

# Are We Laying Hold of What God Says

by Alan Martin

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**Scripture:** Matthew 12:34, Titus 3:1, Hebrews 5:11, James 1:22, Ephesians 4:29

**Topics:** "The Power of Words", "Transforming Hearts through God's Word"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Over the last at least month, if not six weeks or so, it's really been in my heart to to speak to you like it may be the last time I have opportunity to because I don't want this to be some superficial gathering where we talk about information in the Bible. But a genuine equipping and empowering of the saints where the Word of God does what it's supposed to do. Heal, cleanse, strengthen, build, uphold.

Where you so know that Jesus Christ is with you through the presence of the Holy Spirit that every day in your home at your work, wherever you go, you walk in the Holy Spirit. You have the grace of Christ fully available to you and you're utilizing it in such a way that men can see a demonstration of God in a normal human being. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is on full display and everyone in your life is benefiting from Christ in you, blessing you and blessing them through you.

And I realized something this morning that no matter how clear I make the message, if it's not met with how earnest you retain the message, it's going nowhere. That's what the Scripture says. Remember in James chapter 1 where James talks about being doers of the Word and not hearers only.

What does he say happens if you're a hearer only and think about what kind of person would even be a hearer only? Someone who comes to church at least in listening to the Word of God. But if you're just a

hearer only and not doing what you hear, the Scripture says you deceive yourself. The word is paralegitimizing.

It means to deceive at close range, right at hand. You're almost there. And here's the danger.

Sometimes we can think that God is pleased with us because we are in his house listening. That's almost there. But that's not all the way there.

What God intends for us, his will for us, is that we do what we heard. But the man who stoops intently, James says, looking into the perfect law of liberty, investigating, it means bend over to investigate carefully. The person who's doing that, not forgetting what he hears, but doing it, that man shall be blessed in his doing.

So it's not in the hearing of the word that we're blessed. It's in the doing of the word God says that we're blessed. The first kind of hearer that James warns about is the forgetful hearer.

It comes from the Greek word meaning to fail to take notice. But it's intensified by the preposition of P. So it has the idea of the person neglecting to follow through with what they've heard. That's the idea of the word to neglect, to follow through with what you heard.

That's a forgetful hearer. And it's interesting how the scripture contrasts that type of hearing with the type of hearing that God, the father, saw as pleasing and is honored by. And there's a Greek word.

It is pronounced you Lombano. It's a compound where you means good or well. It's like a eulogy.

A eulogy means to speak well. But you Lombano means Lombano means to grasp with the hand. You take something and you lay hold of it with your hand.

But you add well to that means you do. You're doing well grasping a hold of it with your hand. That's the kind of hearing is pleasing to God.

This is what is said of the Lord Jesus in Hebrews chapter two. And during the days of Jesus life on Earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death. And he was heard because he laid hold of.

Well, it says you're the English translations either use godly fear or or because of his reverence. But the literal word is he laid hold of. Well, what did Jesus lay hold of? Well, he only said what the father told him to say.

And he only did what the father showed him to do. He laid hold of this truth. The son can do nothing of himself.

He only does what the father shows him to do. And he only says what the father tells him to say. And when you and I lay hold of the word of God in that same way.

We will start to be benefited by and blessed by the word we receive. James said that if we put away all filthiness and the superfluity of gaudiness is what the king James says. And in meekness, we receive the implanted word which is able to save our souls.

The way we receive the word is what's going to save our souls. The word has power, life, grace, truth. It has all that God intends for us to be blessed and helped by.

But unless it is received by our laying hold of it, well, nothing is going to happen. This is this can be seen. There's another word that I want to use.

There's a forgetful hearer who deceives himself. They neglect to look at something close closely. Instead, they're just hearing without doing.

And it's very close. They they deceive themselves because they think God is pleased that they are here to listen. And so they're close to the truth.

But they're missing it. Then there's then there's the Lord Jesus who laid hold of. Well, he wasn't the only one who laid hold of wealth.

