

impact of evil! Thinking of your words, even this past week, what rippling effect have they had, good or bad, positive or negative? Remember how fruitful one pleasant word can be under God's blessing.

4. Another help in meeting the challenge or call implied in Proverbs 16:24, namely, to speak pleasant words always, which by the way also will mean sometimes having to speak words of reproof when necessary, but then also doing that lovingly and humbly and pleasantly, is to think and pray before you speak. A moment's reflection before an outburst of words might have prevented so much mistake in what we sometimes say, and wish we had never said. Someone wrote once, "If your lips you would keep from slips, five things observe with care: To whom you speak; of whom you speak; and how, and when, and where." [William Norris] Let us remember too that silence and not speaking in return is sometimes much more wise than speaking.

5. In promotion of speaking pleasant words to others, and being true encouragers with others in God's ways, you need to recognize the importance of feeding yourself with what brings true encouragement, namely, the pleasant words of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is as we feed on God's Word, and will be led by God's Word in all our ways, that we will also bring true encouragement to others and be looking out to be encouraging and speaking pleasant words sweet to the soul and health to the bones. Let God's Word guide and show you from Genesis to Revelation the blessing of good words and the curse of destructive words, the joy of loving words and blot of spiteful words, the benefits of upbuilding talk and hurts of discouraging and slanderous talk, and the hope brought through encouraging words, as well as the misery promoted through mean and false words.

What reasons to pray with David the psalmist as he does in Psalm 141:3, "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." May such be the fruit also of these messages on Proverbs 16:24 where God's Word states, "Pleasant words are like an honeycomb, sweetness to the soul, and health to the bones." How blessed when, by God's grace, we are not only hearers of this Word, but doers thereof too. May God so prosper His Word, also Proverbs 16:24 with its convicting, Christ-focused, challenging message about all the words you and I say. May our speech be filled with countless pleasant words to God's praise and for our neighbour's good. Is that your prayer and aim too also in this new season, by the grace of God? 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 [2]

Dear friends, continuing with last week's message, we are still looking at the text from Proverbs about the words you and I speak. The wise man says in Proverbs 16:24, "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." We have been studying this verse noting how it is surely a convicting proverb we have here, a Christ-focused proverb, and a challenging proverb!

After having shown how this proverb convicts us all of sin, I was in the middle of speaking last time about what a Christ focused proverb this is too, surely. The whole gospel message we can say is about God's pleasant words to and for undeserving sinners all for Jesus' sake alone. 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? Isn't it something to stop and reflect on, time and again, that Jesus as Saviour never once sinned with His mouth, no unpleasant, unkind, false word ever came from His lips, not even when so many meanly, falsely, and viciously mouthed off against Him? At the same time He, Who never once sinned with even one wrong word ever, yet suffered and died on the cross being accused of blasphemy against God and wrong words against people. The pleasant words of the gospel message are at the cost of Jesus' once for all sacrifice on the cross. He in the sinner's place "was made sin" [II Corinthians 5:21] and bore the full and eternal punishment for sin, as the just for the unjust. How amazing is the gospel message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen again as the Saviour of sinners. Shall we not all look to Him for complete salvation from all sin and sinfulness by His grace, through Jesus Christ the Lord?

The amazing gospel message is that not only do we find in and through Christ complete cleansing from all sin, but also renewal of life to His praise. The Triune God through Christ doesn't only save us from sin, but sanctifies us to be and become more and more like Christ Himself, pure as He is pure, yes, pure also in our words. When saved by Christ He gives us a new heart where evil doesn't and can't reign anymore but where we seek that which is good and noble and right and true. Then, instead of our heart being filled with hate, it is filled with love and rather than being governed by guilt, it is governed by grace, and then we no longer want to speak unpleasant words destroying others, but pleasant words upbuilding others.

