

# Believe and Speak

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[0:00] I've already described that the activities that we do on campus are kind of based around small group meetings and faculties. And every third week, the small group has to organise itself to do evangelism.

And this particular day, I was heading to the engineering faculty, pedalling my bicycle, riding my bike between my place and the faculty. And as I went, my phone started to buzz in my pocket. And every buzz was another member of the group telling me that they couldn't make it that day. It buzzed a fair bit. And by the time I got to the faculty, the last message had arrived to confirm for me that I was going to be alone that day.

No one was coming. And it's not the first time that I've had to do things on my own, because we've understood, we've realised that part of our job is the Lord sending us there to be an example of people who will stand for Jesus and who will carry on.

And that day, sitting in the faculty, when the last message came through and I was alone, I sat there kind of wrestling with God, angry again, that here I was, this Australian guy who left a fantastic country to go to Italy.

[1:11] And a lot of Italians, they say to us, you are nuts. Why? Whatever possessed you to think about leaving Australia to come to our country? They say that all the time.

They just can't believe that we've done such a dumb thing. And so I wrestled that day thinking, Lord, I've left a great country, Australia. I've come to this country. We've suffered a whole bunch of different things.

And here I am again, alone, seeking to tell about Jesus to Italians when all the Italians can't turn up to do it. And I was praying and thinking, Lord, what should I do?

Should I just go home? I've got an extra hour and a half up my sleeve that I didn't think I had. And then, once again, it became clear to me, no, that if the Lord Jesus is Lord of all life in Australia, he certainly is Lord of all life in Italy.

And that means all the students that I can see walking to and fro in front of me while I'm sitting on that bench in the engineering faculty in Florence, he's Lord of them as well. So that means I have to speak.

[2:15] So I said, all right, Lord, help me. I will speak. And I started praying for the guy who was sitting there next to me. And I opened my mouth and introduced myself.

And I said that I was from the GBU. And would he like to talk about Jesus? And he said, yes. And I'd love to say that after talking with that guy for an hour, he just was kneeling on the floor, you know, waiting for me to help him pray the prayer and commit his life to Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

He didn't do that. In fact, he walked away fairly pumped up with his, I guess, his intelligence and his ability to rebut some of the things that I said.

And in effect, I learned in that hour that he was his own God because he wasn't going to let anyone else in to mess up the scheme that he had going on.

But the thing that moved me to speak and the thing that must move us to speak is the knowledge and the belief, our trust in the fact that Jesus is Lord of all the universe, there, everywhere and here.

[3:21] Would you join me again as we pray and seek the Holy Spirit's intervention right now in our minds and our hearts as we look at the word of God and we seek to really understand that Jesus is this Lord and Savior and we can believe him, we need to believe him and we need to speak that out.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this awesome opportunity to be together now. We pray, Holy Spirit, that you would open our hearts and our minds to the truth that is in this word, the truth about the

Lord Jesus.

That he really is risen, that he reigns and he will return and that we need to speak that out. Help us to not only understand these things, but to do them.

And we pray it for your glory and the sake of the salvation of others. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. If you've got a handout, you can follow the outline that's printed there for you.

The talk is entitled Believe and Speak. And we're looking just at these verses that have been read for us from 2 Corinthians 4, verses 13 to 18. And the big point, like I've already said, is that God has raised this Jesus from the dead and he will raise those who trust in this risen Jesus.

[ 4 : 33 ] That's what God is urging us to believe, because it's true, and speak out. The first point there, as you can see, is why you would speak and what you would say.

And essentially, it's just saying again what I've already said, that God has the power to protect and give life in Jesus Christ. That's why you would believe and that's why you would speak.

It's interesting that Paul cites Psalm 116. So he's drawing back into the Old Testament to find some connection point with what he's doing and saying as he lives and as he writes to the Corinthians.

Please do turn with me to Psalm 116. It's really important that we look at that together, because it helps us understand that God is faithful even in the midst of trial and turmoil that comes because of following him.

Please do turn with me to Psalm 116. Where God tells us this through the psalmist. I love the Lord, for he heard my voice.

