says our tongues are a world of evil, full of poison (James 3:1-12).

Jesus Himself says these very sobering words in Matthew 12:36-37: "*I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*" Jesus is saying that our words will rise up at the judgment and will either prove our faith was real and that we belong to Jesus and serve as confirming evidence to the reality that we are righteous in

Christ, or our words will rise up at the judgment as proof that we were under the dominion of sin and we didn't know the Savior.

You see, when you put your trust in Jesus, He affects every part of your life. One of the places He comes to sanctify and transform is your tongue. Because the Spirit lives in you, there will be sufficient evidence on the day of judgment to show that God has been working on a new creation in your life and it will show in your speech. Words will be coming forth from the mouths of Christians that a non-Christian could never produce. Words that bring glory to God and blessing to others. They will reap a harvest.

As we think about these things, it's sobering. We should pray, "Lord, don't let words come out of my mouth that are not from You. Lord, don't let one word come out of my mouth that is not full of life and healing. Let every word I speak be from You."

That's why we need to guard our tongues. Now let's look at how we guard our tongues. Again, I've got four ways that we should guard our tongues.

First, let your words be true. Proverbs 12:22, "*Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.*" Lying is repulsive to God. It resembles the devil who is "the father of lies" (John 8:44). It's destructive to community because if you can't trust one another and that what you are saying is sincere and true, then you cannot know one another and love one another and grow in relationship with one another. Lying destroys community.

It's not just speaking that can make us a liar; it's also listening. Listen to Proverbs 17:4—this is an interesting twist. This isn't worldly wisdom here; this is God's wisdom. "*An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.*"

Ray Ortlund says,

"We lie to ourselves that we are not involved because we are only listening. But listeners are involved. Be careful what you listen to. A person can become a 'garbage collector.' Someone in the group becomes the one to whom disgruntled people go because that person will listen and sympathize and be a shoulder to cry on and a rallying point for complaints and a hero to those with hurt feelings. And that listener becomes a bigger problem in the group than the talkers."

So our words must be true and we must listen to that which is true. So what do you do if someone comes to me and starts sharing something about someone else that is not

favorable? You say, “Okay, let’s go talk to that person right now. If you aren’t willing to do that, then we need to stop having this conversation. I can’t listen to this.”

So guard your tongue. See that your words are true.

Then secondly, see that your words are timely. Proverbs 15:23, *“To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!”* When a word is matched to the occasion and it’s shaped to meet the particular need, it’s a beautiful thing—it’s a good thing. Right words spoken at the wrong time will not be heard.

Proverbs 10:32, *“The lips of the righteous know what is fitting...”*

Proverbs 25:11 says, *“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.”* That takes some skill and craftsmanship. It’s a beautiful thing when people speak fitting, timely words.

So whose responsibility is it to make sure your words can be heard by the other person? It’s the speaker’s responsibility. I’m responsible to make sure, not only that I’m speaking truth but that I speak truth that’s timely, truth that’s beneficial, truth that they will be able to understand and truth that meets their need. I’m responsible to adapt and lovingly craft my words to the circumstance because it’s possible to say a lot of true things in wildly inappropriate ways.

Can you think of an example in Scripture where there are a whole lot of true words being spoken but they’re not timely and they’re not fitting? I think of the book of Job and his three friends. They spoke lots of truth but it wasn’t timely; it wasn’t fitting and therefore it wasn’t very helpful to Job.

Douglas Wilson says, “The only difference between salad and garbage is timing.” Think about that.

Thirdly, let your words be gentle. Proverbs 17:27, *“Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.”* The first prerequisite to gentle words is that you don’t speak right away—you take time to listen. Proverbs 18:13, *“If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.”*

As a pastor, I have had to learn this the hard way a few times. There have been times I’ve heard one side and thought, “Oh, that sounds just right.” Then I started to give counsel without listening to the other side. Thankfully God is patient with us in these things. If we’re to speak gentle words, we need to listen first.

Proverbs 15:1 is probably the classic text on gentle speech. How many of you learned this when you were a kid? This was one of the first verses I remember learning. It's very useful in training siblings how to relate to one another. Proverbs 15:1: "*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*" So there's a way to speak that diffuses anger and there's a way to speak that stirs it up. There's a way to speak that's like putting oil on a wound and there's a way to speak that's like pouring oil on a fire and it makes it worse.

Gentleness is not the same as being nice. Gentleness is not being namby-pamby. It's not just saying nice things all the time. It can be pointed; it can be penetrating. Listen to Proverbs 25:15, "*... a soft tongue will break a bone.*" Well, that doesn't feel very good. That's doesn't sound gentle.

