

It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak,¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.¹⁵ All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:13-18)

We Believe Therefore We Speak

Can you tell the difference between a person who's "real" and one who isn't? Doesn't the real person eventually show themselves, most of the time? Millennials are notorious for dismissing people they think are fake. But nobody likes to feel like the person they're talking to is just saying whatever they have to in order to fit in. And we can expect to see the real you sooner or later because of the basic principle that what's in your heart will eventually come out. It will show itself in how you treat others and in how you talk and in the choices you make. So what's in our hearts? Lots of things: love, pride, frustration, desire. St. Paul quotes the Old Testament prophet Isaiah this morning to remind us of something else that is in our hearts and that has to come out: our faith. He says something that is true for every real Christian: **We believe, therefore we speak.**

I.

Now, in this chapter, Paul is talking specifically about ministers of the gospel. In a very real way, the vast majority of ministry is about communication, so the ultimate qualification to be a pastor or teacher is faith in Christ. But serving in the church and living our Christian faith is something that God calls all Christians to do. Christian parenting, Christian witness, Christian service to our community and to each other are finally mostly about communication. We communicate Christ's love to each other. We communicate our own love and commitment to each other. That love and commitment are born from our faith. **We believe, therefore we speak. We speak about Christ to the world.**

St Paul said, **"With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence."** I'm not sure that we always understand faith today. Faith is always in something. We believe something. We trust in someone. So today, in a passage that is all about how faith leads us Christians to open our mouths and speak, Paul can't help but remind us what we believe and who we trust: we believe that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead. We trust in him and his promise that just as he raised Jesus, he will raise us, too.

That is the heart of our faith. Why? Because it's what we need above all else. The ultimate problem every human has to face is that we are dying. The other day, I got to hold a baby. She's not even six months old yet. But even though she's at the very beginning of her life, like all of us, she is dying. Now, she isn't sick and I hope and pray that she's going to live here for ninety or a hundred years. But every one of us is dying. Every day, we take a step closer to the grave. And why? Because of our sin. So much of that stuff that's in our hearts and that comes out in our words and in our actions is pure sin. It's ego and jealousy and lust. Well, God sees that sin even when we succeed in hiding it from the people around us. He condemns that sin. So we all die and left to ourselves, we would all go to hell.

But Jesus came to rescue us. He died and he paid for that sin. He didn't pay the devil. He paid God the Father. He paid the Ruler and Judge of the universe. But on the third day, God the Father reached down from heaven and raised his Son from the dead. The Judge and Ruler showed that he was satisfied with all that Jesus had suffered. He was satisfied that his perfect life paid for our sinful lives. So he wiped all record of our sins out of his database. When the time comes and death claims us, we will go to heaven. Then when Jesus comes back, God will raise us, just like he raised him. God will call us out of the grave and give us new and perfect bodies – bodies that cannot die again, bodies that will not age or be damaged or get sick. And inside those

bodies will be hearts and minds that no longer have sinful thoughts or desires. All that will come out in our words and our actions will be perfect. And we will live with Jesus in a perfect world forever.

That is what God promises us. That is what we believe. Because we do, we have to speak. A couple of weeks ago, I spoke about social media in my sermon. We had family here that weekend and my brother-in-law was kidding me about preaching against social media and then posting on Facebook from my phone. You guys know I do that. Many of you saw my posts this week about the Paul Simon concert my son took me to. Why did I do that? What makes it almost impossible even for technological dinosaurs like me to keep from posting what's going on? Why do so many of you do the same, even if you use a much more cool social media platform than Facebook? We want to share with people. That stuff that's in our heart comes out.

If we're that excited about concerts and vacations and birthday parties, how can we not be excited about Jesus? If we can't keep from sharing the blessings God gives us here in this life, how can we possibly keep silent about the eternal life that God has given us? We believe, therefore we speak. Sadly, we all have a sinful nature who doesn't want to speak. It has weapons that it uses to keep our mouths shut: mostly other stuff that's in our hearts – fear, embarrassment, lack of confidence. I know that just as well as you do. I find it just as hard to start spiritual conversations, especially with people I don't know. But the power to speak is in the gospel that gives us faith. That faith changes us. It opens our mouths. It's why I can stand up here today and remind you of God's love in Christ. It's why you can sit with children or grandchildren and read them Bible story books. And it is the power of God to enable us to reach out into the world with the good news about Jesus. Trust that power and speak!

You know what will happen? God will be praised. That's what Paul says. God was praised because his message of grace was reaching more and more people and as they came to faith, they opened their mouths, too! They praised God just as we will during this service. And they praised God by sharing their Savior with the people around them. God is with you, my friends. By his power, you can do this, too. You can praise God with your life and with your lips.