Also used of Noah that when God warned Noah about the flood that was coming upon the face of the earth, it says in godly fear, Noah laid hold of wealth. What the Lord told them. And that's why he built a boat.

He didn't just hear about a coming flood. He so laid hold of it that he worked on that arc for 100 years. And that arc ended up saving him and the lives of his wife, his three sons and their wives, eight people in all.

Because when God spoke to him, he laid hold of it. He didn't just hear it. Jesus used another word in the parable of the sower.

And he uses the word. We see the word I can say in Luke's gospel. The parable of the sower is in Matthew, Mark and Luke in Luke.

It's in chapter eight. And in Luke's account of the parable of the sower, Jesus uses this about the good soil, the good soil. And here's what it says.

It is a Luke chapter eight, the good soil. But the seed that fell on the good soil are those who having heard the word of God with a good and noble heart, hearing the word and hold it fast. Kata echo.

It's like they pin it down. Any of you tried to give a kitten or a puppy shots? And they are wriggling around in your in your hands and you literally have to pin them down with force or else they'll slip out of your hands. Or how many of you you've been in a situation where you tried to catch an animal that's getting away and you get it for a minute and it wriggles out of your hands and you have to pin it down again and grip it in a way that it cannot get out.

Jesus said that the good soil is the kind of person who lays a hold on God's word in such a way that they grip it and they do not let it go. And that word in them through endurance produces a crop. So this is something I'm aware of, unless that's how you're hearing and retaining, retaining, laying hold of wealth.

If you're not doing that. Whatever God says, no matter how many riches he set in front of you, no matter how much he speaks to you. If you don't lay hold of it, it will not benefit you.

And this is so important. And I want us to go in one particular area today to show you how this can dynamically change your life. And we can kind of have a little spiritual examination here to see, are we really laying hold of the scripture? Are we laying hold of it in a way and not letting it go? Let's just talk

about one area.

We know that Jesus said that it is out of the overflow of the heart that the mouth speaks. Isn't that interesting? We normally think that our mind controls our mouth. But this but the scripture, both Old and New Testament, speak of the heart as the center of a being.

That place that is. I read in some of my literature that I was studying. They call it the effective center.

It's what affects what you say and do. So it's out of the center of your being that your mouth speaks. And Jesus said this about that, that our words that come out of the heart, if they if the words themselves are not wholesome.

They actually corrupt us. We talked about this on Wednesday night. They defile us.

So words, you know, we know you've heard this before, but have you laid hold of it? That's what I have. You've heard this before. The tongue has the power of life and death.

You've heard that before, right? And you've heard that the tongue is a world of evil. Among the parts of the body, it's full of deadly poison. It's set on fire by hell and it can set the entire course of nature on fire.

You've heard that, haven't you? OK. Knowing that your tongue has the power of life and death. Knowing it's a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Knowing this. Do you keep a tight rein on your tongue? Do you? Because the scripture says that if any man considers himself religious, if you know this about your tongue. If any man considers himself religious and does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

Have you laid hold of that? That if you are not keeping a tight rein on your tongue every day, when you're feeling good and when you're stirred up. The person that is stirred up and upset, that has been offended in some way. That's what reins are for, right? When a horse is just trotting along down a trail ride and there's no danger, you can just lay the reins on the horse's neck.

But when there's some activity, some noise going on, a gun going off or a snake by the side of the path and the horse begins to be startled, the horse has impulses and wants to bolt. That's when you need the reins. So I'm going to ask you, do you get loose at the mouth when you get upset? Do you run at the mouth or is that when you pull the reins tight? To keep your tongue pressed against the roof of your mouth so you don't open your mouth.

If you've laid hold of God's word, that's how it would be. If you're pinning it down. Because the person that is not speaking in that way has not laid hold of some things that God has already said.

Jesus already said this. Have you laid hold of it? Verily, verily, I say unto you, man will give an account on the day of judgment for every idle word spoken. That means the words you say when you're upset, you say to yourself, I didn't really mean it.

