

Ron Gannon - Witnessing Truth to Inmates

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Preacher: Ron Gannon

[0 : 00] Say that is amen. I asked Barb to pick a CD that would touch us this morning. I had no idea that that one was back there, Barb.

What a testimony. This country has been so blessed that we can only stay that way if we stay under God.

Stay under God. Well, this morning, my message is kind of, I don't know what to say. Marv talked to me Friday afternoon about doing this and really didn't have time.

I said, Marv, that's not much notice. But I said, yeah, I'll come up with something. And I was having trouble coming up with something. And I got to thinking.

I did Bible studies for jail. I worked with the jail ministry down in Clark County. And I also did prison ministry in London Prison Farm for over 20 years.

[1 : 12] So I had a lot of studies that I did for those people. They're kind of, they're shorter studies. But the idea when we went into these institutions was to talk to these men and to see if they had Christ in their life, which most did not.

And, of course, the first thing that we wanted to do was talk to them about Christ and what he did and what he could do for them.

But also, once we did that talk, and many of them did turn their lives over to Christ, and, of course, a lot of them didn't. You never know when you're talking to them.

And one of the things we found out when doing these studies with these men is the men in prison have a very hard problem trusting people. So when somebody came in with messages like this, you know, they had very difficulty trusting people.

And I had the privilege of sharing some of my visits with a man called Paul Stafford. And many of you know Paul.

[2 : 31] He's a very outspoken person. He's down to earth. He served time in prison. And he knew how to talk to these men.

He didn't take any guff from them. He didn't take any excuses from them. He laid it out on the line. He says, guys, I've been here. I know what I'm talking about.

Now, he said, listen to this man that he's going to give a study this morning. And that paved the way a lot of times to where I could go in and do a study. And the men would listen and sometimes come to me afterwards and thank me for a study that was done there.

Because they had a trust. And that trust came from a guy that was like them. And they believed that. And they trusted. So this morning what I'm going to do is I'm going to do a couple studies that I did with the men there in London.

They're kind of short studies. But matter of fact, some of them today, this one especially, is I think got a lot to come and do with what we've been seeing here lately.

[3 : 38] And I think it has a lot to do with it, matter of fact. So today I want to discuss what the Bible says about our tongue and about the words that come out of our mouth.

Turn to Matthew chapter 12, verse 34. And we read there.

You brought a vipers. Speaking of the Pharisees now. How can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out that which fills your heart.

The good man brings out of his good nature what is good. And the evil man brings out of his evil nature what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.

For by your words you will be justified. And by your words you will be condemned. That which comes out of the mouth, an expression of what is really in the heart.

[4 : 52] The Lord Jesus clearly stated that. It is really not the mouth problem. But it's the heart problem. For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

So what we have to do is get into people's hearts. Because the natural heart is what we see most of the time. All the news we see on the media and all the stuff that's happening, that's what we're seeing.

Words are like fruit. If the fruit is bad, something must be wrong with the root. And the root here is the heart. Remember when wrong and filthy words flow out of a person's mouth, he is showing everyone a picture of his heart.

Now if you'll turn to the book of James. The book of James has a great deal to say about the tongue, and especially how important it is to bridle that little member.

James devotes a good portion of chapter 3 to attack a careless and corrupt tongue. He appealed for controlled tongues and controlled thoughts. The mouth is, after all, connected to the mind.

[6 : 17] Engaging speech demands a wise source. And again, going back to that heart, the wisdom. And that's what comes out when we talk.

James first mentioned the tongue in chapter 1, verse 26, where he said, You must bridle your tongue, stop talking like you are saved, and start acting that way.

One way to start is to control your tongue. Small as it is, the tongue is powerful and all too prone to perversion. Many say that they would never commit murder, steal, commit adultery, and such.

But boy, can they rip you apart with their tongue. James thinks that this is a vital sin, for he mentions a tongue in every chapter of his book.

Excuse me. Tongue in every chapter in the book, the book of James.

[7 : 26] Verse 1, James states, Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment. Why do you think James picks on teachers here?

In Judaism, the most respected person was a religious teacher. He was called rabbi, which means a great one. Everywhere rabbi went, he was accorded the most respect.

So the honor of such a person was sought by many. But Jesus condemned those in his day who were teachers, saying that you teach the words, but you do not practice what you teach, as we saw there in Matthew.

Jesus is underscoring that all who are in a position of authority need to recognize that they are under authority also, and that the only infallible teacher is from heaven.

