

# The Tongue

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult. Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit.

There is one whose rash words are like sword thrust, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. It's the authoritative, inerrant word of God.

You know, there are two things I know about you. The first is, you talk. Man, do you talk.

[ 1 : 07 ] I mean, some people talk more than others. Some are unable to stop talking. You know, some people like to talk. Some people, not so much. I used to think I was a pretty good talker.

And then I got married and realized my wife's view of talking was very different than my own. In frequency, in length, and in depth. It seemed to her that I could not stop talking, even though I was exhausted from all the talking I was attempting to do.

I remember reading one article that said, A woman or women are lean, mean, communicating machines. You know, I felt like I married one. Immediately, they speak double the amount of words in a day than a man does.

And that's what happened. Men come home from work and they used up all their words. And the woman is just getting started. She's on the back nine, ready to finish strong with the rest of her words.

But, you know, whether you're a male or a female, whether you're talkative or quiet, whether you talk every day and it's hard to overemphasize the impact and the importance of your words.

[ 2 : 11 ] All the best moments of your life and all the worst moments of your life have a lot to do with what you say. Unlike the animals in Narnia, no other creature in this world talks.

You talk because you're like God. You're created in His image. Called to follow Him by moving out in the world to build trust, form relationships, and tell others about the grace of God that's found in Jesus Christ with your words.

But there's another thing I know about you. Your talk gets you in trouble. Now, some people's foot is always hanging out of their mouth. But I'm fairly certain whether you talk too much or don't talk enough, what you do say gets you in trouble.

Maybe it's the muttering of frustrations when you're riding behind the slow driver in the left lane. Maybe it's the backtalk of your mother that's spoken just below what she can hear as she walks out of the room.

Maybe it's the slow leak of discontent and grumbling that fills the rooms you enter and rubs off on those around you. Maybe you mainly talk to yourself.

[ 3 : 26 ] Maybe you mainly talk in the shower, replaying fights with folks at work, dreaming about what you could say next time to really stick it to them. You assume that because it's quiet, it doesn't matter.

Maybe you're loud, though. Maybe you are like me. You get heated up. Maybe you yell. Maybe you shout. Maybe you're famous in the family for keeping a close record of everyone's wrong and rolling them out at just the best moment.

James says, if anyone doesn't stumble with his words, he's perfect. One thing I know about you, and you and I are not perfect. How many of us would like to hear an audio recording of our words from the past month played aloud for all to hear?

But the Lord hears. The book of Proverbs has much to say about our words. One commentator lists 90 Proverbs about our tongue and the words we speak.

In fact, the book of Proverbs talks more about your words than about anything else in your life. More about your words than it talks about your money. Then it talks about justice.

[ 4 : 36 ] Then it talks about sex. Then it talks about family. Then it talks about friends. As we studied last week, Ray Orland said, Our words matter. The Bible says glorify God with your body.

Proverbs says that starts with your tongue. Now, if we're listening, these things are going to stink.

It ain't me. It's the word of God. But the way I see it, there's two ways to proceed this morning. One is to harden up. To let the verses punch a little, but not really turn it to change.

Two, so that's option one. Two, option two, begins by thinking, if we all talk, and we all have problems with our talk, how kind of God to pull up a chair and want to talk to us about our talk.

And if you take that path, you lean in and listen. I think what you hear is incredible. So that's the path I'm going on. That's the path we're going on. So in a word, what we want this morning, let the words of your mouth give life to all who hear.

[ 5 : 52 ] Let the words of your mouth give life to all who hear. We're going to break this out in three points. The first is the power of words. Words are so powerful, but they don't seem that way. Words don't seem that way.

They're shared so easily. They roll off our tongue. They come out so quickly. I didn't mean to say that. They just come out like that. They seem so small and insignificant, so they don't seem to matter. I mean, we chant on the playground, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me because they're so small.

They're so insignificant. They're just verbal. But how could words hurt us? But Proverbs warns us not to think that way. Proverbs 29, 20 says, do you see a man who's hasty, who's quick in his words?