God's recording it and you're going to you're going to be given an account for it. Have you laid hold of that? If you laid hold of that, I guarantee if you laid hold that you would be judged for every single word that you spoke. If you lay hold of the fact that if you consider yourself a Christian and religious and yet you're not treating your tongue that way.

You don't have a tight rein in there all the time. You're deceiving yourself. If you laid hold of it in a proper way, this would be a reality in our life.

You'd be just like Paul said in Ephesians 4:29. Do not let any unwholesome talk proceed forth out of your mouth. Do not let any when you feel bad, when you feel good, when you're upset, when you're not upset, when it's crazy and when it's all calm.

Never let an unwholesome word proceed forth out of your mouth. And that includes talking about what that other person did that you're upset about. Factual information is not necessarily wholesome when it lacks grace and mercy and hope and patience and love.

Let no unwholesome talk proceed forth out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up others according to their needs. So ask yourself the next time you're venting about what someone else has done. Are you building up that person according to their need? Are you building up the person you're talking to according to their need? And the other thing it says, not only does it supposed to build up others according to their need, it is supposed to minister grace.

So is your conversation about that other person ministering grace? As a witness, being here seven years, I can tell you not all conversation meets that standard. And that means something. I have not helped you lay hold of the reality of what the scripture says.

And I am convinced that there's greater blessings for us when we lay hold of the word. How many of us would like to be permanently cured of foot and mouth disease? There is a cure. Your tongue, the tongue of the wise, commends healing.

How sweet would it be to have a healing tongue? And you know what it says about the wise? The wise in heart think to answer. Another translation says the wise in heart study to answer. Some of us need to study harder.

Especially when the emotions and the thoughts that are in us, however accurate they are, however accurate they are, Yes, some person takes two tacos instead of one. Yes, some person has never put a dollar in the taco bin. Fact, fact, fact.

Is it gracious? Does it edify? Does it bless me to hear that? Minister grace to me to hear that? How about the other person you tell that to? Does it minister grace to them? What if I don't care? What if I just want to buy more tacos then? God is kind to the wicked and the ungrateful. Does God stop being kind because someone is ungrateful? No. And we are to be perfect like our heavenly father is perfect.

We need to lay hold of these things. And this is in this one area about speech. Why is it so important? Why do I want to begin this area about speech? Oh, because it's so powerful.

James says in chapter three, James says this, that not many should presume to be teachers. We shouldn't have any teachers. Because teachers are going to be judged even more strictly because of their knowledge.

They're supposed to be the more mature. Knowledge has been very available to them. They have many years in it.

What they know makes them actually more accountable. And then he goes on to say this. If a man is never at fault in what he says, he's a perfect man.

Not perfect in the sense we use the English word perfect today. Perfect in the sense of complete, mature, well-rounded. Think about that.

If a man is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man. And then you know what it adds? Who can tell me what it adds to that? What's the last part of that statement? He's never at fault in what he says, and he's able to do something that all of us want to do. What is he able to do? Keep his whole body in check.

Wouldn't you like to keep your body in check? Would you like to keep your tongue in check? And your mouth in check? And your brain in check? And your feet in check? And your fist in check? And your countenance in check? And that stare in check? And that look in check? Wouldn't you like to keep it all in check and live under the power of Christ? Yes. How is it then, by never being at fault in what he said, how is a person able then to keep his whole body in check? Think with me. Think of God's wisdom.

Before a word comes out of a mouth, what is it? What is it before it becomes a word you can hear? What is it? The thought. Is he saying this, that if you learn to capture a thought before it becomes a word, you will learn a degree of control that most men never experience? Follow that? Does not the Bible talk about, we're having some sound issues, it's okay, let's just focus. Good.

It's good to have to work through distractions. Focus. Whatever it is, it is.

If we learn to take every thought captive and bring the thought into the obedience of Christ, that means we will prevent ourselves from disobeying any commandment of God. And when is that necessary the most? Isn't that quality of self-control most necessary when you're stirred up? How many times have we seen lightning on a clear day? For there to be lightning, there has to be turbulence in the atmosphere somewhere. It may not be right over our heads, but even if it's two miles away, they'll stop an athletic event for the safety of those on the field and in the stands.