[ 5 : 41 ] He heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. And it's in a tricky situation. The cords of death entangled me.

The anguish of the grave came upon me. I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord. O Lord, save me. The Lord is gracious and righteous.

Our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the simple-hearted. When I was in great need, he saved me. Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.

For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed.

And this is the sentence that Paul quotes. And you might have a footnote similar to mine. It says, It's an awful moment in the psalmist's life.

[ 6 : 48 ] How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O Lord, truly I am your servant. I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have freed me from my chains. I will sacrifice a thank-offering to you and call on the name of the Lord.

I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord. The psalmist is in the midst of trouble and difficulty.

And what does he do? He cries out to this God that he knows, who is powerful and faithful, to sustain him. Why would you speak and what would you say?

Well, you would tell about this great God, this great powerful God. And we see the reason that Paul gives in verse 14. But I wanted to ask someone who has a loud voice to read out for us, please, verses 13 and 14.

[ 7 : 50 ] Preferably from an English Bible. Because otherwise I won't understand it. Or you could read Italian. Someone, 13 and 14?

I will. Great. Loud voice, please. That's all right? Forgive you. We have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written.

I believe and so I spoke. We also believe and we also speak. Knowing that he who reigns the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

Excellent. My version has in verse 14 because, I think Nick's version was, knowing that. But he says, we believe and we speak because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present you with us in his presence.

So what they're banking on is this. God has showed that he is powerful because he's raised Jesus from the dead. And on the strength of that, they put all they have on Jesus knowing that he is powerful enough, or the one who's raised Jesus is powerful enough to raise them who've trusted the one who raised Jesus and he is powerful enough to raise those who trust in the message that

they are proclaiming.

[ 9 : 18 ] I've already mentioned it, but it's a Colum Buchanan line that I'm stealing. I'll put all I have on Jesus. I will put all I have on Jesus. That's what Paul's saying.

He is convinced that Jesus is risen from the dead and it's not only powerful enough for them, but it's powerful enough for everyone who trusts him. I just want to pause for a second here and make a brief observation about what this tells us regarding Jesus himself and why Jesus is so trustworthy, why Nick's song and the chorus is so cool, why Jesus is it.

Because Jesus' resurrection actually confirms Jesus' identity as the eternal king, the king that God promised to David on the eternal throne of his people.

If you want to in your own time, you can have a look at Matthew 28, verses 18 to 20, and Jesus says there in verse 18, all power, and it's arisen Jesus talking, all power in heaven and earth has been given to me.

He's not saying it before his resurrection, he's saying it after. Jesus' resurrection confirms God's power to raise believers. It confirms Jesus to be true because if Jesus had not been raised, he would have been a liar.

[ 10 : 39 ] So it confirms actually Jesus' power, the power of Jesus' own words, his own resurrection, confirms that he should be believed. Jesus is trustworthy and the risen God.

Close the bracket. Now, listen carefully to this. Without the resurrection, there is nothing to believe. Without the resurrection of Jesus, there is no Christianity.

Without the resurrection of Jesus, Jesus is a liar. On campus, when I'm talking with people, I get to a certain point in the conversation and I say something like this.

I just want to be really transparent with you and I want you to understand who we are so that you're not feeling fooled and so that you can know if you want to take this conversation further, you can or not. We're from the Gruppi Biblici Universitari, the university Bible groups.

Our motto is sharing Jesus from student to student. So Jesus is at the center of everything we do.

We're not trying to build a new church. We're not trying to create a new institution. We don't want to establish a new student group on campus and really, we don't care about the GBU.

[ 11 : 54 ] What we want to talk to you about is Jesus and we want to talk to you about one thing about Jesus. Do you think he's alive? Do you think he's risen?

And because I'm a foreigner and I've had to learn the Italian language, I kind of muck around a bit saying, I'm using the conditional language here, right? I'm using the conditional tense.

If Jesus is alive, then it changes everything. If Jesus is alive, then he has the solution to our common problem.

He's overcome death. But if Jesus is not alive, then I'd be happy to go back to Australia yesterday and stay there and live there and die there.