There's more hope for a fool than for him. There's more hope for a fool than a man who's hasty in his words. The idea there is that he's not a fool, not merely because he talks too much or too quickly. He's a fool because he fails to see the power of his words.

He speaks before he thinks. He speaks too much. He speaks too quickly. You know, and so the words, they're shared so easily, but the power of words is seen in how they spread.

[ 7 : 04 ] You know, they begin with a whisper. They reach all the way into the core of who we are. You know, Proverbs 18, 8 says, the words of a whisper are like delicious morsels. They go down into the inner parts of the body.

You know, let me say one thing. This is total aside. I'm going to put all these scriptures up tomorrow morning, or Gil's going to do that for us. So you can have them all there so you don't have to write them around.

We go, I am going to give you a few too many scriptures today, but sorry, it's the word of God. And actually, I'm not going to apologize for that. I think it's really important that we see all these. I could have put a whole lot more, but so aside concluded.

Proverbs 18, 8, the words of a whisper are like delicious morsels. They go down into the inner parts of the body. This is, this is, this vivid proverb. It's repeated in verbatim in 2620.

It gives us a window into why our word spreads so quickly. You know, few set out to become a gossip. I mean, nobody said, most likely to become a gossip when you graduated high school.

[ 8 : 03 ] Nobody set out to become a gossip, and yet it comes out in the world and comes out in our relationships. Maybe you see the gossip as that guy or girl that elevates himself as the informer, you know?

Maybe they like being in the know. They like being the one on the inside. They like the one, like to be the one with all the load down. They like to tell you exactly what really happened when Jim and Tammy split, and so they see themselves as the community informant.

If you want the nitty gritty, you want the dirt, come to your informant, or maybe we meet the gossip as a grumbler. You know, maybe, maybe they mainly talk about themselves and how bad they have it.

You know, misery loves company, and so when we're miserable, we invite others. Isn't that great? Invite others to enjoy the misery with us, and what we tell them is how everyone's out to get us in our lives.

We don't tell them about our hearts. We tell them about so-and-so, so-and-so, so-and-so out there. Maybe it's somebody who's much more forward, a backstabber type of person.

[ 9 : 09 ] They know exactly what they're doing. They're paying others back. They're telling half-truths of that person that got the promotion instead of them, or they're working to unload the criticism of other people around them.

No matter how they occur, though, Proverbs alerts us here, the words of a gossip, they go all the way down. They come to the ears, but they go to the heart.

Look, they're delicious morsels taken into our core. You know, the idea is turning down a bit of townhome gossip is harder than pushing away Moose Tracks ice cream.

You'll take the gossip. It's so sweet. It's so satisfying. Goes down to the inner parts of the body.

What's that mean? The inner parts of the body. The idea is it goes down to the core of who we are, the thoughts and meditation of who we are. Here's the point. What begins with a whisper settles deep within us, and we're never the same again.

[ 10 : 11 ] Once others were our friends, but after hearing gossip, doubt and speculation and uncertainty settle into our hearts and poison our friendship forever. We never look at them the same.

Proverbs 25, 23 says it very soberly. The north wind brings forth rain and a backbiting tongue angry looks. See, that's cause and effect. North wind, it means rain's coming.

Backbiting gossiping tongue angry looks. We look down on those we gossip about. And so words, they shared so easily, they spread so quickly, and they quickly ruin others.

Words lodge in the hearts of others. They're never the same. They stumble into trouble. 26, 28 says, a lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin anger.

Here's the idea. Anger destroys. Crudeness corrupts. Slander tears down. Gossip separates close friends. Lies lodge falsehood. In the minds of others, flattery puffs up and fails to point out the flaws that bring them into a pit of ruin.

[ 11 : 20 ] 29, 5 says it very bluntly. A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet. The idea is our words are not just these simple things that pass around in conversation, but they're after our very death.

That's what 18 says. Look at that. Sorry, I lost my place. There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts. I mean, that couldn't be more vivid. Words are incredibly powerful.

That's what he's trying to say. Do you see? Words are incredibly powerful. What begins with a few breaths can lead to the unraveling of someone's life. I read a story a couple years ago about Miss Justine Seiko, who's the director of communications of a large corporation, tweeting on her airplane flight from New York to South Africa.

