

Speaking with grace on our lips

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Those who feared the Lord, spoke to one another

In response to the cultural adjustment that the Lord brought to the people through the prophet Malachi, there was a group among them who feared the Lord. Mal 3:16. These were the ones who were turning in repentance and faith and were lifting their voices, by faith, for understanding so that their culture might be reformed to be consistent with the word proclaimed to them. They were being recovered to the ground of Yahweh's fellowship of offering love. The fruit of their repentance and faith was fellowship - they began to speak to one another.

Clearly there was something *different* about 'how they spoke to one another' and from 'what ground they spoke to one another' than what they'd been doing prior to the cultural adjustment. The outcome of this speaking to one another was that 'the Lord listened and heard them and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared the Lord and who meditated on His name. "They shall be Mine" says the Lord of host.' Mal 3:16-17.

Jesus described this same ground of fellowship when He said, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Matt 18:20. The word of present truth is establishing the ground of fellowship for us to meet on. Christ Himself has set the table and invites us to our personal participation as we eat and drink with Him. As we receive and believe the word, we hear the gathering invitation of fellowship to 'come' and we run to Christ for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. Heb 6:18. As we meet in this fellowship we are in the name of the Lord and He is in our midst. Prov 18:10.

The Psalmist also spoke of this restored manner of 'speaking together' when he said, 'Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; To him who orders his conduct *and conversation* aright, I will show the salvation of God'. Ps 50:23. Our conduct and our conversation is 'ordered aright' as we turn in repentance and faith to the word the presbytery is proclaiming to us at communion and as we express faith towards our daily participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This is where the grace of God is multiplied to us as resurrection life in our mortal bodies. Grace secures us in the fellowship of His offering and as we learn from Christ, grace is on our lips. Col 4:6.

Grace on our lips

It is important to know that 'grace on our lips' is not firstly referring to what we say (the content of the words) or how we say it (the tone). Grace does not enable us to try harder to do better. There will be grace on our lips because of where we say it from - a place of connection to the order of His headship which is the order of His grace. And there will be grace on our lips because we speak according to our sanctification as a son of God. This is our repentance.

When we speak from the ground of Yahweh's fellowship, His grace is multiplying so that it becomes grace on our lips. What we say will be so much more than 'the right words' spoken in the 'right tone'. Rather, it will reflect the truth of 'who we are' and will invite the other person to join the same grace-multiplying fellowship of offering love and to be 'who they are'. This is where we bring the conversation to the tree of

life. At the tree of life we offer up praise and thanksgiving; we confess that the will of God is our sanctification and is made known by offering; we prophecy, having obtained the testimony of Jesus, to build up, encourage and comfort; and we testify of our repentance and faith.

Every time the Lord speaks He is gathering us to Himself. He is calling to us come to Him, to be secured by grace and to learn from His obedience. Matt 11:28-30. If our speech is not from this ground of offering fellowship (also known as the tree of life) then what we say, however accurate we think it might be, belongs to us. That means we speak from ourselves (and not from our sanctification) while seeking an outcome that is self-centred because it benefits us. This can even happen when we desire the good of God in our marriages, our families and in our parenting. Instead of eating from the tree of life, we covet it, without relinquishing our right to sit at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The words we say and how we say them are important. But if they are not from the ground of Yahweh's fellowship, if they are not from the tree of life and expressive of our faith for daily participation, then that's all they are, our own words. And our words don't multiply life. When joined to His offering however, we find the words of eternal life.

Grace to our children

Let me give a very brief example with our parenting. When we speak with our children it needs to be from a fellowship of offering love with the intention to gather and to join them to that offering love so that they would grow in their knowing of the Father and the Son. When we speak to them we are holding fast the beauty of the name the Father has individually given them. We are teaching them how to run to Christ for refuge and to lay hold of the hope set before them. We are teaching them to refuse the naming of the world upon their lives and to choose instead the reproach of Christ and the riches of their inheritance as a son of God. We are teaching them the culture of the Father's house and to be content in the place prepared for them in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. We are teaching them to fellowship each day at the tree of life and to cease from coveting the life of God while holding fast to their own perspective. We are teaching them sanctification.