But if Jesus really is alive, I will go wherever God wants me to go because if it's good for me and it really is true, then it's good for you and it's good for everybody.

[ 13 : 05 ] It's important in Italy that we talk about the resurrection of Jesus because otherwise Jesus is just left as one of a hundred, if not a thousand, other gods and saints and lesser deities.

He's someone who got close. But who knows if he got close enough? Good guy. Top guy. But is he the risen Lord of all the earth in the mind of the average Italian?

No. He's not. So he doesn't have the power to save if he's not risen. He can't be saved if he's not Lord. It's important in Italy. It's important here too where you live.

The guy who dropped off the car that we're currently using, we got talking and it turns out that he grew up in country Australia having a Roman Catholic experience.

as he grew. Convinced that God was there but doesn't really know how going to Mass makes him any closer to that God that he knows is there but can't really be sure how to connect with.

[ 14 : 11 ] And I said to him, of course it came out that we were in Italy. He was doing a favor for my brother-in-law giving us this car so that he didn't really know much about us. And I said, we're missionaries in Italy.

He said, wow. And in the course of conversation I said, you know what the really big deal is for me being a missionary or being a Christian? He said, no, what's that?

Well, the kicker for me is that Jesus is risen. Because if he's not, then I'd love to forget it because it makes my life a great deal more difficult being a missionary in Italy.

But if he's alive, that changes everything. And this guy said to me, yeah, you know, I've never thought about it like that before. Start thinking about it.

But what about you? What about you? Because often we can be confused as Christians. And we might not be super clear about what the centre of Christianity is.

[15:21] And this is what I meant. There was a meeting that I had one time with a key student as part of the GBU group. And the lights were starting to come on for me about what I should be doing and what should be some of the key things that I should be doing with students.

And I said to him, look, if I give you two minutes to share the central message of Christianity with me, what are you going to say? And what are you going to say with your friends?

And I said, would you mind doing that just as a bit of an exercise? It's not a test. He said, yep, yep. I said, right, time starts now. Stop.

I said, thanks. Can I just reflect something back to you? I said, yeah, yeah, yeah. I said, you didn't mention Jesus. He's like, oh, yeah, right.

But not only did he not mention Jesus, the resurrection was nowhere in sight. Paul's big point here, resurrection, game on.

[16:25] No resurrection. Forget it. If I can borrow something from the circus in Rome. What about you? What do you say when you've got two minutes to share the message of Christianity with people you know?

And I'm challenging about this because it's become obvious to me that we need to really understand that the resurrection of Jesus changes everything. And you need to understand that too, and we'll see why.

Because without this difference, without the resurrection of Jesus, Christianity is just like any other religion. Just a set of rules, kind of some good examples, but it goes nowhere in the end because it has no eternal value.

There's no guarantee that by doing Christian stuff, you're going to actually overcome death and have eternal life. Without the resurrection, Christianity is just like any other religion, but because of the resurrection, there is believing hope.

It changes everything. And in keeping with the title of this talk, Believe and Speak, it means not only is it something worth believing, but it's worth speaking about. That's why you would speak and that's what you would say.

[17:34] You would talk about Jesus' resurrection and it's no mistake that Paul talks about that here. I'd invite you to study the book of Acts again in your own time and just see how much they talk about the resurrection. They don't talk a whole bunch about the crucifixion.

They talk much more about the resurrection because that's the thing that confirms that Jesus really should be listened to and that his death actually did what it should have done. And Paul goes on, the goal of what he's doing is also to bless others and glorify God.

This is the second point. We've already looked at, haven't we, that we've established that he refers to the psalmist in Psalm 116 because it really sums up what they are experiencing.

When you read from the start of chapter 4, you see he's talking about trials and suffering and being perplexed, being crushed. And this is because of following Jesus. But he wants to keep on telling others about Jesus for their sake that they might be blessed and for the glory of God.

Can someone read up verse 15 please? It doesn't matter what version it is. Verse 15 please. Thank you.