She was tweeting jokes, you know, before her first leg. She tweeted out, weird German dude, you're in first class. It's 2014. Get some deodorant.

You know, she talks about smelling in the BO. So, I mean, that's pretty funny, right? Nobody laughed, but I thought it was funny. You know, before her final leg, she tweeted, going to Africa.

[ 12 : 33 ] Hope I don't get AIDS. Just kidding. I'm white. This was in 2013. She didn't think much about it.

She had 170 followers. That's less than me, actually, but I don't really get on Twitter very much. So, that's a mystery. She, it's probably just all my cronies from college, but she boarded the plane, turned off her phone, and went to sleep.

When she arrived in Africa, life as she knew it was over. A friend from high school, she hadn't seen in 10 years, said, I am so sorry to see what's happening. That's the very first text that popped out.

You're like, oh my goodness, what's going on? Another said, you need to call me immediately. More and more texts came in, you know, and you open up your phone, all these are coming out to you. Her phone immediately rang.

A friend, Hannah, said, you are the number one worldwide trend on Twitter right now. That's not a good thing. You know, she looked on Twitter, all sorts of people were calling her narrow-minded, ignorant, racist, you name it.

[ 13 : 36 ] They were coming after her. Even her employer, she saw, subtweeted there, this is an outrageous, offensive comment. This is her employer. Employee in question, currently unreachable on international flight.

In fact, all the buzz on Twitter started, there was a hashtag that ran, has justice landed yet? So they're following her flight on Twitter, waiting for her to arrive.

Sure enough, there was a voicemail that said, you are officially terminated. The life as she knew it was over. When Miss Seiko connected back to her world, she was shocked to see what one little bad tweet did.

But any reader of Proverbs should not be. Let your words give life. If they don't, you're going to have to pay.

I mean, that's kind of what Proverbs says is coming. Point to the weakness of words. So the power of words is great, but the weakness of words is great as well. Words are powerful, but sometimes they're pathetically weak.

[ 14 : 41 ] They cannot change other people. 29, 19 says, by mere words, a servant is not disciplined, though he understands, he will not respond. You know, words are not enough to bring forth obedience and discipline.

Sometimes we get confused about this as parents. We forget the way we were raised, and we say, did I not tell you yesterday? Not to touch that, you know, not to stick your finger in that. Yeah, did I not tell you?

Just telling is not enough to get your kid to love, wisdom, and knowledge, right? We know that all too well. You can speak to them, to your horse, and yet they won't understand.

We didn't understand that way, nor will they. Proverbs 17, 17:10, a rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool. You can say the right things a hundred times, but the right thing cannot cause someone to love, listen, and receive wisdom of God.

I think in so many ways, this is where we missed out in the book of Proverbs. I mean, we read it like it's these little nuggets, that if we just memorize the nugget, the little true nugget, then all of our life will be transformed, but ultimately, that's not really what it's after.

[ 15 : 49 ] Really, all these nuggets, and the listen, and learn, and bow down, they're ultimately called a posture of heart, not an ability to memorize, a posture of heart that says, Lord, I want to fear you, I want to love you.

Do you get what I'm saying there? they're trying to get a posture of heart that doesn't just listen. But it bows, and so the weakness of words is so evident, it cannot cause anybody really to do anything.

Words cannot change us either. You know, far too often, words are a mass. They're a cover for laziness, and disobedience. Proverbs 14, 23, in all toil there is profit, and mere talk leads only to poverty.

You know, and every Western has a chatty cowboy that does nothing, and usually, it's because he's going to pay, you know, somebody's going to take him out.

The idea of that proverb is, if you work, you'll profit, but if you only talk, you'll be left with nothing. No matter how sincere your words are, they cannot, wisdom is more than words.

[ 16 : 52 ] No matter how sincere your words are, wisdom must be more than words. We think about 1 John, let us not love in word and deed, but let us love in deed, or let us not love in word and talk, but let us love in deed and truth.