Because it takes turbulence to produce a lightning strike in the atmosphere. And you and I have the power of the Holy Spirit to stop us from firing off at the mouth when we're upset. But that is accomplished through keeping a tight rein on our tongue.

If we may hold it. Do me a favor, Sam. Turn it.

Turn the sound off. Power off. You guys can still hear me just fine, right? See, God gives wisdom.

We just remove the distraction. You'll still hear me. I'll just talk a little louder.

Let me know. Raise your hand if you can't hear me back in the back. Laying hold of every word of God is what I want to see us as saints walk together.

This is what we're to help one another do because saints that do not actually do what God says are called hypocrites by the world. And we don't solve hypocrisy by comforting one another that we're all human and everybody does it and no one can be perfect. That's not what we're called to do.

We are called to exhort one another. Encourage one another to press into one another like the writer of Hebrews. The entire book of Hebrews, if you read it correctly, is a letter written to Christians to cause them to enter into the fullness of Christ.

Enter into the rest of God. Be very careful that you don't appear to be a fallen short of it. And it takes, in the writer of Hebrews chapter 3, two verses verses 6 and verses 14 speak about the importance of laying hold of there's that word again, kata echo, seizing down the hope that we have within us and the hope that's more important to me for you and I to grasp these days in this life is Christ Jesus in you.

Many of us have lived many years with the sure hope of going to heaven while we are not laying hold of every word God is saying now. Because the hope of going to heaven, many of us, that's our hope. Well, in this life I'm just going to stumble around and no one's going to be perfect and I'm just, I inherited my sinful nature from Grandpa Adam and that explains why I do what I do.

You know, Paul didn't have that approach. That was not Paul. Paul said, yes, all of us have born the likeness of the earthly man, the earthly Adam.

He goes on to say, so now let us bear the likeness of the heavenly Adam. It is God's will that we not be conformed to Grandpa Adam but that we be conformed to the image of his son. And with his son, you know what he said about his son even before he began his public ministry? What did he say? This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

And you know all Jesus did? He had not done any public ministry that we know of at all. What we know about him is that he grew in wisdom, in stature, in favor with God and man, and when they found him even at 12 years old, they found him in the temple and what was he doing? He was listening to the teachers and asking them questions. And if we approached the word of God the way he approached it and lay hold of it well, like he laid hold of it, I feel the Father, Heavenly Father, is going to look down at us and say this is my beloved son or daughter and with them I am well pleased.

You know why he's well pleased? Because we've begun to understand he sends forth his word to heal us, to strengthen us. And if we don't listen carefully, if we're a neglectful hearer and we fail to lay hold of it well, and we don't pin it down to make sure that we do it, we miss the grace that he's giving us. And process does not automatically go forward.

You know in the book of Hebrews, chapter 5, you're familiar with this. The writer of Hebrews says in chapter 5, he's talking about Melchizedek, the king of righteousness, and he says, and how Christ is a type of Melchizedek or Melchizedek was a type of Christ, the king of righteousness. And the writer of Hebrews says, I have much more to say to you about this, but it's hard to explain because of some reason.

You remember why he said it's hard to explain? Because you become dull of hearing. You're not hearing fully. You're not fully taking it in.

You're not laying hold of it. You're not pinning it down. You become dull of hearing.

Then it says this, that you've gone the opposite direction. Although this time, you ought to be teachers by now, many of you instead, you need milk instead of solid food. You're going backwards.

So Christian growth is not automatic. Some of the oldest people here might be the biggest babies in Christ. I'm not trying to offend anybody, but some of the oldest people here might be the biggest babies in Christ.

And a young person, brand new in the Lord, that's actually listening to and doing everything God says may be in spiritual years far beyond someone who's been in the church a long time. Isn't that what Jesus said? Be very careful how you hear. For to him who has is having, present tense, more shall be given.