[18:52] So he says, we're going to keep doing this and as we do it, it's for your benefit because as they keep preaching Christ, the grace of God, the news of God's unmerited favor, the news of God's mercy goes out and the people who hear it and they believe it, they're brought in.

And the effect in their life is one of being overjoyed at being released from the uncertainty of death and the fear of death. This thanksgiving at knowing that there is a God and that God loves them and they can know that God and they can be connected to that God forever.

and the joy that they experience and the release, the freedom from sin and the liberation from this uncertainty and God's judgment wells up in them as thanksgiving.

But that's pretty good. That's a personal effect for the people who are receiving Jesus Christ as Lord but what it does is glorify God. So what happens when a person is actually hearing about Jesus being the risen Lord of the universe and accepting that they are being brought into a worship of God and it works like this.

As Christ is proclaimed his truthfulness which shows itself in actually being raised again it points to the fact that there is a God and that God is true and he's eternal and he's loving.

[ 20 : 19 ] He cares about right and wrong and he cares about you. And in all that process God goes that's right.

That's what I'm like. And it's only right that you should understand me as that right, loving, holy God who's shown himself in the Lord Jesus and I want to bring you in.

Come in. God is glorified and Paul is, he wants to be on that train. He wants to be with it.

He wants to be on that program. He wants to keep that happening and he will not take a backward step. Cherie is a woman that Sarah has been meeting with over the last couple of years now and Sarah shared a little bit of that story this morning.

Cherie is someone who has struggled with depression and great uncertainty relating to life after death, judgment. But as Sarah has been able to sit and be very patient with her opening the scriptures and studying Jesus together, getting to know Jesus together, Cherie has been liberated.

[ 21 : 34 ] And it's a beautiful thing to see in the life of a person when they really do understand how God has made peace through the blood of Jesus and how that's been confirmed by his resurrection.

And the joy comes out. The freedom is there. The clarity of mind actually occurs and it's like, whoa, I'm seeing now.

And this has been, we've been watching this and praying for this in Cherie's life. A brother in our, in my Bible study group, church Bible study group in Florence, I think summed it up really well when we were studying Acts one night and he said, you know, it really seems to me that evangelism is much more like giving a gift.

Telling Jesus is much more about giving a gift rather than some crazy thing that we really feel burdened by and we can never really get to doing. And I think he's right because we're seeing it in Paul.

He won't take a backward step. He will keep going because he wants to give that gift. That gift has come to him and he didn't deserve it. He wasn't looking for it. He didn't want to take it.

[ 22 : 42 ] God said, here it is. Jesus says it to him on the road. He receives it and he knows he can never give it away. He's not going to lose it but he wants to give it. He wants to make sure that other people get it as well.

Italy is a place that needs that gift. And I think Australia is not far behind it. We've got 0.2% of people who are non-Roman Catholic Christians in Italy.

Australia, I don't know, 5, 6% that might kind of fall into that category. believers who are in churches. But there's this great confusion in Italy because Jesus is not Lord.

He's not presented as who he actually is and people are left in their confusion, in their fear. But it's a question for us, isn't it?

Are we speaking it out? Are we being led to the same thing that filled Paul's heart and his life as he kind of captures it in verse 15?

[ 23 : 45 ] He's not going to stop it. Or this is for your benefit. And the final point I've got is the reason to keep believing and speaking is because this is an eternal reality.

Look down again with me please at the passage from verses 16 to 18 and I'll read this time. I think this is a really awesome reality check for two reasons.

When we look at the contrasts in these verses we see on the one hand a whole bunch of difficult stuff. He talks about losing heart. He says we do not lose heart but he's talking about that because it's pretty easy to start thinking oh I'm just not sure.

I don't know if I can keep going. I'm taking the knocks. He talks about wasting away. It's kind of the opposite of all the advertising you see around.

It strikes us really in a big way when we come back to Australia and then when we return to Italy. The Italians are really into well-being. Skin, appearance, beauty. Being thin.

[ 25 : 06 ] Not being too fat. And they talk about it all the time. Come back to Australia and it's kind of like whoa it seems like Australia's kind of going down the Italian path. Paul's not talking about going to the gym and he's not talking about his own well-being.