Words are covered, not just for laziness and disobedience at times, but also for how we really feel. 26, 23 says, very provokingly, like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are fervent lips with an evil heart.

You know, in those days, what they're referring to is everyday pottery was often covered with a silver veneer to make it look like it was silver, kind of like a table from Ikea, you know, it looked like wood.

I only say that because we got a lot of them, you know, but our words are often a veneer covering up the way we really feel. You know, I never forget, this is a long time ago, but I was calling my mom from college.

I'd run out of money and in the negative on the bank account, you know, so things were not looking good. I happened to be calling on the beginning of the month. Her birthday is March 1st, so I was calling on March 1st, and I was very determined to get some money transferred in, and so I called her, you know, in the morning before she went to work and didn't get a hold of her.

[ 18 : 15 ] I called her at work, you know, I think I left like a message with several secretaries. Hey, mom, can you call me? Hey, mom, can you call me? She called me back. I was calling her for money all day long. She called me back and said, later in the night, said, thank you so much for trying to get in touch with me on my birthday.

Of course, at that point, I said, you're right, mom, happy birthday to you. I love you, and I've been chasing you down.

Could you transfer some money? Actually, I did have enough wisdom to save that for tomorrow, but my words, my happy birthday was just a veneer. My heart was after what my heart wanted, and that's the way our words are.

Our words are often like they're a veneer to cover up how we really feel. They're a protective, a self-protective glaze to convey what we really want. We praise God with one side of our mouth, James says, and curse our neighbor under our breath.

We flatter when we're frustrated. We commend when we don't agree. We hide beneath the veneer of our Sunday best and our Sunday niceties. But this chapter quite soberly says the veneer will not hold.

[ 19 : 28 ] The veneer does not change who we are, and it all is coming out. In the end, it's very sober. Look in verse 26, chapter 26, 27, 28.

It kind of continues right there where we were. Whoever digs a pit will fall into it. A stone will come back on him who starts it rolling. A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

The idea who speaks with just a veneer is that's just a flatterer. That's just a fake, and ruin is coming to them. Ruin's coming.

Bruce Walkie says, a fool's tongue is long enough to cut his own throat. That's what's coming. Words, therefore, cannot change the ruin that is coming.

Proverbs 18, 6, a fool's lips walk into a fight and his mouth invites a beating. I mean, that is so true. You know, you've all met someone who you wanted to shut up with a punch.

[ 20 : 26 ] But more than that, our words bring on not just the judgment of men, but the judgment of God. Proverbs 13, 2 and 3 says, from the fruit of his mouth a man eats what is good, but the desire of the treacherous is for violence.

Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin. The fool doesn't listen to wisdom. He opens wide his mouth to say whatever he feels.

He just opens it wide and ruin is coming just as he opens wide his mouth. So ruin is opening up wide to take him down. Let me just say, even though you're an American and have a right to say whatever you want, never believe that just because you feel something deeply, it's okay to say.

Never believe it as an American and you have a right, you have the freedom of speech. Don't believe that just because you feel something deeply, it's okay to say. That's the way fools talk. And they get what's coming from the fruit of their mouth.

That's the idea. Whoever starts the stone rolling, it lands on him. Whoever digs the pit, he falls into it. He gets what he deserves because it's the judgment of God. Proverbs 6 says there's seven things God hates, or there's six things he hates, seven that are an abomination to him.

[ 21 : 42 ] Pride, murder, plotting evil, hatred, but also our words, lies, dishonesty, slander. The Lord is not neutral about the weakness of our words.

He hates them. Now we think they're just words. They're just these phrases that pop into the air for a moment and then they're gone, but what the Lord is after is they're an overflow of the heart. Now if you grew up going to the doctor, he often, especially as a kid, used to pull out that wooden tongue depressor and say, ah, you know, tell you to stick out your thumb and say, stick out your tongue and say, ah, and then they looked around your mouth, and if you're really lucky, they stuck that thing down there in a swab too, which made you want to gag.

Apparently, doctors can tell a lot about your health from your mouth. Proverbs is saying, God can tell a lot about your heart by your mouth. What comes out of our hearts is, what comes out of our mouths is an overflow of our hearts.

