

“The Only Thing Worth Saying”

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[0 : 0 0] But by the grace of the Lord, I have bound on strength in him. So my ability to be up here to stand before you is not by my own skills, not by my own diligence or righteousness, but by the righteousness of Christ that he has given me and the strength of the Holy Spirit that allows me to press on.

If I was left to my own devices, I could do none of these things. I encourage you to turn with me as we continue our study in 2 Corinthians. We are working through this book bit by bit.

I have been loving it. I hope that you all have been blessed by it. It truly is an amazing book. You'll find our passage today on page 177 of the Pew Bibles.

We have been working slowly through chapter four, which is really a highlight chapter of 2 Corinthians.

And this section should continue that, Lord willing, the beautiful truths of God. I need you to know that there's a world of people outside this building.

[1 : 1 4] That they are dead and in darkness. And there may even be people in this congregation dead and in darkness.

The whole world is suffering and struggling in darkness and in pain. Now imagine you have been handed the microphone.

That you have been set on a stage. That you've been given your 15 minutes of fame. And you have an opportunity to speak to them. What will you say?

What will you say to a world that is in darkness? That is struggling and suffering? If the microphone was yours, what would you do with that opportunity?

I say this because you actually do have an opportunity to speak. Most of us will end up on TV or before a stadium of thousands.

[2 : 2 1] Maybe our brother Don here knows something about that. Most of us won't have that opportunity. But you do have a microphone each and every day.

You do have a stage, an opportunity to speak. God has placed you in all the circumstances that you find yourself in.

So that you might be a light in the midst of darkness. What will you say to the people that you are around every day? God has put you there.

Many of the people you meet, you might be the only Christian that they ever talk to. What will you tell them? They walk in darkness.

You have the light. So speak to them. Speak to them about the light. Speak to them about Christ. If you have Christ, you have the only thing worth saying to everyone in the world.

[3 : 3 1] Read with me 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verses 5 and 6. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Amen. This message here is simple and straightforward. You do not need a college degree to follow the point of this passage.

This truth is plain and it is for you sitting here today. We need to preach Christ. Every one of us from the least to the greatest.

We need to not preach ourselves. We need to preach Christ because the God we preach is more powerful than the darkness.

[4 : 47] I encourage you to continue and to look for even more ways to speak of our Savior to a dying world. For those of you who are Christians and don't preach Christ, I hope that this sermon convicts you of your lack of faithfulness and care for the world.

And a morning of technical difficulties continues as my notes stop there. Thankfully, the word of God is in front of us.

And the most important things I have to say are the things that are captured here. So we will go a bit off script now.

This sermon is for your sakes.

If you know Christ and you preach him in your life, I want you to be encouraged to do this all the more. When you speak of Jesus, you speak about the one thing that matters.

[6 : 10] The one thing that matters to anyone who you talk to. I could talk about sports. Not much. I don't really like them, but I could speak of them. And there would be people that it would matter to. But if I found myself in a tribal village in Africa, they really don't care that Brady has six Super Bowl rings.

It doesn't matter to them. Seven? All right. I could speak to you about fantasy novels.

One of my favorite things to read outside of the Bible. And to most of you, it probably wouldn't matter that much. I'd like that much. I'd like that much.

But if I speak to anyone about Jesus, even if they do not appreciate their need for him, I am speaking the one thing that truly matters.

[7 : 25] There is no one you will come across in your life who does not need to hear about Christ. Even myself, who has the privilege of being a pastor and a teacher, of studying God's word, I need to hear about Christ and his gospel every day.

There is not a day that goes by when my life is not made better by hearing about the Savior and my need for him. So I encourage you to go forth and to preach this Christ.

We will take this sermon in the same order that Paul structures his passage. He starts by presenting the fact that he does not preach himself.

We too must not preach ourselves. Take a minute or maybe in the coming week, watch how much you talk about yourself.

Look at your conversations and see just how much time you dedicate to talking about you. To focusing on your life, the things that are happening, your complaints, your achievements, everything.

[8 : 49] You might realize like I have that you spend entirely too much time talking about yourself. There's a reasonable amount to speak about our things, to share the goings on, going ons of our life.

But when we realize that we have a limited time and a limited number of words to speak, and we are speaking to people in great need, we should realize that speaking of ourselves is oftentimes the last thing that people need.

How much is the lives of people around me benefited by me droning on about the going ons of my life? Well, how many hours do I spend venting about work or traffic about these various tasks that come up in my life, the errands I have to run, complaining about a lack of sleep or feeling unwell, any number of things that we busy ourselves in talking with.

What profit is that to people walking in darkness, dead in sins and trespasses? How are people's lives improved by your conversation?

You're talking to a dying world. Do they really need to hear more about yourself? Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ.

[10 : 34] He is a Roman citizen. He was a Pharisee, a prestigious person. People everywhere he went looked up to him.

He was educated and literate in a day where most people didn't know how to read or write. When he went into churches, he could speak eloquently and clearly.

He had seen the risen Christ and been miraculously converted. He had been taught by Jesus directly.