"*A soft tongue will break a bone*"—what's that mean? A gentle tongue is potent to break down the most hardened resistance. So you can be gentle, yet forceful and powerful in your speech. Gentle speech is not less than forthright, direct, and straightforward—it's not beating around the bush. You must tell people the truth when they need to hear it. You can be gentle in the way you do that but still be very straightforward, very penetrating. You can do it in such a way that it breaks down resistance.

What makes truthful speech timely and gentle? Look again at Proverbs 15:1 again, "*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*" The distinguishing trait is that gentle speech is not harsh. Harsh words are designed to inflict pain. Harsh words are designed to put someone else in their place. Harsh words are spoken out of anger to prove a point. Harsh words are spoken from bitterness. People will never be persuaded by sarcasm, harshness, put-downs, manipulation and anger. You might win the battle with someone that way, but you're not going to win the war. You're not going to win a friend; you're not going to win a relationship with harsh words.

Gentleness is persuasive because gentle speech is motivated always, always, always by love. It's motivated by self-sacrificing, redemptive love. If you want to speak gently in a way that's going to help a person, you can't be on a mission of selfish confrontation. You've got to be out to help them, to rescue them from danger.

The tone and purpose and motivation of gentle speech is always kindness. One way to test whether your speech is gentle is by whether or not the person who hears you realizes that you love them. When you're speaking gently, the person who is hearing you speak those words may say, "Oh, that was hard to hear. I wish he didn't have to say that. I

didn't really want to hear that but when he was speaking, I knew he loved me and I could tell that it hurt him just as much as it hurt me. It hurt him to say it just as much as it hurt me to hear it."

That's the genius of gentleness—it's always bathed in love and kindness. That kind of speech can be very persuasive. When you hear words like that, it can transform your life. It can free you from wrong patterns of thinking and set you free from bondage to sin because it's in love. So how do you get that kind of gentleness? You need to know where your power comes from. Your power doesn't come from your words. Your power comes from God the Holy Spirit.

Listen to Proverbs 29:19, "*By mere words a servant is not disciplined, for though he understands, he will not give heed.*" You can tell him all the things he needs to hear and he might even understand what you're saying. Your son or daughter might be hearing your words and they know what you're saying and they believe what you're saying but they're not heeding it. What do they need? They need the Spirit of God working in their hearts.

You can be gentle in your speech because you realize that the power doesn't lie in you. I want to read a passage from something that Paul Tripp wrote called *Speaking Redemptively*. He said,

"We are...free to be gentle because we have given up any hope that human pressure, power or logic can change the heart. It is never the loudness of our voice, the power of our words, the drama of the moment, the creativity of our illustrations, the strength of our vocabulary, the specter of our threats or the grandeur of our gestures that causes a turning within people. Gentleness comes from knowing where our power lies. God can use whispered words to produce thunderous conviction in a heart."

So we put our trust in the only One Who can produce change and we speak out of love, motivated not by anger but by a desire for the good of the person who hears. Let your words be gentle.

Finally, let your words be few. That's kind of obvious because if you're taking time to make sure your words are true and timely and gentle, you better be speaking less words. And if you're speaking a whole lot of words, you're probably not thinking are they true, timely and gentle. If you're taking time to consider your words, instead of just pouring out

whatever is on your mind then you had better think more than you speak. It's impossible to meet the first three criteria if you are talking too much.

Listen to Proverbs 10:19: *"When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent."* What's that saying? The more I speak, the more likely I am to sin with my words.

Doug Wilson has said, "Talking in order to hear the soothing sounds of one's own voice is not wise. For every person who sins through silence when he should have spoken there are hundreds who have sinned through speaking when they should have been silent."

There are of course benefits sometimes if you keep silent. Listen to Proverbs 17:28 if you need a little selfish motivation. *"Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent."* Others may think, "Oh, he must really be profound and intelligent."

Listen to this quote by George Eliot: "Blessed is the man who having nothing to say abstains from giving wordy evidence of the fact."

Or this quote from Abraham Lincoln: "It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt."

Let your words be few if they're going to be true, timely and gentle. Think about the difficulty we're in here. "Who can tame the tongue," James says. It's a restless evil, full of deadly poison. People can tame all kinds of animals and beasts, but no man can tame the tongue (James 3:1-12).

Some unknown person wrote this:

*If all that we say in a single day,
with never a word left out,
were printed each night in clear, plain black and white,
it would make strange reading no doubt.*

*And then just suppose,
before our eyes close,
we should read the whole record through.
Then wouldn't we sigh, and wouldn't we try,
a great deal less talking to do?*

*And I more than half think that many a kink,
would be smoother in life's tangled thread,
if half what I say in a single day,
were to be left forever unsaid.*

So I could give the benediction right now and we could all leave church in silence. We could all say, “You know what, here’s what I’m going to do. I’m just never going to talk again because I can’t get this right in my own strength.”

