

Devotional and Reading Plan for 2022, Week Fifty

Week 50 — December 10th-16th. Philippians 1-4; 1 Timothy 1-6; 2 Timothy 1:1-4:18; Titus 1-3; Philemon; James 1-5

This week's passage focuses our attention on instruction, teaching and the power of the spoken word. The tongue has the power of life and death (Prov. 18:21). People have risen or fallen because of their spoken word. People have won or lost, have conquered or been defeated in life, have prospered or stagnated depending on their spoken word. People have achieved great things or nothing in life because of the spoken word. We will learn the importance of discerning truth in what we hear and in making sure it is what we speak.

December 10th

Philippians 1:1-2:11; Philemon 1. "Messages and Motives"

"Whether or not their motives are pure, the fact remains that the message about Christ is being preached, so I rejoice" (Philip. 1:18).

The Apostle Paul declared his imprisonment was a tremendous opportunity to share the Gospel. With pure motives he preached the Good News of Jesus Christ. However, others preached just to build up their own reputation, and out of jealousy they used Paul's imprisonment to try to make a name for themselves. It's amazing how God can still use people and situations to bring Him glory that are truly not seeking His glory.

As with any topic, our motives should match the message we are sharing. Perhaps even more so, our motives, our reason for sharing the message of Christ should match the truth and beauty of that message. It's apparent that the beauty of the message of Christ had touched Paul's life in such a way that he had joy even while imprisoned. Does your message match your motives? Knowing that the message of Christ was being preached caused Paul to "rejoice." Does it cause you to rejoice?

December 11th

Philippians 2:12-4:23. "Shining Brightly"

The past few weeks, I have been overwhelmed by the number of people who are far more intent on pointing out what is wrong rather than looking for what is right. In this passage Paul essentially informs us that this is normal. He tells us that people will see what is wrong with your life before they see what is right. So, he informs us, "In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing, so that no one can speak a word of blame against you ...live clean, innocent lives ...in a dark world ...let your lives shine brightly" (2:15).

There are things we say and do that are more than just damaging to our personal testimony they are destructive within the church. Are you aware of what kind of words people speak of you or of your church family and what are you doing to make sure they are positive words? We have to practice what we preach. Paul said, "Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing" (4:9). Do you have enough confidence in how you live to say that?

December 12th

James 1:1-3:18. "Speak Wisely"

In just these three chapters James has written volumes of material to consider pertinent to this week's theme—the power of the spoken word. Yet he has also addressed the quandaries lying therein. He has informed us that “those who control their tongue can also control themselves in every other way,” but then, “no one can tame the tongue” (3:2,8). He also tells us that Abraham's faith was not the only thing that saved him, it was also by what he did (2:24). He adds, “Faith that doesn't show itself by good deeds is no faith at all—it is dead and useless” (2:17). He also says it is more important that we are “quick to listen and slow to speak” (1:19). By nature, we are more apt to do the opposite. And then he even starts off the letter telling us about all the good things trials bring into our life but that God doesn't tempt anyone (1:2-18). Temptations seek to create a fall, whereas trials seek to create an avenue for growth.

Perhaps the bottom line is this; if we are going to speak out let's make sure we know what we're talking about.

December 13th

James 4:1-5:20; 1 Timothy 1:1-2:15. “Prayer Spoken”

A young minister, learning that a woman from Boston who was visiting in town had been taken ill, stopped in to cheer her up. “I'd like to say a brief prayer for your recovery,” he suggested. The woman responded, “That won't be necessary, young man, I'm being prayed for in Boston.”

James has addressed a variety of topics relevant to the power of the spoken word. Of course, his list of topics would not be complete without mentioning prayer. To the suffering he encourages them to keep praying about it. To those who have reason to be thankful he exhorts to continually sing praises to the Lord. To those who are sick he urges them to ask the elders to pray over them. He then talks about a “prayer offered in faith.” This is quite different than some who have “faith in their prayer.” It may seem trivial, but a prayer offered in faith is one that yields to God's will, whereas faith in a prayer is a belief that we will dictate how God will answer.

Prayer is our spoken word to God.

December 14th

1 Timothy 3:1-6:10. “False Teaching is a Waste of Time”

The Apostle Paul gives young Timothy a great deal of instruction concerning false teaching. Most often when we hear the term “false teaching” we think of descriptions such as “those who are teaching wrong doctrine” (1:3), “those who deny truth” (6:3), or “teachings that come from demons” (4:1). However, Paul actually spends a seemingly greater amount of time warning against those who “waste time in endless speculation over myths and spiritual genealogies” (1:4), or those who “spend their time arguing and talking foolishness” (1:6), or those who “waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales” or those who don't “spend their time and energy in training themselves for spiritual fitness” (4:7), or those who “have an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words” (6:4).

What we teach must have priority, meaning we need to spend our time and energy speaking what is of most importance. It's easy for us to get sidetracked and begin spending time reading, studying or teaching things that “don't help people live a life of faith in God (1:4) or “are not foundational for a godly life” (6:3).

December 15th

1 Timothy 6:11-21; 2 Timothy 1:1-18; Titus 1-3. "Promote Right Teaching"

The spoken word is powerful, yet to be most powerful it must ring true. It is vital that we speak and teach truth and only truth. The first portion of Titus 2 emphasizes the importance of promoting right teaching. "This is the content of our faith. Believers must be grounded in the truths of the Bible so they won't be swayed by the powerful oratory of false teachers, the possible devastation of tragic circumstances, or the pull of emotions. Learn the Bible, study theology, apply biblical principles, and do what you learn." (Life Application)

Being "grounded in the truths of the Bible" means immersing ourselves in Scripture. We must know the truth well in order to recognize the counterfeit. In the currency world, those who professionally recognize counterfeit money spend their time studying the genuine and when a fake comes along they quickly identify it. In order to promote right teaching we must be studying Scripture. The greater devotion you expend to study, the better you will know truth and the better you will promote right teaching.

December 16th

2 Timothy 2:1-4:18. "Sending Forward the Spoken Word"

Every time I read Second Timothy I can't help but be reminded that these were Paul's last words. I can't imagine how young Timothy must have read them over and over. As Paul sat alone in the cold Roman prison waiting his execution, he knew they were his final words (4:6). It's wonderful to read Paul's conclusion; "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful" (4:7). Try and picture yourself at the end of life. Could you look back and know as Paul did that you had been faithful to God's call and that you had finished the race well?

Paul's spoken word had been powerful, true and honoring to God. He finished well. However, the spoken word was to live on. Paul was passing the torch. As he wrote he mentored young Timothy. Beyond that, Paul essentially mentors each of us through his teachings, words, examples, etc.

Paul's life has a way of emboldening each of us to live, speak and teach the Word of God for the glory of God.