II.

Faith is inside us. It affects the way we think and what we feel about things. The more our faith grows, the more it touches every aspect of our lives. We could talk this morning about all kinds of things that Christians have to view differently, just by virtue of our faith, things like marriage and raising children and what really constitutes success. But St. Paul talks about hardship and suffering in our text this morning. **We believe therefore we speak. We measure our lives by a different standard.**

After talking about our hope of the resurrection, St. Paul says, **“Therefore we do not lose heart.”** “Therefore” is not a throw away word. Anytime you see “therefore” in the scriptures, you should ask, “What's it there for?” It's there to show us the logical conclusion. All that gospel, all that faith means that we don't lose heart. Paul continues, **“Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”** Do you ever feel like you're wasting away? Paul was talking about pastors and teachers. In his day, being a pastor or teacher was a recipe for making your life harder. It didn't pay well. And there were lots and lots of people out there willing to physically assault you or falsely accuse you of crimes. Today, it's a little different. But being the person who has to say what God says is never easy. In this sinful world, you're always going to be swimming against the current of what our society wants to believe. So people are always going to attack you.

But it isn't just we ministers that have to deal with hardship. Outwardly, we Christians waste away when people we love are dying or when our own health deteriorates and we hurt. We waste away when work is tough and our finances are in trouble. We waste away when we have family problems or when our faith is under attack by people we love. We all waste away because we live in this sin damaged world. But inwardly, we are still being renewed, day by day. Notice, Paul doesn't say that we stop wasting away. The strange reality of being a Christian is that we hurt and we rejoice at the same time. We take comfort even while our life is breaking apart. We look forward to heaven while we mourn what we lose here. Outwardly, we waste away. But inwardly, in our hearts, our faith is real. And every time we hear about Jesus and his promises of forgiveness and life and love, we are renewed. It is an ongoing process that will continue for as long as we live on this earth. But it does happen for all of us.

So Paul says, **“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”** You know, I think that if you came into my office and poured your heart out about all the

things that hurt right now – if you had tears streaming down your face as you spoke, you might not appreciate it if I called those things, “light and momentary troubles.” But that is what they are! Even the most painful things here are light compared to hell. And they are momentary compared to heaven. But that’s hard to see right now. Do your hurts and sorrows feel like “light and momentary troubles” or do you feel like you’re “wasting away”? Quite often, it’s wasting away, isn’t it? God never acts like that pain isn’t real. That’s not what Paul is saying either. Outwardly, we do waste away. But God’s promise is that we will escape from all the hurt here, that we will live in that new and perfect world forever. That promise does renew us here day by day.

And it gives us a perspective that no unbeliever can ever have. If you are an unbeliever in America today, how do you deal with death and pain and sorrow? You say that it’s not about the destination, it’s about the journey. You try to convince yourself that you’ve lived a full life and you make a bucket list of things you want to do before you die so that you will be fulfilled. You may remember a country song that was on the radio a few years ago called “Live like you were dying” – and it was all about the experiences the character in the song had when he learned he was dying. The singer us all to live like that long before we find out that we’re dying.

But you know what? That’s a fraud. There is no real peace in that because it doesn’t allow you to escape from death. It doesn’t undo the pains and sorrows and regrets you have from life. It doesn’t make you a better person or more acceptable to God. It certainly doesn’t get you out of hell. Jesus does all those things. He won eternal life for you. You are forgiven for all your sins because of him. You will live and find perfect joy and peace. That is what your life here is all about. Our light and momentary troubles achieve glory – they unite us to Jesus who suffered hell itself on the cross and now lives in glory. And when you embrace that, you find a kind of peace this world simply cannot give. Paul says, **“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”** So often, what is seen hurts. So often, it’s a lie that leads back to hell. So often, what we see here and spend our lives trying to get leaves us empty and without God. Even if you enjoy every moment of your life here, finally it ends and you have to face heaven or hell.

But what is unseen is eternal. All God’s promises are unseen. We don’t have the fulfillment yet, but it is coming. And the faith in your heart is unseen. But it grabs on to all that God has said and it changes the way we live here. It changes the way we think about life here. It is all that is real. Millennials – and the rest of us, too – want things and people that are real. Well, nothing is more fake than a world that’s dying. Nothing is more real than Jesus’ love and his work to save us. Nothing changes your life more than having faith in your heart. That faith is yours. Embrace it. Feed it. Thank God for it. And let it come out in your life and in your words until you see Jesus. Amen.