The officer, the office of teacher is divided, is a divinely appointed one. The Lord gives some the gift of pastors and others the gift of teaching.

[8 : 35] But James warns his readers against becoming too eager to teach others, because their responsibility is greater in this life than those who teach will be judged more strictly.

Those who teach other people have the responsibility because of what they're putting forth. And I think we can see that today, the thing that's being put forth out there in different places, and people picking up on it.

And people now are picking up on it so bad that we get groups of people conjugating and doing marches and all these kinds of things. So, yeah, what people are being taught, what people are saying, it makes a difference in this world, because people look at it, they believe it, then they start acting it out in their lives.

One good thing about being here at Grace is that Barb has always said, Hey, don't just believe what I tell you up here. Don't just say, hey, Marv said that, so it must be good, and it must be true, and it must be accurate.

No. Go home. Read those verses again that he was talking about. Decide for yourself. Is this the truth? Marv's not infallible either.

[9 : 59] I mean, Marv's a great teacher. But I'm sure he'd be first to let you know that he's capable of saying something that may not be accurate. Like every person that gets behind a pulpit, or every teacher that stands up before students, or anybody that stands up before a group of people.

What they say is very important because other people are going to take that and use it. So, know your gifts and only teach if that is the gift God is having, giving you.

So, teachers, be aware. If you teach, also practice what you teach. Be an example because that's the prime thing. If you're teaching something, can people see you tomorrow and see that same thing that you taught in your life?

That's important. You have the gift to teach. Don't shrink from your calling, but do it. So, if you have the feeling that you would like to speak or talk to people or do something in a mission, don't hesitate.

Get up there and start doing it. Is it easy? No, it's not easy. But it can happen. All you have to do if you have that desire is to get out and start doing it.

[11 : 15] If you teach, spend much time in prayer in God's word, there's no more important thing to do that if you're going to talk to a group of people or a teacher at school or a pastor behind this pulpit is to pray before he does that.

Put it in God's hands. James includes himself when he said all are, verse 2 says, For we all stumble in many ways.

If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Wow. James includes himself when he said all stumble.

Whoa, there is no argument there. We stumble in many ways, but most of all in what we say. Spiritual maturity requires a tamed tongue. A lot of our spiritual saints also had trouble with the tongue.

Job confessed his sin of the tongue in chapter 1, verse 8. Behold, I am vile. Lay your hand upon my mouth. Isaiah confessed, How many times have you caught yourself saying the things that offended God or hurt others?

[12 : 40] Once something goes out of your tongue, it can't be brought back in. And that's so important to say, too. Because sometimes we get wrapped up in a conversation, and sometimes it gets overheated, and sometimes you start spilling out stuff, and then later you say, Oh, man, if I could just bring that back.

But you can't bring it back. It's already out there. It's already out there. Well, if you haven't had that experience, you're a perfect man.

You have it all together. You're able to bridle your whole body. I doubt that any of us fall into this category, but we can mature as Christians and tame the tongue as we grow.

So, yeah, I'm not saying today that we're all perfect here and that we can control our tongue because that's in a perfect situation, a perfect, I don't know, a perfect that we're not in.

We're in a society with all kinds of people, with all kinds of personalities, and it's hard to do that. It is very difficult. But we need to try, and as maturity, as we grow in maturity as Christians, we should be able to grow in maturity in what we're saying and what we're thinking and how we talk to other people.

[14 : 07] Now, in verse 3, James submits some examples. Verse 3 says, Now, if we put the bits into the horse's mouth so that they obey us, we direct their whole body.

A horse is very large animals, over 1,000 pounds, but you control this direction by the use of a bit. So if anybody has ridden a horse out there, they know what I'm talking about.

You put that bridle on a horse, you put that bit in his mouth, and that horse is going to obey when you start pulling that bit. He's going to obey. So you can control.

A small thing, like a bit in the mouth, can control that massive horse and make him turn whichever way you want him to go. Now, if you don't know anything about horses, he goes on in verse 4, and he says, So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and it boasts great things.

No, let me go. That's not verse 4. It's verse 5, I think. Behold, the ships are also, though they are so great, and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, whenever the inclination of the pilot desires.

[15 : 25] So here, we don't see that so much today because our boats have these big, powerful motors on them and everything like that. But back in the day, back in the day when Paul was there, when he was on that ship and everything, the shipwreck and all that kind of stuff, they can control the ship by that little rudder that sticks out of the back of that ship.