And he will have an abundance. But to whoever who does not have. Now why would a person not have if they're in the same place? Let's put that parable with two people in the same congregation, same preacher, same number of years.

Why would one person be having and him even being given more? And he has an abundance. In other words, he's growing in the Lord. He's being blessed.

The transformation becomes obvious. And another person listening to the same preacher, sitting in the same church for the same number of time hardly grows at all. To him who does not have, why would he not have? Why would he not have? Why would one person be having and the other person not having if they're in the same place listening to the same preacher for the same amount of time? Because the way they listen is different.

The person who does not have is because he's not listening and retaining. But he thinks he has because he's in the building listening. He's deceived himself.

He's not doing what he heard. He's simply coming and listening. So one person grows abundantly stronger in the Lord and another person sitting in the same opportunity not laying hold of well, not seizing, holding down, pinning down, retaining what he's heard makes hardly any progress at all.

And because he thinks he knows as much as the others, even what he has is taken away from him. Wow. Jesus said this.

To him who has, more shall be given. You know what happens when more shall be given? What does Jesus give us? What is all the graces and spiritual riches of Christ come to us through his word? Here's what Jesus said about the heart. If you want to turn there with me, Matthew chapter 12.

If you have your Bibles and you want to turn there, I'll read it to you. This is how you kind of know where a person's at. This is how you know where they're at.

It's in that same passage that Jesus talked about. A tree is known by its fruit. I'm going to start in verse 33.

Matthew chapter 12, 33. Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad. For a tree is known by its fruit.

You know a tree by the fruit. Okay? Then he says this to the Jewish religious leaders, which is pretty intense. Brutal vipers.

How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. You realize Jesus was saying your hearts are evil? He said, you being evil. He just got through saying a bad tree cannot produce good fruit.

Then he calls them an evil tree. And he says that there's evil in their hearts. How does he know that? Jesus is not a mind reader.

Jesus does not have to be a mind reader to know that. You know how Jesus can know that? Jesus only said what the father told him to say. And here are these men arguing with what he says.

You get it? How can they love the father if he's actually saying what the father told them to say? They claim to love the father. But they argue with everything the father has told him to tell them. He knew he knew what was in their heart by what was coming out of their mouth.

And then he goes on to say this. Verse 33. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things.

The word for treasure is thesaurus. How many of you know what a thesaurus is? A thesaurus is a book of words. It's a treasure of words.

In a thesaurus, usually you'll have most of the synonyms of a word listed together so you can see how many words are similar in meaning. It's a treasury. Someone has put together a treasury of a volume of words.

So what do you think the good man is treasuring in his heart? What do you think he's treasuring in his heart? God's word? He's been treasuring it. How do you treasure something? When you value something, when you treasure something, what do you do? Keep it under lock and key. You guard it.

You preserve it. You pay attention to it. For wherever a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also.

So the good man, the reason Jesus is able to say a good man is because the word of God in his heart is what's making him good. And when he speaks, he's speaking out of the overflow of the word of God hidden in his heart. Isn't that what David said? Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.

We teach that to children in BBS. And how come we let other things other than the word of God come out of our mouths? How many of us have that genuine attitude like David? That the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be well pleasing in your sight. That none of the things of my lips offend you.

That no unwholesome talk proceeds forth out of my mouth, ever. Only what builds up others according to their needs. Only that ministers grace to others who are hearing.

Only that kind of terminology, only that kind of wholesome word comes out of me because I am storing your word in my mouth so that everything that comes, I mean, in my heart, I'm storing your word in my heart that every word that comes out of my mouth would be saturated, directed, shaped by, undergirded by your word that I'm hiding and continually storing in my heart. And Jesus said the evil man. He always contrasted the good man brings forth good out of the good treasure stored up in him.

And the evil man brings forth evil out of the evil treasured in him. Now, how in the world would we treasure evil? How do you go about treasuring evil? I got a few suggestions. TV? How many of us repeat the trash we hear on TV? We call it news.

