

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 40 (September 27-October 3, 2015)

I am probably not the only person who struggles with the sins of the tongue. For the next few weeks, we will examine this subject from God's Word.

Sunday, September 27 (Read Ephesians 4:1-6)

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:29)

I chose to print my theme verse above on the subject of the sins of the tongue even though it does not appear in today's reading. This has been my worthy goal for many years, but now I am taking it seriously enough to beg the Holy Spirit to fulfill this verse in me. My prayer is that as I set the example, others will want to follow (see 1 Corinthians 11:1). To pursue such a worthy goal, we must start at the beginning of the chapter, in order to be aware of the Scripture lessons that are taught prior to this wonderful command. You have accepted salvation as a free gift, but God now commands you "to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (v. 1). No one earns salvation by works, but you do show your faith by the life that you live. If there is a discrepancy between what you say and how you live, people will believe the latter. We will look closer at this text in tomorrow's devotion.

Monday, September 28 (reread Ephesians 4:1-6)

*Make every effort to **keep** the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:3, emphasis mine)*

We are asked to **keep**, not **create** unity because Jesus spoke it into existence in His talk with the Father that is known as the High Priestly Prayer (see John 17:23). The Lord is the only One who can "name it and claim it!" In order to accomplish this command, we must "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (v. 2). In other words, we must allow the Holy Spirit to live in our earthly bodies to direct our words and our deeds. All Christians are a part of the larger Body of Christ; therefore, none of us should think of ourselves as being superior or inferior (v. 4-6). If there is a person in your fellowship whom you cannot tolerate, drop to your knees (if you are able) and confess your sin to God. Allow yourself to see that brother/sister as **He** sees them. This will be your first step toward fulfilling v. 29.

Tuesday, September 29 (read Ephesians 4:7-10)

He who descended is the very One who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe. (Ephesians 4:10)

Having established the fact that God has created unity in His Church, Paul moves on to our role. Jesus has given **grace** to each of us (v. 7), but He has also given us **gifts** to use for His glory in the Church (v. 8). You can find most of these gifts listed in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. After Jesus ascended back into Heaven (Acts 1:9), He sent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to establish the Church on earth (Acts 2:1-13). Some teachers use today's passage to prove that Jesus **descended** into Hades before His resurrection on Sunday morning. This is probably true (see 1 Peter 3:18-22), but that is not what **this** passage is teaching. Paul is merely saying that Jesus **descended** from Heaven to earth, taking on a human body so that He could be tempted in every way that we are (see Hebrews 4:15). He died for our sins, rose again from the grave, and then **ascended** back into Heaven to sit on the right hand of God (v. 9-10). We will see more of His plan in tomorrow's devotion.

Wednesday, September 30 (read Ephesians 4:11-13)

It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers . . . (Ephesians 4:11)

The purpose of all of the workers in the Church of Jesus Christ is “to prepare God’s people for works of service” (v. 12a). While there are many gifts of the Spirit that are distributed among the members of any church, God has given special gifts to those whom He has called to preach and teach His Word. The Apostles were the leaders who walked with Jesus and established the Church while the prophets were the ones who spoke words and messages that would not be fulfilled until a later time. Today’s prophets use the written **Word of God** to warn their listeners of the perils headed their way. Evangelists are usually traveling preachers who proclaim the message of salvation all over the world. Billy Graham is the most famous evangelist of our lifetime. Sometimes, pastors and teachers are the same person. The minister, for example, must perform **both** duties to fulfill his/her calling, while a Sunday School teacher performs only one task. God’s plan is to reach the lost and grow the believers spiritually (v. 13). How is your church doing in performing His tasks?

Thursday, October 1 (read Ephesians 4:14-16)

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is Christ. (Ephesians 4:15)

Nothing frustrates me more than to have a member of my flock leave the church because he/she heard a television preacher say something that contradicts what I teach. It also happens when people allow Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormons to come into their homes and confuse them with **their** interpretation of scriptures. God wants His children to become **mature** believers so that they can no longer be led away by others, especially those seeking only to profit from the ministry (v. 14). The printed verse above was the theme verse in my former church. We can never compromise the truth of God’s Word, but we can deliver it in a loving manner, always loving the sinner while hating the sin. Jesus holds the entire ministry together as each member uses the gifts given to him/her by God (v. 16); therefore, results are left up to **s**.

Friday, October 2 (read Ephesians 3:14-19)

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ . . . (Ephesians 4:17b-18)

For the next two days, I want to show you what is **available** to those who obey the commands, such as taming the tongue (v. 29), articulated by God through the pen of Paul in chapters 4 & 5. You will see what’s in it for you if you seek to know and experience God’s love in its fullness. In today’s text, the apostle Paul **kneels** before the Father to pray that the believers in Ephesus may come to understand their God-given privileges (v. 14-15). Do you understand what Jesus has done for you (John 13:12)? Are you willing to obey the voice of your Savior? God wants you to know “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (v. 18). The Holy Spirit is ready and willing to fill you to capacity so that you can answer, “yes” to those questions (v. 19). We will see one of God’s great promises in tomorrow’s devotion.

Saturday, October 3 (read Ephesians 3:20-21)

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to power that is at work within us . . . (Ephesians 3:20)

I often quote today’s printed verse as I preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. What a promise! For me, it’s certainly worth taming the tongue in order to experience this truth. I try to teach my readers to claim the direct promises of God found in His Word, but this verse goes far beyond those. The power of God living in us in the form of the Holy Spirit “is able to do immeasurably more than all we **ask** or **imagine**” (v. 20, emphasis mine). That is why God is going to teach you what it means to live in obedience to His Spirit in chapters 4 & 5. He wants you to experience the abundant life that Jesus promises (see John 10:10). Do you want more of Him? Then get ready to obey His commands as we move into next week’s devotions!