But to fail to speak—to say, “Okay, I’m just not going to talk because I mess up too much” —would be unbelief. That would be a grievous failure because my mouth needs to be a fountain of life. I need to share the healing of God. So what do I do? How do I take this tongue that has so much potential for evil and good, and how do I get it moving in a direction that brings redemption and blessing to others?

Well, that brings us to the second main point and here I will apply my counsel of letting my words be few.

2. Guard Your Heart

Why should we guard our hearts? Because it’s out of your heart that your mouth speaks. Proverbs 16:23, “*A wise man’s heart guides his mouth*” (NIV). Jesus developed this thought in Matthew 12:33-35, “*Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.*”

So here’s the principle: Whatever is controlling or captivating my heart is going to come out in my speech.

Tim Keller says is like this: “All of our heart problems become word problems. All of our word problems come from what fills the heart.”

So it’s not enough to just read Biblical wisdom and make a checklist and say, “Okay, this week I’m going to work on truth, timeliness, gentleness and tack. Then I’ll see how I’m doing.” That will fail. One thing you’ll realize very quickly is that you need a Savior. These proverbs are designed to bring us face to face with a Savior Who can transform our hearts, not just to give us techniques for how to live. They point us to a Person Who is the wisdom of God. We need Him to captivate our hearts so the words that come forth are echoes of the words we are hearing from His voice.

How do we guard our hearts? Listen to Proverbs 15:30. “*The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and good news refreshes the bones.*” I can transform my speech by

hearing good news, listening to good news, taking in those gracious words that are like a honeycomb, those gospel words. Gospel means good news. Let them be sweetness to my soul and health to my body because my speech to others will then be an overflow of God's speech to me. If I am taking in and treasuring God's Word and hearing the sweet good news of the gospel, then what other people are going to hear are echoes of that sweetness and goodness and mercy and love.

So how are you hearing God's Word to you? How is Jesus speaking to you? They say of Jesus in John 7:46, *"Never a man spoke like this man."* Never. Not before and not since. Jesus never spoke an unguarded, selfish word. Never a dishonest word. Never an ill-timed word. He never spoke when He should've been silent; never was silent when He should have opened His mouth. He always guarded his mouth. He practiced Psalm 141:3 which says, *"Set a guard over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips."*

Remember what we read at the beginning? He who guards his words preserves his life. That didn't happen for Jesus. He always guarded His mouth and it took Him to the cross where He died in our place. What was He bearing there? He was bearing God's divine condemnation for my lies, my insults, my gossip, my put downs, my bragging. For my broken promises, grumbling and complaining. For my guilty silence when I should be speaking. Jesus died for all that. He died so I can be forgiven for my sins of speech, so that when I come before the judgment and all my words are open and laid bare, I will have at the right hand of the throne of God Almighty, a great High Priest Who says, "Not guilty. Not guilty."

When Jesus was dying for my tongue—for my sins of speech, for every foolish, reckless, harmful word I've spoken—what did He face? He faced the ultimate "silent treatment" from God. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1). He hung there in the silence of God's condemnation for my sin so that I can hear the sweetness of the good news that my sins are forgiven for His name's sake. So that I can rejoice in the gospel and let the sweetness drip through my soul like a honeycomb and sweeten every part of my being, including my tongue. My speech to others—your speech to others—will be full of life and healing in direct proportion to how much God's gospel speech is captivating your heart.

So if you're more aware of the sins of your tongue than you are of the sweetness of the good news of the gospel, then listen to the Spirit of God and let the living Word of God captivate your heart afresh and say to Him, "Jesus, I need You to be my speech writer today

and every day of my life. Be my speech writer. Fill me with Your words so the world and my family and my church can hear the echoes of Your tone coming forth from my lips.”

Let’s pray. O Lord, I need a Savior. We need a Savior. Our tongues are consistent proof of that fact. Thank You, Lord, that You died for all these sins and You give us Your Spirit so our tongues can be made new, regenerated and become agents of redemption and healing in this world. I pray Lord that the words of our mouths would bring healing to our families, our children, our church and to our community this week. Make us like a fountain of life. May the mind of Christ our Savior rule our lives in everything. May the words of Jesus fill us as the waters fill the sea. Lord, let everyone see You exalted through the way we speak. Help us live a life that’s dependent on Your grace. Captivate our hearts with the gospel. Amen.

O great God of highest heaven
Occupy my lowly heart
Own it all and reign supreme
Conquer every rebel power
Let no vice or sin remain
That resists Your holy war
You have loved and purchased me
Make me Yours forevermore...

Help me now to live a life
That’s dependent on Your grace
Keep my heart and guard my soul
From the evils that I face
You are worthy to be praised
With my every thought and deed
O great God of highest heaven
Glorify Your Name through me

(O Great God by Bob Kauflin)

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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