From your heart flow your springs of life. Out of the abundance of your heart, Jesus said, the mouth speaks. This morning, the Lord is pulling up a doctor's chair, so to speak. He's pulling out the wooden tongue depressor and taking a look in.

The idea is, he wants to see not merely problems with your words, he wants to see problems with your words because there's problems with your heart. James says, your tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness, a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

[ 23 : 11 ] He wants us to see that our deepest problem is not that we talk too much or talk too little or talk too quickly or something superficial like that. He wants us to see that our deepest problem is that all of our talk flows from a heart that demands its own way.

Our words reveal that we care more about our kingdom than God's kingdom. Our words reveal that we care more about what we want than what he wants.

going to do this. That's why they bring on ruin and destruction. The veneer is coming off. If we were to sit down and listen to an audio recording of the last month, what kingdom would your words reveal that you care most about?

Why do you get angry with the kids? Why are you so quiet? Why are you so quiet? Why are you so quiet? Why are you so quiet? Why are you so quiet? Why are you so quiet? Why are you so quiet? Is it your personality?

Or is it something else? Why do you nag? Why do you follow others around with your little list? Why do you find it hard to be grateful?

[ 24 : 25 ] This week I was trying to write down three things to be grateful for and I had to think. I was like, Lord, that is so wrong. I shouldn't have to think. I should have a hundred immediately. It's so important we pause.

I think what God wants to do, you can't fix your word problem horizontally. If we walk out of here, I'm going to try to ask nice things to my wife and whatever, praise her food or something like that, that won't do anything.

You must fix your word problems vertically by bringing yourself before the Lord who hears every careless word and knows your thoughts. The first thing you must do is learn to shut your mouth.

What I mean by that is every crude joke, every spew of discontent, every punch of anger, every cold comment is deserving of the just judgment and wrath of God. Every careless word will be brought under his scrutiny and his judgment.

The scriptures say no one is good, not even one. All of us have gone astray. All of us are slaves to sin and deserving of his just furious wrath. The idea is that our word problems are revealing our heart problems.

[ 25 : 35 ] When you really see this, it will shut your mouth. You'll stop making excuses. You'll stop blame shifting. You'll stop saying it's not as bad as that guy down the street.

You'll stop trying to cover things up. You'll bow low and receive the forgiveness of God that's only found in Jesus Christ. Martin Lloyd-Jones, the great preacher in England, said you're not a Christian unless you've been made speechless.

How do you know whether you're a Christian or not? It is that you stop talking. You don't begin to be a Christian until your mouth is shut, is stopped, and are speechless, and have nothing to say.

And that's what prophets should say to us. We have nothing to say. we're guilty. But once your mouth is shut, Jesus knows the word to open it again.

He says there's no condemnation for any misstep with your words. Now that's incredible. How many regrets I have for my words. I am a foot, sticker in the mouth type of guy.

[ 26 : 53 ] But praise God. There's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. That's the truth of the gospel. If you come to Jesus Christ this morning, you can be forgiven. I don't care what you've done with your words or how rash they've been or how sword thrusty they've been the last week or the last six months or for all of your life, you can come to Jesus Christ.

It's a very serious matter, but you can come to him and escape the wrath that's coming, that's on the way for your words. And find forgiveness.

But then Jesus says, not just is there no condemnation, but he says I want to make you new. I want you to surrender your right over your words. I want the words of your mouth to be about my kingdom and bringing life and joy to all who hear.

And this is when it gets good, the potential, thirdly, of words. The power, the weakness, and the potential. Once you surrender your right to say whatever you want, whenever you want, you'll see the incredible potential your words have for building up others in the kingdom of God.

You know, we take up words again, or we should, you know, we should take them up very cautiously. I resonate completely with Psalm 141. Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth.

[ 28 : 10 ] Keep watch over the door of my lips because it just opens up and gets me in trouble. And so set a guard over it. But we take them up decisively because we realize words are incredible.

First, words. We see how words heal the broken. They heal the broken. Spiritual brokenness is not the feeling of a few bad, or a few things not going well. Spiritual brokenness is a weariness of soul.

