

The Power of the Spoken Word

Isaiah 55:8–11 (NKJV)

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”

Psalms 19:14 (NASB 1995)

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.”

Introduction

There was a girl who nearly gave up on herself. She was a quiet student — shy, uncertain, always sitting near the back of the classroom. One afternoon, her teacher stopped at her desk, looked at a composition she had written, and said to her quietly: “You have a remarkable mind. I hope you know that.” The girl never forgot those words. Years later, she stood in the graduation hall of Princeton University and remembered that teacher. A handful of words, spoken in a moment, changed the entire direction of her life.

Words are powerful. Every person in this room knows this from experience. We remember the words that built us up. And we remember — sometimes for decades — the words that tore us down. A kind word spoken at the right moment can open a door in a person’s soul. A harsh word spoken carelessly can leave a scar that takes years to heal.

The Bible takes the power of words with the utmost seriousness. If you were to count how many times words related to speaking appear in Scripture — words like “said,” “spoke,” “word,” “speak” — the number approaches seven thousand. That is not an accident. The Bible is, at its heart, a record of a conversation: God speaking to humanity, and humanity responding to God. The whole of Scripture is carried on words.

This morning, I want to look at three kinds of word-power. The power of God’s words toward us. The power of our words toward God. And the power of our words toward one another. Each one is extraordinary. Each one carries weight that we often underestimate.

The Power of God’s Words

Let us begin where all power begins — with God.

Isaiah 55:10–11 gives us one of the most striking images in all of Scripture. God compares His word to rain/snow falling from the sky. Rain does not fall and then drift back upward, unused and wasted. It soaks into the ground. It waters the earth. It produces seed for the farmer and bread for the table. And then God says: “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”

God never wastes His words. He sends them out to accomplish what He intends. Always. Without exception. He does not speak and wonder what will happen next. He does not hope His words will be enough. They go out, and they do what He sends them to do.

We see this first in creation. God spoke, and the universe came into being. He said, “Let there be light,” and there was light (Genesis 1:3). Stars, mountains, rivers, living creatures, human beings — all of it called into existence by spoken words. This is the meaning of the Hebrew verb ‘bara (ברא),’ to create: to bring **something** into being **out of nothing**. Only God can do that. And He does it with words.

Even Jesus, walking among us in the flesh, spoke with that same creative authority and power. He said, “Peace, be still,” to the wind and the waves, and they obeyed; there was a great calm (Mark 4:39). He spoke to the sick and they were healed. He spoke to the dead, and they rose. His word was not merely information. It was power.

This matters for how we receive Scripture. God uses the Bible to speak to us today. That’s why we call the Bible God’s Word. When you open the Bible and read God’s Word, you are not just reading historical curiosities. You are reading the living word of a God that still accomplishes what He sends it to do. He still speaks to us. He still heals us through His Word. He still sustains us through His Word. The word that created the universe is the same word that sustains our lives today (Hebrews 1:3— *Christ upholds all things by the word of His power.*)

The Power of Our Words Toward God

The second kind of word-power is perhaps the most astonishing: our words actually move God.

In the book of Numbers, the Israelites stood at the edge of the Promised Land. Twelve spies had returned. Ten of them said: “*We cannot enter. The people there are too strong. We will be devoured. We are like grasshoppers before them!*” (Numbers 13:33). Only Caleb and Joshua said: “We can do this. God is with us.” The people listened to the ten. They wept. They declared it was impossible. And God responded with words that should stop us cold: “I will

do to you the very things I heard you say” (Numbers 14:28). He gave them exactly what their words had claimed.

On the other side, consider King Hezekiah. Hezekiah fell gravely ill, and the prophet Isaiah came to him with hard news: “Put your house in order, for you will die and not recover.” But Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed. He wept and spoke to God. And before Isaiah had even left the courtyard, God sent him back with a different word: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life” (Isaiah 38:5). Hezekiah’s words moved God to action.

This is not magic, and it is not a formula. It is the reality of a covenant relationship in which God, in His grace, invites our words to matter. He listens. He hears the words of faith, and He hears the words of unbelief, and He responds to both.

This is why the words we say to God in prayer are so important. They are not merely therapeutic. They are not simply a way to process our feelings. They are real communication with a real God who responds. King David understood this. He wrote: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.” He was not asking God to overlook careless words. He was asking for the discipline to bring words worthy of the One he was speaking to.

The Power of Our Words Toward One Another

The third kind of word-power is the one we exercise dozens of times every single day: the words we speak to each other.

There is an old story of a Quaker merchant in the 19th century. He was known throughout the region as a man who never signed a contract. Not because he was evasive, but because no contract was necessary. His word was enough. When he said he would do something, it was done. People trusted his word the way they trusted a signed deed. That kind of integrity — a life where every spoken word is a kept promise — is rare. And it is powerful.

In contrast, think of the damage done by words carelessly thrown. A father who looked at his son across the dinner table and said, “You’ll never amount to anything.” Those words followed that son for years. He could still hear them in quiet moments, still fighting the voice that told him he was not enough. Words spoken in a moment of frustration became a weight carried for a lifetime.

Jesus took this seriously. He warned that calling someone a fool in contempt is a kind of spiritual violence (Matthew 5:22). The Apostle Paul put it plainly: “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29). And

again: “There must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks” (Ephesians 5:4).

The standard Paul sets is not merely “do not be cruel.” It is much higher than that. Every word out of our mouths should be good for building up — suited to the need of the moment, offered as a gift of grace to the person listening. That means we must think before we speak. We must ask: Is this word true? Is it kind? Is it needed right now? Does it serve the person I am speaking to, or only my own frustration?

We have a choice every time we open our mouths. We can speak words that heal or words that wound. Words that lift a person or words that flatten them. Words that give them something to hold onto, or words that take away what little confidence they had. That Princeton girl’s teacher chose well. We can too.

Three Things to Do with Your Words

First, hold on to the words God has spoken to you. Consider Abraham. The Lord spoke to him when he was 75 years that he would have his own son. For the next twenty-five years, Abraham waited for the fulfillment of God’s promise. He held onto those words through doubt and age and silence. And God kept every word He had spoken. The word that sustained Abraham is the same word available to you today. “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” “You are my beloved child.” Let those words be the foundation you stand on, especially on the days when nothing else feels solid.

Second, bring words to God that are worthy of Him. Make prayer a daily discipline — not a last resort. Speak to God honestly, faithfully, and expectantly. Bring your fears, your gratitude, your petitions, your praise. Hold nothing back. He hears every word, and He responds.

Third, speak words to one another that build and do not break. Be a person whose word can be trusted. Keep your promises. Thank people. Encourage the discouraged. Speak truth, but always in love. Before you say something difficult, ask yourself: am I saying this for their good or for my relief? Choose the words that leave something good behind in the listener.

Conclusion

You do not need another sermon to convince you that words are powerful. You already know it. You have felt it — on both ends of a spoken word. What matters now is what you do with that knowledge.

The question is not whether your words have power. They do. The question is whether that power is being used to honor God and to serve the people around you. Every conversation is an opportunity. Every sentence is a choice. You can leave people a little more hopeful, a little more seen, a little more loved — or you can leave them diminished.

Speak as a person who knows that God is listening. Speak as a person who knows that words last longer than the moment they are spoken. Speak as someone whose words are a reflection of the One above in whose image you are made.

Let the words of your mouth and the meditation of your heart be acceptable in His sight — today, and every day that follows.

Amen.