He's not talking about the tablets that he can take to pump himself up. He's actually talking about the fact that they are wasting away outwardly. And he talks about troubles.

That's on one side. That's the reality check of the effect of following Jesus and the effect of being involved in the ministry of telling out Jesus. The other side he says, have a look again. Verse 16. We're wasting away outwardly yet inwardly we're being renewed day by day. We have light and momentary troubles but they're achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

So what do we do? We don't get weighed down by thinking about all the temporary things but we look for what is unseen, what is eternal. That is the risen Jesus and what he promises.

[ 26 : 07 ] The great powerful God who could raise this Jesus from the dead and who will raise from the dead those who believe in this risen Jesus. In the six weeks that we've been back in Australia, so far I've attended two funerals.

I've been quite, two very different funerals. The first, the wife of Richard Chin who is the AFES national director, Bronwyn. She died about three or four weeks ago and then most recently a family friend.

He died at the age of about 72 and sitting in those funerals it was a massive reality check. It's pretty simple isn't it? The message of a funeral often is that this life is nothing.

We can't hang on to these things to make us live forever. It doesn't work that way. Like Ecclesiastes said, a funeral is a good place to hang out because it's a really good wake-up call.

It's a very good wake-up call. And Paul is saying in the midst of all this stuff, all this trouble, all this body wasting away, it's a reminder he's drawn back to ask why and he's pointed back to the risen Jesus.

[ 27 : 26 ] And he must be involved in this news going out. I want to just leave you with this one last challenge and you can pray it for me as well. My challenge is this. There's a danger for us if we're already following this risen Jesus, the longer we wait to speak out what we believe and what we know about him, the further away our opportunities will be to tell others about him.

I've seen this in Italy and I know it to be true here because I've experienced it myself. This is what I'm talking about. For evangelical Christians in Italy, like I've already said, it can be very difficult to actually live in this massive great ocean of people who don't understand who you are and they don't really care for who you are.

And the church, as much as it's God's blessing, can become a place where people really take very severe, deep refuge. It's kind of like the lifeboat. They've been hauled into it and the last place they want to go back into is the water that they've just been rescued from.

But the challenge with that is they forget why they're there and they just become a club. They enjoy all the benefits of that club but they forget about the founder and that it's up to him.

And I think people can be left doing this. They sit around thinking about what they think other people think. It's a bit tricky that. Sitting around thinking about what they think other people think.

[ 28 : 59 ] And this is how it goes. Ah, they hate Christians. They don't want to know. They're not interested. They're going to kill me. And in my experience that's not true.

They just don't know Christians. They don't know Jesus. They really want to understand. But the longer we wait, the bigger the wall and the less ready we are to speak.

And I think Paul's encouragement to us, to you tonight, to me tonight, to our evangelical brothers and sisters in Italy, is to speak it out. Is to get back to the fact that Jesus really is risen and that there's much more going on than meets the eye in being a Christian.

It can look pretty poor on the outside, but the eternal reality is astounding. Where are you at with Jesus? Where am I at with Jesus? Are you really convinced that he's risen?

What's going to keep you going as a Christian, but what's going to move you to come and be in Italy with us? when you're on your own? The Italians aren't there, but Jesus is there, and you're there.

[ 30 : 15 ] That's enough. Speak it out. If we believe it, we'll speak it out. And I want to encourage you to think about how you might do that this week and talk to each other about how that's going.

Let's pray. Hallelujah, Father, thank you so much for the chance once again to look into the reality of the Lord Jesus.

Thank you, Father God, for calling your servant Paul. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for calling him, for filling him with the Holy Spirit and testifying and giving him such a great understanding that, Lord Jesus, you really are risen, that he was never going to take a backward step.

Please help us to examine our hearts and our minds and understand whether we really believe that you are risen, Lord Jesus, or whether we've got doubts, and please help us deal with those doubts.

And we pray that you would help us to speak out the truth about you, Lord Jesus.  
And I pray for your Italian people, that they would do the same thing and help us to be in it together,  
we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.