Our children will learn to be instructed and easily adjusted and to accept the necessity for discipline, because we do. They will learn that capacity to live as a son of God is found by turning in repentance every time the Lord speaks, because we do. They will learn through our example and through our steadfast continuance in the four foundations of fellowship – the apostles doctrine, the apostles fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer.

As parents, we are being delivered from our propensity to conform our children to our own law for short term peace. And we are being delivered as fathers from imposing our lazy disobedience upon them and as mothers from imposing our deception and control on to them. Thank the Lord for the deliverance and healing he has been bringing! For the life changing cultural reform He is bringing to our homes. We are fearing God and not man, just like the faithful, watchful and fearless parents of Moses. Heb 11:23.

Our devotional meditation with our children each day is being transformed as we gather and secure them in the communion fellowship that Christ our great High Priest has already ministered to us and to them. Anything other, however well intended, will provoke His jealousy. Well intended doesn't count for anything if all it does is demonstrate we were either deceived or disobedient. Every conversation with our children can be and must be with grace. Col 4:6.

Hebrews 13:5-6

Throughout this season I have been greatly encouraged and strengthened by some verses in Hebrews 13:5-6. What we read about here is both a wonderful summary of what the Lord has proclaimed to us through this season and is also a wonderful example of what it looks like when we speak with grace on our lips. Let's read these verses and then we'll walk through them looking at seven statements that are made. 'Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"'

Let your conduct be without covetousness (rather, let it be sincere)

Throughout this season, the Lord has been addressing our conduct and our conversation, the elements that describes our culture. Our entire cultural mode and our propensity to covet the life of God from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil has been addressed. We have been called to make a life changing cultural shift. Jesus Christ is the tree of life. The fruit of the tree of life is His body and blood. Our eating of Christ's flesh and our drinking of His blood occurs as we receive and believe the present truth word that is ministered to us by Christ's messengers. We could also hear this statement in Hebrews as 'let your participation in the communion be without coveting'. We can covet life at communion - hoping the blessing of the elements transfers life to us in some supernatural way instead of expressing faith for our participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

We know that we are eating at the tree of life and are not coveting *the* life when we meet the proceeding word in repentance and faith. We accept that the ground of fellowship is established for us and we need a daily provision that is not resourced from ourselves. This was Satan's deception. Coveting the life of God comes directly from the heart of Satan as an indelible part of who he is. Is 14:12-15. Having fallen from his God given place in the angelic realm, he sold his deception (coveting the life of God) to Eve in the garden as a principle that she could live by. He promised Eve that she should have the full package of life right now and not by the progressive attainment promised in the principle of the seed.

Coveting leads to discontent because it is never satisfied. It always wants something else, something more, something quicker, another season. It presses hard for answers from others when repentance is what's needed. This is in contrast to the contentment we find when we confess 'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want'. Ps 23:1. This is the confession of someone who knows where their provision for each day comes from. As they abide in Him, and He in them, they have all that they need. 1 John 4:16. They have a testimony of deliverance from coveting the life of God. They are content to wait patiently on the Lord as He lays them down in green pastures; leads them beside still waters and restores their soul. Ps 23:2-3. This is someone who is growing up in all things into Christ who is the head. Eph 4:15. They are resting in His provision for each day.

Coveting is an alternate mode to grace

Paul highlighted our propensity to covet the life of God whenever we hear Him speak in Romans chapter seven. When we hear about restored family life, who among us doesn't desire the fullness of what God is promising! But our *desire for life* is what the Lord has been addressing. We have come to understand that enthusiasm for the next thing is not repentance and it's not even faith. Our enthusiasm for the next thing is the very coveting of life we are being called to repent of. We are not replacing one thing with the next thing. We can't be the bread and cup if we haven't eaten and drunk in repentance and faith. We are to have a clear testimony of where we are being delivered from our coveting of life and what we are being delivered to. Without

repentance we don't have a ground to stand on and we are not gathered in His name. Coveting is an alternate mode to grace.

Where there is no coveting, there is contentment and sincerity. Sincerity describes our conduct and conversation when it is sourced from the wisdom from above and is by the grace of God. 2 Cor 1:12. When we speak by the grace of God, we are not the source. We are constrained to His offering by grace so that the things we say and do multiplies grace to others. Our words can be spoken in simplicity, sincerity and truth as we consider one another to stir up love and good works. Heb 10:24. In this truth there is nothing to hide and no ulterior motive.