If anyone has something to boast about, it's him. If anyone has fame or a position to talk about, it would be Paul.

Paul wants to make it clear that it is not himself, his opinions, or his life that he is here to preach on.

[11 : 39] He says, we do not preach ourselves. So if the apostle thinks that he is not worthy of being the center of his conversations, we must not think that we are worthy to be the center of our conversations.

So watch how much time you spend talking about things, especially how much time you spend talking about yourself. cut back.

But the way to stop focusing on yourself, the way to stop wasting so much time on things that are less significant, on complaining about things that don't matter, is not by an intense focus on yourself in all the ways that you talk about your day.

the way that we stop preaching ourselves is by starting to preach Christ. That is the second point, preach Christ.

Paul says, we do not preach ourselves, but Christ, Jesus, the Lord, and ourselves, bondservants, or slaves, for Jesus' sake.

[13 : 04] The alternative to talking about yourself is not talking about sports, or cars, or decorating, or cooking, or any number of things that we might choose as hobbies.

The alternative is to fill your mouth with the words that really matter, with the words of life and light, the words of Jesus Christ.

Paul recognizes that he has limited time, that he has limited words, that he has one life to live, and he is speaking to people who are in danger of darkness and hell.

And so he says, this is what I will preach. This is what I will use my limited resources on. It's like money is a great example of this.

If you have a lot of disposable income, like most Americans have, you don't mind buying a new TV, or new clothing, getting, going out to eat for sushi, or a good steak, whatever it is you like to spend your extra cash on.

[14 : 28] But if you find yourself suddenly with one-tenth of the income that you had, suddenly a lot of things become unnecessary.

The math changes. When it's a choice between a video game or food on the table, well, my hungry stomach makes the decision pretty easy.

life, if life, if the stakes of our lives were low, the consequences of our words would be minimal.

It doesn't matter if you waste a bunch of time talking about nothing. It's a leisurely life, you know, kick back, relax. But the Bible shows that the world is perishing.

Tomorrow is not promised to any of us. Yes. You may be dead before you walk out this door. And so might be any person you talk to.

[15 : 38] And if someone dies in their sins, that's not the end. But they will justly suffer in hell for those crimes.

But they need not perish because a way is made out in the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you repent and believe on him, there is real forgiveness of your sins.

There is real freedom from death. And that goes not just for you, but for every person you talk to. Perhaps you might be the tool of God to ransom a soul from hell.

But you'll never know if you don't speak. I'm going to turn briefly to Romans chapter 10. It presents this truth so wonderfully.

You'll find it on page 1745 of the Pew Bibles. Romans 10 verse 9.

[16 : 52] That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

for with the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture says whoever, that means you, that means me, that means every last person you meet, the beggar on the street corner with his sign asking for money, the rich suit in his office with millions and a beach house, every last one of us, the inmate in jail for a triple homicide, the parent who selfishly neglects their children, the friend who lies for his own advantage, you and me, whoever believes on him, will not be put to shame.

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. That would be the most significant distinction they would know at the time. They would think the Jews deserve salvation and the Greeks don't.

But Paul says the best people you can think of are the worst. Everyone needs Christ and if they call upon him, they will be saved. For the same Lord is over all, is rich to all who call upon him.

For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This is the beautiful truth of the gospel, but Paul does not stop here.

[18 : 36] He says if this is true, then we must do something. If you leave here and you go about your life and you do not speak to people about Christ, it's doubtful that you really believe the gospel and it's doubtful that you're really saved.

So watch your heart and be careful. Notice the commandment that Paul gives after preaching this gospel. Verse 14, how then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?

And how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they not hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things. But they have not all obeyed the gospel.

For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? So then, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

[19 : 59] How are they to believe unless you speak the gospel to them? How are they to know unless you preach Christ? What will you use your words to do?

We have considered that we should not preach ourselves and some of the reasons why that is true. We have considered why we should preach Christ and some of the ways, the reasons why that is so necessary.

But Paul goes on to give his own explanation as to why we must not preach ourselves and why we must preach Christ. This is point number three, our powerful, mighty God.

God is mighty to save. Look at Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians chapter 4. Once again, that's page 1777 of the Pew Bibles.

Verse 6, for it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[21 : 15] What God are we talking about preaching here? Is it a statue in a temple that you toss coins into a coffer and is capable of doing nothing?

Is it an empty book? Is it an empty faith? Are the best parts of church just the fact that you have people to hang out with?

Or is there really a God in our midst? Paul says we do not preach ourselves, we preach Christ. Why? Because we are preaching the very God who created the world by his commands.

In Genesis we read that God said let there be light and there was light. By his voice, by his commands, he fashioned this whole world.

What can you do by speaking? I mean, my brother here is a maintenance worker. Do you tell the cabinets to be put up and they get put up?

[22 : 31] What house was constructed by people walking around and talking at the lumber? The roads, are they built by people speaking as they walk down the way?

Or my car? Did someone just voice that into existence? people in all of these, what are they compared to the universe, to the galaxies, to the sun, to the earth?