How many of you repeat the attitude one political party has against another? How many of you let the trash of calling some political leader some derogatory term because he's not the one you voted for? You're storing up evil in you. And you're letting unwholesome talk come out of your mouth because you've not laid hold of the fact that your tongue is a world of evil and it's full of deadly poison and you better keep a

tight rein on it because you might actually allow stuff you're hearing out there to be stored in your heart and if it's stored in your heart it's going to come out of your mouth and you're going to be held accountable for it in the day of judgment. It's just a Bible.

And I think sometimes as Christians we're shocked. You mean my pastor believes this? Yes. That's what the Bible says.

Does it really matter whether I believe it or not? It's what the Bible says. I don't really care how many people we know who live this way either. Mary couldn't look around and find out how many other people had a virgin birth.

Who is she going to go ask? Is this possible? Whatever God tells us is possible and if Paul said as a saint speaking to normal people just like us not to let any unwholesome word come out of your mouth. That's what he meant. That's what he meant.

Lay hold of this. Lay hold of it. And that means not in private, not a husband and wife, not two friends who agree.

I know there's two people agree that someone shouldn't take, they should only take one taco not two. Okay. Not even there.

Not even there. See I'm not, and I'm not saying I'm picking on that because there's one particular thing I've heard. I'm the one that buys the tacos.

I should have a say in it. Am I denying that some people are not considerate of others? No, I'm not denying that. I'm asking are you praying for them? I'm asking is your heart full of grace and hope for them? Are you just some kind of factual observer like the guy on CNN can be or Fox News can be? Just like a reporter giving a bad report.

That's earthly. It's natural. It's not spiritual.

Someone being led by God's spirit speaks with grace and mercy and peace and hope for others. They see the same things but they have not forgotten how much mercy they themselves have received. They have not forgotten that if it were not for the blood of Jesus Christ, they couldn't stand before God at all.

And the danger for us, I mentioned this on Wednesday night, some of the most dangerous people in this room are those who know the Bible the best because knowledge puffs up. And knowledge without grace and mercy produces the Pharisees, the religious leaders. And remember what Jesus told them? He didn't tell them they were tithing correctly, they were seeking to keep the law.

He didn't tell them to not do those things. But what did he tell them? They had neglected the weightier matters of the law. What were the weightier matters of the law they neglected? Justice and mercy.

Mercy triumphs over judgment. one of the sins, you know, we know about unforgivable sins, right? We know about those. One of the first ones that comes to mind is a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

You got that. Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, you're going to be forgiven. A brother Mario asked me about that today.

You know, blasphemy means to speak against. That's all it means, to injure with your speech. And if you're arguing with the Holy Spirit who's sent to lead you into salvation and speak the truth to you, if you're arguing with what the Holy Spirit says, you're speaking against the Spirit.

There's no way you can be saved. The Spirit is sent to guide you to salvation. If you're arguing with it all the time, there is no other... God doesn't have a plan B. That's what that Scripture means.

But you know what we don't know? We don't know that the word of blasphemy is not just used for speaking against the Spirit. It's used for not speaking against any man. Let me read you this verse from Titus chapter 3. And I'm telling on myself, by the way, if I could erase 20, 25 years of pride and self-deception in my life, I could.

If I'm being honest with this, this is not truths that I've known a long time. I am one that is openly repenting. I see these things so clearly because I was so foolish to miss them while being a preacher and teacher for so long.

So don't think that I'm not in the same boat we are. I'm just telling you that until I began to lay hold of these things, I stayed in that self-deceived state, full of knowledge and bowling a china shop. Not very pleasant to be around.

You can talk to my wife about the past. I've not always been that easy to live with. Titus chapter 3 verse 1. Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities to obey, to be ready for every good work.

This is Paul talking to Titus about people in the church. I'm reminding you, everybody, let's be subject to rulers and authority. Let's obey.

Let's be ready for every good work. To speak evil of no one. You got that? Everybody here? So as a part of this church, we're not to speak evil of anyone.

