

Proverbs 15:26 we read, *“The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD, but the words of the pure are pleasant words.”* Are your words pleasant and edifying, and is that what you aim for daily in regards to all people?

All these questions bring us now to our second main point where we consider how our proverb is surely also a Christ-focused saying. How does Proverbs 16:24 also point to Jesus Christ the Saviour as Jesus tells us all Scripture does? Well, not only does it bring out our great need of Him and His saving work time and again, but it also reflects what the gospel itself is all about. The gospel message is God in Christ Jesus speaking pleasant, that is kind, gracious, good words to us, words meant for our wellbeing in soul and body. And the gospel is sweet for it is a gospel message of salvation by grace alone through Christ alone by faith alone, which will always bear fruits of thanksgiving too by His saving, sanctifying power. The gospel message is a word full of tender mercy and wondrous salvation affecting body and soul, and being valid for both life and death, and for this life and the eternal life hereafter. We read in Psalm 19 about God’s Word and the meaning is God’s Word of salvation through the promised Messiah is a word that lightens the eyes, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. The gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Saviour, trusting and following Him, is called in Luke 2, *“good tidings of great joy!”* and in Romans 10, *“glad tidings of good things!”* When Philip explained the gospel word from Isaiah 53 to the Ethiopian eunuch, and that man believed and was baptized, we read in Acts 8:39, *“he went on his way rejoicing.”*

The gospel word is full of pleasant sayings showing and offering the one and only sure way of complete deliverance from all sin and evil, and the one and only way of fullness of life here and eternal life hereafter. We read in Luke 4:22 about Jesus the Saviour when here on earth, as He was teaching about the gospel in and through the Triune God as revealed in Him, that *“all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.”* My friend, do you know and experience the gospel message as, indeed, pleasant words for us, so undeserving as we are in ourselves but all for Jesus’ sake alone? Does Proverbs 16:24 serve by the Holy Spirit also as not only a convicting word, but a Christ-focused word? Next time we will think still more on this second point and then also speak about how this proverb gives a challenging word to hear more on this word of true wisdom, *“Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.”* Amen.

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**BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST**

*Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America*

*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)*



### SPEAKING PLEASANT WORDS [1]

I begin this two part message, based on Proverbs 16:24, with this personal question. “This past year, if someone had paid you ten dollars for every kind word you ever spoke about other people and to others, and also collected five dollars for every unkind word about others and to others, would you be rich or poor?” What would be the answer thinking also of your words at home, as well as at school and work, at church, and in your community?

I ask this question in view of what we read in Proverbs 16:24. There God’s Holy Spirit inspired Word reads, *“Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.”* Instead of pleasant words, you could translate also good words or gracious words, kind words or fair words. Pleasant words are “words which love suggests, and which breathe out love” as one commentator put it. And such words, the text relates, are sweet to the soul of the hearer, and bring strength and healing to his or her bones.

In Bible times honey was viewed and used both as that which was physically life renewing and life strengthening. It was prized not only as something so taste-worthy, but also as something so wholesome for the body. Perhaps you remember the story of Jonathan when Israel was in a war setting against the Philistines, and King Saul had foolishly forbidden any of his men to eat anything in the day of battle. Jonathan, unaware of that ruling, had taken some honey from a honeycomb dripping with honey in the forest. The other soldiers would not eat, however, because of King Saul’s rule, and we read in I Samuel 14:29 of Jonathan’s regret about his father’s foolish ruling, saying, *“See, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I have tasted a little of this honey.”* Honey in those days served like a boost and even as a healing remedy, and what was especially attractive about it, unlike some medicines it was a sweet remedy, not bitter or stinging in any way. Honey provided pleasure and health at the same time.

Now then, says the wise man, *“Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.”* I invite you to reflect on this proverb with me some more. In mentioning Proverbs 16:24 to someone once, the person responded, “I could use a sermon on that text”, implying the need to learn much also in this area of the use of our tongue and the words we speak. Can you say that you can do without a sermon on this matter and you have no problem speaking mostly always only pleasant words to others and about others? In Proverbs 18:21 we are told, “Death

and life are in the power of the tongue” and James warns about the tongue being filled with deadly poison rather than pleasant words. “*Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*” [James 3:10]

This message and that of next week is in Christian promotion and encouragement for speaking pleasant words, words so blessed, wholesome, and life-reviving. Our theme is Proverbs 16:24, ‘Speaking Pleasant Words’, and we will consider together what a convicting proverb we have here, what a Christ-focused proverb, and what a challenging proverb.