Everything we create is just a reshaping of what God's made. And out of nothing, by simple voice of his power, he creates this world.

who do you talk about that matters? Celebrities, politicians, writers, musicians?

We think of all sorts of people who are movers and shakers in the world, and we like to talk about and discuss these things because we feel they have weight and significance.

[23 : 39] it's good to talk about politics, they matter, they affect lives. But who has the power to affect lives more than the creator of the universe?

You'll speak of Biden and Trump, but will you speak of Christ? You will speak with worry about the outcome of an election, but will you speak with worry about the outcome of people's souls?

about whether or not they deal with the God of creation. He is a mighty God, and so no one is worth talking about more than he is.

Do not preach yourself, you are weak. Preach him, he is mighty. But also look at what Paul says here. He says, this is the God who has shown in our hearts to give light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

You need to preach Christ because he has transformed your life. Because this God that we are talking about has really come into your hearts and brought to you a light like no other, a knowledge that you could possess no other way, and a life that you could not have without him.

[25 : 09] I talk about the things that have made a difference in my life. If I get in an accident, that's going to be what I tell people about from my day.

If I get diagnosed with a sickness that threatens my life, that's going to be the thing I mention to people, not how I lace my shoes in the morning.

we talk about the things that affect and impact our lives. The more they impact us, the more we talk about them.

Who's impacted you more than Jesus? Has anything that you spend your time talking about done anything like what God has done in your hearts?

What is there that has had such an impact? So what is there worth talking about more than him? Talk about the one who has changed your life.

[26 : 16] By the way, this is the easiest way to evangelize, to talk about Christ. The way you preach Christ is not just walking around everywhere you go and going Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, as if someone just hearing his name is enough to save them.

I found so often the best way to preach the gospel is to talk with the people in my life about what God is doing.

To talk about him like I talk about anything else, just more so. So it's not a special separate conversation, but when someone asks me what I did this weekend, I could talk about a game I played with my family, I could talk about a place I went to dinner, or I could talk about getting together with the people of God, about getting to sing worship, and how much that meant to me, how much that was such a wonderful time.

What a great way to evangelize, just talking about God as part of your life.

Preach Christ, because Christ has changed you. Which, by the way, means that if you aren't reading your Bible, if you aren't moved by the things of God, you'll have nothing good to say about Jesus.

[28 : 13] But if you dig yourself into these things, you'll start to find you have so much more to say than your complaints about life and traffic and weather. all the things that pass away.

Lastly, I want to point out that this is not just the God who is mighty to save us, but he is mighty to save every person we talk to.

He is powerful. The same God who has shown in our hearts, has shown into the hearts, is capable of shining in the hearts of anyone we meet.

They walk in darkness and we can preach the truth to them. do you give advice to the people you talk to?

Do you point out things that they could do better or offer your opinion on the choices they're making? It's a common thing that we do with our friends.

[29 : 22] Oh, try this. It worked really well for me. Oh, go out to this restaurant. It was really good. Read this book.

I really enjoyed it. We talk about all sorts of things and give all sorts of advice.

Will you advise people that there is a God reaching out to them, calling them near, who answers their struggles with his love, who cancels their sin by his death?

Will you speak to the world that advice, that counsel? Or will you be content to help people live a better life and then perish in hell eternally?

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? What does it profit your friends if you help them make good choices about who to date or where to shop or how to save money, but you never counsel them about the fate of their soul and the gospel that calls them to repentance?

[30 : 42] I love Isaiah chapter 9, verse 2. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.

And later on in verse 6, for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to order and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward and forever.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. might you be used by God to be that great light dawning on the people walking in darkness.

Might you get to glory and hear, well done, good and faithful servant, you preached all that I had preached to you. The gospel you received you did not bury in the ground, but you multiplied it, an ambassador for Christ.

[32 : 13] What will you have at the end of your life? 40, 50 years of a career?

Passing things that fade away? I mean, my full-time job, I like to describe it as stacking pieces of glass on top of one another.

It's a bit more technical than that, but ultimately, I spend 40 hours a week on glass. And I do that week in and week out, and I've done it for five years.

It will all wipe away. It will all fade and pass. be to be a tool to bring one person to salvation.

It'll be worth it if it takes my whole life to achieve that. Because that soul will continue on for all eternity, praising and glorifying their Savior.

[33 : 22] might we all have such a testimony on the final day. Might we all be able to thank God that by his grace we did not preach ourselves, but Christ and him crucified.

Salvation to the world. How will they believe unless they hear? How are they to hear unless someone preaches? Will you go out and preach to a dying world?

let us close in prayer. Lord God, we do not have the words to say, the wisdom to say it. We do not have the righteousness to choose the paths or the diligence to walk in the ways we should.

We confess our sins and our hard heartedness to not love as we should to allow people to perish without telling them the gospel. Might we be so filled with you and with your words and with your love that we don't even have to think about it.

We just can't help but speak of you. I pray all these things in your name. Amen.