Not President Biden. Not a Democrat. Not a Republican.

Not someone on city council. Not another member of this church. Not a homeless person on the street.

Okay? Got that? Speak evil of no one. To be peaceable. Gentle.

Showing true meekness to all men. To speak evil is that word blaspheme. To blaspheme no man.

Never injure another man with your speech. Wow. You see how harmonious the Bible is? It's there.

Knowing that this tongue is a world of evil among the parts of the body. A restless evil, full of deadly poison. Knowing that, if I have laid hold of that, I do not trust this thing.

And if you realize that the tongue can suddenly lash out and the Bible says there is a speaking that's similar to the thrusting of a sword. You can use your tongue and thrust a sword right through someone. There's a speaking like that.

Knowing that, how can I not keep a tight rein on it? How can I not seek to lay hold of this knowing that if I'm not careful, I'm going to give an account on the day of judgment for every unprofitable word spoken. Now, I believe that there are times we slip and don't even catch it. I got that.

That's what the grace of Christ and the cross of Christ takes care of. But the writer of Hebrews says this. If the message spoken through angels was binding and every setting aside and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Remember what neglect is? It's refusing to give proper focus and attention.

So I am asking us to place our attention on our tongues. And the reason I'm asking this today is to see have we laid hold of well what God says about the tongue. We are to never use it to blaspheme another man.

We are to never let an wholesome speech come out of our mouths. We are only to use it to speak those things that build others up according to their needs and that minister grace to those who hear. Now you might be thinking and you would be right to think so because we can't cover everything in a particular topic.

Didn't Jesus say some pretty hard things? He sure did. Whitewashed sepulchers, brood of vipers, unmarked graves, men who travel land and sea to make one convert. When you make him he's twice the son of hell as you are.

I mean very strong things. But who did he say that to? To the proud who are not showing mercy to others. They were proud, self-righteous, and not showing mercy to others.

And they were his number one enemies. Let's finish with where we started. The tongue was just the example.

Tongue is just the example. Again, reminder, before a word becomes something we actually hear that comes out of someone's mouth, what is it? A thought. So can you see that by hearing the word of God, every time you hear it, you keep it, you retain it, you put it in your central processing unit.

You keep it. You begin to treasure it up. And as you treasure it up, the person who has will be given more and he will have an abundance.

And out of that abundance, the mouth speaks. So what's going to be coming out of that person's mouth more and more? The word of God. True, wholesome.

His speech is going to be directed by the word of God because his thought process is being transformed by the word of God. Be ye not conformed to the pattern of this world. And you know what the pattern of this world is? Comment, comment, comment, comment, opinion, opinion, opinion, comment, comment.

That's the world. God was in Christ, Jesus, not counting men's sins against them. Seeing the same evil, but here to redeem, here to save, here to lift up, here to heal.

God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Seeing the same thing, but the approach was completely different. He's there to heal, to renew, to save, to rebuild, to restore.

He even quotes a passage from Isaiah 63. The spirit of the Lord is upon me to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, the year of jubilee, to proclaim the recovering of sight to the blind, to open the ears of those who are deaf, to set at liberty those who are bound, and to preach the good news to the poor. And he genuinely left off the last part, which is about the day of evil, judgment, tribulation that was coming.

Because that wasn't the first time he came. He didn't come for that purpose. His first coming was to save.

And he's given to us the ministry of reconciliation. And our mouths, and our energy, and our thoughts are to be filled with his word, filled with his spirit, so that our speech is reconciling the world to himself. Not criticizing, not condemning.

Yes, the evil needs to be exposed. And this is something I have no rocks in my pocket, because I am guilty, probably the number one, I could probably say like Paul, I'm the chief of sinners in this regard. I knew how to expose evil.

As a matter of fact, I knew how to do it in the church. I could make church people feel terrible for how little they read their Bible, how little they prayed, how much they watched TV, the things they said, I could make them feel horrible, because I was exposing their laziness and I was, I wanted to wake them up, that's what I wanted to do. And after a long period of time, when you're doing that on a regular basis, how do you think the church felt? They kind of cringed to come in the door.