When saved by Christ you can't live in hatred and tension with others, but you seek out others in love and promote that which is helpful and encouraging to them in God's ways. By Christ Jesus and His Word and Spirit in us, the believer seeks that God be glorified and others be edified in all their thoughts, words, and deeds. And for speaking the truth in love, Christ Jesus is the Great Example as well as Saviour for us. Whenever we still fail and falter in speaking pleasant words, we may go to Christ for cleansing and renewal and for the challenges in speaking the truth in love always we may look to Christ Jesus for His strength and help in so living to God's praise and our neighbor's good. Paul, the blasphemer and persecutor of the church, became Paul, the gospel missionary and the up-builder of God's people through Jesus Christ the Lord. And this is Paul's call to all God's people, that they be filled with pleasant words to others, giving out that which is sweet to the soul and health for the bones. *"And whatsoever ye do in word and deed,"* says Paul in Colossians 3:17, *"do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."*

Is that how you will live too, dear friends, young and old, each and everyone? Do you live to God's praise, also in all your words, in and through Jesus Christ the Saviour? This message and last week's are meant as a great call and encouragement to speak pleasant words one to another, God glorifying and upbuilding for others. This is our Christian calling, which is to be pursued not in our own strength, but always looking to Jesus and following in His steps! Our text gives such motivation to do so also in stating how positive it is when we speak loving words, truly pleasant and upbuilding words to one another and about one another. It is something sweet to the soul, and health to the bones, and who would not agree with that being so true? Cutting, unkind words are so destructive, but pleasant words are so encouraging and upbuilding! In Proverbs 15:23 we read, *"A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it."* Indeed, in and through Jesus Christ and His pleasant gospel words, we become also, by God's grace, channels of pleasant words to others, and what a blessing that is and that brings.

Here I come to our third and last point, considering the charge or call for speaking pleasant words to and about others. *"Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."* The purpose of this inspired proverb is not only to convict of sin and to draw to Christ the Saviour in faith and repentance, but also to guide and guard us in wisdom's way. Wisdom's way, yes, the Christian way of life is to live also not being unruly with your tongue, but seeking to have it in submission to God and His Word and will, and with your speech ever to be praising the Lord and being of blessing and encouragement to others in the gospel way. Paul writes in Colossians 4:6 *"Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, [with the truth of God's Word, that which is so opposite to the decay and rot*

of this world] *that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."*

Here, in promotion of speaking pleasant words that are helpful and healing to others and both God-honoring and encouraging towards others, let me mention some practical helps for us to remember and follow.

1. Remember also from this proverb the importance of all our words and speech. Our words reflect what lives in our hearts, either love for God and others, or lots of pride and disregard for God and others. To speak always pleasant words, you need to realize constantly that your words are an important part of life, that your words have either grievous, damaging effect or gracious, upbuilding impact. Your words spoken and written are not unimportant for either they are words that bless God and others, or curse God and others. The book of Proverbs includes many verses on how we speak, bringing out it is not insignificant or irrelevant how we speak and don't speak. We need a very tender conscience even against the least sin in word as well as in thought and deed. Remember before God and man what you say with your tongue says so much really. If you will live a life full of pleasant words, you know words count.

2. In promotion of Proverbs 16:24 and the charge implied to speak only always pleasant words, words of truth and love, care and comfort and encouragement, how you need continually to look to Christ Jesus and abide in Him and His love. Remember, time and again, His gospel ministry of pleasant words, given and verified even to the death of the cross. What forgiveness of sin, also the sins of our tongue and mouth, is found with Him and His cleansing blood, and what grace and strength are given by Him to become Christ-like, and that more and more, slowly but surely, by His grace and Spirit, yes, also in and with all the words we speak. For justification with God we must ever look to Christ, and for sanctification before God we must ever abide in Christ and His love. If you will live a life full of pleasant words, as you are called to do, you must realize that without Him you can do nothing, nothing but fail time and again, but through Him you may be and will be given opportunities and strength to speak pleasant words in season, so God-honouring and people encouraging.

3. In promotion of our proverb and speaking pleasant words to God's praise and for the wellbeing of others, realize what an encouragement a pleasant, loving, caring, compassionate, sensitive, truthful, friendly word here and there can be and what a blessing it can bring. As someone said, "Many a time a word of praise or thanks or appreciation or cheer has kept a person on his feet. Blessed is the man who speaks such a word." Proverbs 12:25 reads, *"Heaviness [anxiety] in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad."* Pleasant words in the marriage relationship and in the family home, in the church fellowship, at school and work and in the community bring a ripple effect of so much blessing and encouragement, whereas cutting and unpleasant, unloving words can result in such a rippling