It's the feeling of being crushed by painful circumstances, but not merely being crushed, left alone by the Lord as well. It's the fear that things will not get better.

It concludes that it doesn't matter anymore if I read or pray or seek help or do this or that. It's just too hard to bear. Proverbs 12, 18, a man's spirit will endure sickness, but a crushed spirit, who can bear?

Who can bear it? But the words of the wise heal the crushed in spirit. Look in verse 18 of our things. There's one whose rash words are like sword thrust, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

[ 29 : 16 ] You know, it's not money that heals the broken. It's not power that heals the broken. It's not food or gifts that heal the broken. It's not time that heals the broken.

Time does not heal all wounds, but wise words heal the broken. The words needed are often the words of a gospel from another person's mouth.

I mean, that's ultimately what rescues us and lifts us in so many ways. Dietrich Bonhoeffer captured this so well. He said the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's word to him.

This is neat. The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother. His own heart is uncertain, but his brother's heart is sure.

And so he's strengthened by the heart of his brother. His brother speaks the word of the gospel to him with power and tells him the Lord is good. The Lord is pleased with you. The Lord will fill you with his love.

[ 30 : 11 ] Again, and so the words, they heal the broken, but they also encourage the anxious. You know, this has been the year of anxiety in so many ways. I never thought I had a problem with anxiety, but it has arisen this year.

And I think you can understand why about my health or about our health collectively or businesses or our country. There's a palpable anxiety in our culture, but the way out of anxiety is not knowing who will sit in the Oval Office on January 20th.

The way out of anxiety is not a certainty about this earthly future. The way out of anxiety is a good word that reminds us of what is eternally true.

And I just love this. Proverbs 12, 25, anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad. You know, anxiety paralyzes.



That's what's going on. Anxiety brings him down. It paralyzes him, but a good word lifts him up. A good word gives him perspective. All is not indeed lost.

[ 31 : 15 ] A good word gives him just what he needs. A good word gives him encouragement and grace. A good word points where God is still at work. Listen to this. J.C. Ryle, he's talking about the Lord Jesus in Revelation 3.

He says, to you also, Jesus says, I know your works. This is how you encourage the brokenhearted and the anxious. You see no beauty in any action you do.

All seems imperfect, blemished, and defiled. You're often sick at heart at your own shortcomings. You often feel that your whole life is one great arrear and that every day is either a blank or a blot, either of no significance or a strike against you.

But know now that Jesus can see some beauty in everything you do from a conscientious desire to please him. His eye can discern excellence in the least thing which is a fruit of his own spirit.

He can pick out the grains of gold from amid the dross of your performances and sift the wheat from amid the chaff in all your doings.

[ 32 : 37 ] Your tears are all put into his bottle. Your endeavors to do good to others, however feeble, are written in his book of remembrance.

The least cup of cold water given in his name shall not lose its reward. He does not forget your work, your labor of love, however little the world may regard it. That's what the Lord, that's how you encourage somebody, that's how you give someone a good word.

Isn't that incredible? And so we're entrusted with this incredible privilege. Ephesians 4 29 captures it, let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth but only such as good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to all who hear.

Jesus Christ is not one size fits all. Jesus Christ is not one size fits all. Jesus Christ entrusts us with the awesome responsibility of looking out each day to build others up with our words.

This is an exciting opportunity to scan the crowds and the conversation of each day not for opportunities to humor and impress others but for chances to build up all who hear.

[ 33 : 44 ] I mean that is an exciting endeavor that you're all invited into in response to the gospel of Jesus Christ. You've got the privilege of finding out who needs Jesus Christ deeper in their heart to say isn't that amazing?

You can do it. The Lord needs your word. They need your word. Speak up and build them up. We see how the word stop the angry. We're told eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, don't back down, fight fire with fire but the angry are not stopped with anger but a gentle word.

Proverbs 15, one, a soft answer turns away wrath but a harsh word stores up anger. I'm sure you know this by experience. Anger isn't stopped with anger but it is stopped with a gentle word but the idea is gentleness, gentle words don't just mend fences, they build houses and you can see what I mean by that.