You know, I mean, now and then you can say, thank you, pastor, I really needed you to step on my toes, I get that. You know, now and then you need a spanking, I get that. But that on a continual basis does not produce very much light, does it? Here's what I've discovered.

I've never seen the evil more exposed by lifting up the light. By talking about how beautiful our tongue should be. Full of grace, full of mercy, full of patience, all the fruit of the Spirit.

When someone walks in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, abounding in Christ, they are just a light that exposes evil all around. Evil is just exposed by lifting up of what's good. Light manifests things.

When we walk in the light, this is why. The people in your life, those people that God have already given you, if you or I, the people in our lives, it's not just to you, this is to me as well. Because there's many people who knew me as that person I described.

Many people knew me. Not surprising, they're not my friends today still. They're not sending me Christmas cards or calling me on the phone seeing how I'm doing because they had their time with me and they didn't want any more.

But I'm hoping that I can be so transformed by what I'm talking to you about, what I'm trying to lay hold of myself, that they'll see, wow, Brother Allen has changed. He has changed. And that's what I want them to see.

I want that, see, my ashes can then become beauty. You see how that I can take the ashes of what I've learned and all the mistakes that I've made and I can be open with you and I can plead with you, do what I failed to do. I was not laying hold of what God said.

I was not carefully listening and retaining and doing. I was deceiving myself. And life, my spiritual life, my marriage, my relationship with other people began to change when I began to store up in me God's word in a way that was fully laying hold of it, including not speaking evil of men, not blaspheming others, not letting an unwholesome word proceed forth out of my mouth.

Those of you who've been around a while know that it comes out of me fairly often. It's not something new, is it? So you've heard it quite often, right? It's not the first time. What do you think I'm wondering right

now? What do you think I'm wondering? If I really do my... If I accomplish the purpose I'm seeking to accomplish, what am I going to see? You're going to get it.

I'm not going to hear a single one of you say something that you shouldn't say. I'm not anywhere here. I'm not going to hear about it from somewhere else.

That's my goal. Because I believe it that sincerely. And I do believe it's possible.

You know, I said this Wednesday night. I think I need to say it here. Some of you, maybe you're just thinking inside, that's just impossible.

No man could do that. Hmm. How about that? I guess that's why we need Jesus every single day, don't we? That's why we need the Holy Spirit, isn't it? That's why we never have to do this on our own, do we? That's why walking with Jesus, keeping in step with the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit, is the key to everything that God has said becoming a reality in your life.

And we either live that way or we simply deceive ourselves by those who come and listen and don't do it. And that was in the Bible, by the way. I think, I haven't gone there in a while.

Brother Rudy probably could help me here because he knows the Scriptures well. Isn't it Ezekiel 16, around there where the Lord tells this to the prophet Ezekiel. He says, you know, the people come to you.

They're drawn to you and they say, come hear the word of the Lord. Come hear the word of the Lord. Oh, great, Brother Al's preaching today.

Who's teaching tonight? You know, or something like, come hear the word of the Lord. And here's what the Lord told the prophet. Well, they come to you like they usually do and they sit and listen, but to them you're just like one who sings beautiful love songs or plays an instrument well.

For they listen to you but they don't do what you say. Wow. I don't want to stand before the Lord and hear that.

You said a lot, but you never actually expect anyone to live it. No, no, no. That wouldn't be fair to you.

This is what you gain if you will lay hold of what I'm sharing with you. You won't need me anymore. You won't need me.

You'll have the word of God. You'll have the Holy Spirit and the Spirit himself will so guide you into all truth. And then you know what I'll feel? I've done my job.

I've done my job. You have the kind of heart that's pleasing to God. You have the kind of life that's pleasing to God because you're beginning to store His word in you.

You take it seriously. You put it all into practice and that's what we're here for, right? That's what the church is supposed to be. We're to be that group of people that encourages one another in this way.

Right? Okay. Thank you.

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