The fruit of Eve's coveting the life of God by her own desire, was deceit. Her initiative to Adam to also eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, while well-meaning in her own eyes, was insincere. This means, while she meant well, desiring life and fruitfulness in her marriage and family, her words were not true or sourced from the tree of life but they showed that she was deceived. This principle of self-serving, self-justified speech is an aspect of fallen humanity that sits within us all. When we speak to one another we must do so from the ground of Christ's offering and the fellowship of communion. If not, the Holy Spirit resists us and prevents us from finding the life we long for, the reconciliation we long for, and the peace both of mind and relationship that we long for.

When considering the communion, the apostle Paul posed the question to the Corinthians, 'How is it when you come together?' 1 Cor 14:26. He was highlighting that when they came together for communion, there should be a participation where *each one has*. There should be no division and no one should be putting themselves ahead of anyone else. 1 Cor 11:19-20. The Lord has been asking this question of every house, 'How is it when you come together?' Is it in simplicity and godly sincerity to stir up others to love and good works? If we don't discern our participation in His suffering body, we have nothing to pour out on another and we won't recognise their sanctification.

They shall be Mine

Returning to our verses in Malachi, it is clear that 'those who feared the Lord' had turned to the apostles teaching and sought to be established on the ground the messenger had established for them. As they met one another in open hearted fellowship, meditating on His name, the Lord was with them, in their midst. He listened and heard because they had been gathered to Him; in His name. When we come on the ground of fellowship and speak by faith, He is in our midst. He is writing a book of remembrance and He is testifying saying – these are Mine!

The prophet Zephaniah described it this way, 'The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.' Zep 3:17. What a wonderful thought! The Lord rejoices over us in this season as we turn in repentance and faith and are gathered to His name.

Kids, when you respond in obedience, when you participate in family devotion and prayer, when you speak in the times of communion fellowship, when you sing, when you offer, when you accept that you are disciplined because you are loved, the Lord is there in your midst. The One who is Mighty to save, is listening to your participation, to what you are saying, and He is rejoicing over you saying, 'this one is Mine!'

Healing in His wings

It is worth noting that there was another group of people in Malachi, who heard the same word of the messenger. But instead of receiving the word as gentle rain that would bring rest and refreshing, they were caused to stumble and were ensnared as they grumbled and argued. Is 28:11-13. They also would have spoken together, but their gathering was not in the fear of the Lord, the Lord was not in their midst, and it was not the Lord's table they ate from. They did not discern the Lord's body or their participation in it and they did not discern the captivity the Lord had come to deliver them from. This is a profound blindness and hardness of heart to which Jesus said, 'if the light (of your own religious perception) within you is darkness, how great is the darkness.' Matt 6:23.

As the Lord speaks to us, addressing our culture and our participation, He is ministering grace to heal every ear that has been hard of hearing. The evidence that we have heard will be repentance, and the Lord will heal and bless our ears that now hear. Matt 13:14-16. The fruit of this healing will be fellowship because hearing, we turn, seeking a context in which to speak by the same spirit of faith. Our capacity to speak is connected to our capacity to hear. Wherever there is a hindrance to how we hear the word of God it will show in how we speak to one another. The repentant remnant in Malachi could speak together in the fear of the Lord because they feared God when they heard.

Further on in Malachi chapter four, it says, 'But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.' Mal 4:2. It was under His wings of healing that Jesus longed to gather the nation of Israel that had become hard of hearing. There is healing in every word for every lameness. But we will not know this healing, particularly to our lame spiritual hearing and the lameness that comes from coveting the life, until we are able to say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'. Matt 23:39. The healing comes as we present ourselves on the ground established by the word. It comes at the table Christ has prepared for us, as our great High Priest ministers to us our participation in His offering and sufferings.

In short, we've got to get our culture and therefore all of our conversations to the tree of life. Stop coveting life; enthusiastically moving ahead without a foundation of repentance and faith. Stop speaking from our own resources. There is a great responsibility when we speak to one another. We serve one another by speaking with grace on our lips. It is from the overflow of the heart that we both do and speak. Where the love of God is being poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit, the love of God will motivate what we do and what we say. In fact, our actions and speech will minister the life and capacity of God to others.