When I speak of this proverb about pleasant words as a convicting proverb, do you not find it so too? Coming back to the opening question, wouldn’t all of us be in the red if receiving ten dollars for all our pleasant words and paying five dollars for all our unkind, unpleasant, ungracious, unloving, judgmental, demeaning, insulting, complaining and bitter speech? How guilty of sin we can be with displeasing words to God and dishonorable words regarding others. When God created Adam and Eve before the Fall, always their speech and all their words before God and with each other were all pleasant and most wholesome, but with the fall into sin, immediately that showed also in unpleasant speech. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed others, and the beginning of endless clashes in words began.

How mean we can be in and with our words, how insensitive, cutting, hurtful, miserable, grumpy, unkind, unhelpful, self-centered, thoughtless, and cruel. In Proverbs 25:18 we read, “*A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour [not having pleasant words toward him but unpleasant words about him and towards him] is a maul [like a club], and a sword, and a sharp arrow.*” All of us may have felt clubbed at one time or another or pierced deeply with unkind words spoken about you or even to you, but on the other hand, how often have we with our mouths, as it were, clubbed and pierced others, and spoken most ungraciously and even viciously about others or to others? In Proverbs 16:27-28 we read, “*An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is a burning fire. A froward [perverse] man soweth strife: and a whisperer [meaning also a gossip and slanderer] separateth chief friends.*” Are these words not so painfully true?

How guilty we can be of unkind, unhelpful talk even in our families, between husband and wife, between parents and children, and between the children too. Sometimes on the way to church even, there can be such arguments and fighting between the children, or that icy silence between husband and wife, or those sharp bitter words between the parents and children or the other way around. What explosions of unpleasant words can come out of our mouths when angry, and as we put it, “pushed too far”. My point now is how much we prove our sins and sinfulness with all too many unpleasant words from our mouths. Won’t every true Christian confess and admit this, and shouldn’t all others do the same? The Apostle Paul, when speaking of our deep fall into sin, defends and summarizes it all in Romans

3:13 proving there is none who does good, no not one, by saying, “*Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.*”

With this message about speaking pleasant words so blessed and encouraging and helpful to others, are you one who doesn’t have reason to be convicted of all too often failing in this regard, even yes, also as a Christian, and too often yet speaking unpleasant, unhelpful, unwholesome words to and about others? Will you admit and be sorry for your sins in this regard? In Matthew 12:36-37 Jesus says, “*Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*” Is there not every reason to be convicted of sin thinking only of our words to and about others, all too often still unpleasant words, more cutting than upbuilding?

How urgent to realize too that with unpleasant words often comes damaging results way beyond the original intent of our words. This is made clear too in these short lines someone wrote:

I lost a little word  
Only the other day  
It was a very nasty word  
I really had not meant to say;  
But then, it was not really lost  
As from my lips it flew,  
My little brother picked it up  
And now he says it too. (Guy King—a belief that behaves)

Our proverb is a searching, convicting proverb. How much reason for true and daily repentance from all sin there is, not least also the sins we commit with our speech, our speaking unpleasant words too often and too rarely speaking pleasant words. Are you sorry for this sin in your life, and do you too resolve by God’s grace to speak only always pleasant words, which are like “*an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones*”? Isn’t this what all God’s true people desire and pray for? The godly psalmist of Psalm 71:8 prays, “*Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, and with Thy honour all the day.*” Paul writes in Ephesians 4:31-32, “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another...*”, and in verse 29 he states, “*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*” The holy purpose of Proverbs 16:24 is to encourage and guide us in the way of the Lord and His grace, which also involves speaking only always pleasant words, in praise to God and blessed and helpful to others. Pleasant words are about speaking the truth in love, and that is the way God would have His people speak. Shall we learn then from this proverb? In