Best of all, words give life. Words give life. They give healing as we saw in verse 18 but they give life. 18.21 says death and life are in the power of the tongue and those who love it will eat its fruit.

So you want more life in your life? Eat the fruit of the word. It's obvious that the power of the tongue brings forth death but now we'll see the power of the tongue brings forth life.

[ 35 : 01 ] I love this. Proverbs 15, four says a gentle tongue is a tree of life but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. I mean this is the image. This is the image I want you to leave with. A gentle tongue is a tree of life.

The idea is that words have an opportunity to rescue and restore. Words have the potential to give someone a restart. Words have the potential to erase so many fears and make someone feel that they can finally live again.

Words give life. Words is a tree of life. The image there is that our words are a place where people come to hide. That's why birds run to trees because they want to hide from the wind and so our words become a place where people can hide and heal.

Our words become a place where people can feel safe. Our words become a place where people can feel comforted and built up and made to walk again. Our words can be a halfway house in a dead-end world.

In our words, these things that just fly off like they're puny, they're not puny, they're incredible. They restart someone's life.

[ 36 : 06 ] They change the game. You have voices in your head telling you, no good, you're an idiot, you're a failure, but the words of a brother can say, silence!

You understand? You understand? It's incredible. That's what the Lord wants with our words.

Several months ago, I read a book called Educated by Tara Westover. It's an incredible book.

It's not a book about the Bible, but it's a memoir. Tara grew up in a Mormon home with a very hard-line view of the Bible and a very far-right view of this world.

She was never registered as a child, never received a social security number. She endured horrific abuse at the hands of her brother and at the lack of defense of her father and mother.

[ 37 : 27 ] I want to read you one little thing. She ended up getting out and she went away to school. She actually went away to Cambridge after that too and she's a lawyer. She's done a few things.

But she talks about really wanting to hear from her mother again. That's a thread throughout the whole book, but she tells about an email exchange between her mother and her while she was in England.

Her mother was in Idaho, I think. Her mother wrote, listen, her mother wrote, you were my child, I should have protected you.

This girl's 35 years old when she receives this email. You were my child, I should have protected you. Listen to what she says. I lived a lifetime in the moment I read those lines.

A lifetime that was not the one I had lived. I became a different person. I remembered a different childhood. I didn't understand the magic of those words and I still don't understand.

[ 38 : 31 ] Tara would say, I do understand because of God's word, but I don't understand it now. I only know that when my mother told me that she had not been the mother she wished she had been, she became that mother for the first time.

Tara said, I love you. Back. Let your words give life. I felt like as I was preparing this week, yesterday, I felt like I had a prophetic impression.

What I mean by that is not an addition to the scripture. Revelation gets very clear about that. Don't do that. But just felt like the Lord laid a picture on my heart, an impression on my heart.

So you can take it, you can discard it, I put it at the end so that you can cut it off if you wanted. This was it. I saw people walking up to the altar of God. Walking up.

Carrying with them, yes, carrying all their guilt. Carrying with them all their shame. But they were also carrying words. Words of hate.

[ 39 : 47 ] Words of hurt. words of slander and gossip. And I just felt like I was seeing each individual word that were just being pulled out of a backpack and dumped out right there.

And the Lord was covering every single one. But He was also giving them new words. Giving them new words.

The Lord doesn't just want to forgive you, which is a wonderful thing, an incredible thing. Lord wants to send you with new words. He wants to fill your mouth. That you would have a word.

It quiets the voices. Let us pray. Father in heaven, we give you thanks this morning that we know the word of God that is found for us in Jesus Christ, the word that tells us that all of our sins have been canceled on account of His name and that we rest completely secure in You.

Lord, we thank You that even a message like this, even things that are so sober with what we do with our words, nevertheless, this morning is not about our condemnation, but about You putting Your arm around us and coming alongside us and trying to point us to what a new life with new words could look like.

[ 41 : 10 ] So help us, God. we pray and we thank You in Jesus' name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at [trinitygraceathens.com](http://trinitygraceathens.com).