And that ship that Paul was on, even during that massive storm, they were kind of controlling the ship by keeping it from going in and going into the rocks because of that rudder.

But when that rudder broke off, it was all over. The wind just took it wherever it wanted to go. So good. Again, an example of how small a thing can be so powerful.

And that's what we're talking about here today, the tongue. It's very small and it's very powerful. And again, if you don't know anything about boats, so also the tongue is a small part of the body and it yet boasts great things.

Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire. Now, folks, I think we can get behind that because if you listen to any TV this summer, you realize that the state of California was almost burned up in the forest out there.

[16:50] And it's been happening year after year and it gets worse every year, it seems like. And what usually caused those fires? Just a spark. Just a spark.

If somebody flipped out a cigarette, and what happens when you flip that cigarette and it hits the ground? Sparks fly. Somebody can drive me down the road, flip a cigarette down to the side of the road, catch some stuff on fire, and wow, we got a forest fire that lasts for months on end, which we saw this summer.

So there's so many things that we do. Sometimes they got started with campfires. You know, if you're going to have a campfire in the forest, what do you do when you're done with it?

You douse it out. Sometimes that doesn't get done correctly and just a little wind will rekindle that fire and get it going again, just from a little spark.

So the little tongue is the most active member of a body used to communicate with others. We can use it to lift others up, or we can use it to tear others down.

[18:06] The destructive power of the tongue is satanic. Every word that is unclean, untrue, angry, divisive, unkind is from Satan.

Words can break up a whole family. How many know families that have not spoken to each other for years because of what was said? In this case, the tongue has defiled every member of the family.

I don't like to say this, but I know that from a fact because as a young boy, I witnessed my family go through this because a great uncle who had a lot of money, upon his death, gave it to one person of the family.

And you know what happened? Months, years, the talk, the banter. Why would he do that? She, duh, duh, duh, duh.

The family never talked to each other. We used to have family reunions. I used to go to my aunts and uncles and stay all night on the weekends and things like that. All that just disappeared because the tongues that were in my family started beating each other up.

[19:28] And before long, you ruined the whole family. And they didn't talk for years. They didn't talk for years. So it can happen. It happens to a lot of families. And I know we all know instances of that.

The Lord said in Matthew 15, 11, It is not what enters to the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds from the mouth that defiles the man. Like James, the book of Proverbs is a very practical book and has much to say about the use and abuse of the tongue.

The first thing we want to do is to look at some of the wrong and sinful ways that the words are used. Words are powerful, and they can create close friendships, destroy friendships.

They can prompt laughter and motivate tears. Words can hurt and harm, and words can heal and help. Let us now consider some of those. What does the Lord think about the lying tongue?

Well, in Proverbs 6, verses 16, he says, A lying tongue is one of the things he hates. So God hates liars.

[20:36] I think that's pretty clear. God hates liars. Verse 22, or in chapter 12, verse 22 says, A lying lips is an abomination to the Lord.

This sin caused Ananias and Sapphara to be hurried away into eternity, as we see in Acts chapter 5. Ananias and his wife, Sapphara, they're the early Christians we see in the book of Acts.

They all came together. They were expecting the king to come. So they said, bring all your stuff together. Let's live as a community. Everything comes in for all people.

Bring all your possessions in. And then it came, the Lord let them know, let Peter know that Ananias had withheld some of the things.

And when he questioned him, and he finally came out and said, yes, I did, he said, you will die this day. And he's now bringing his wife in. And he said the same thing. And she died that day because of what she said and the lies that she committed at that point.

[21:51] So we see that the Lord takes this very seriously, don't we? So who is the liar's parent?

John 8, 44 says, you are the father, the devil, and there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of all lies.

So the father of all lies is Satan. Is Satan. Will a liar be punished? Yes, Proverbs 19, 5 says, a false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells a lie will not escape.

How will he be punished? Well, in the now, now, like today, the liars may have to pay the consequences if they're found out. However, in the future, all liars will face judgment day, just like everybody else.

And I think that will be held in account at that point. How you conducted your life, and how the truth that was in your life. Those whose lives are showing that they do not love the God of the truth, liars and deceivers hide the truth, twist in truth, and misrepresent the truth, and lead others away from the truth.

[23 : 21] What always came out of our Savior's mouth? John chapter 8, verse 46. And Jesus said to his disciples, which one of you convicts me of sin?

If I speak truth, why do you do not believe me? He was saying this to the Pharisees and all those that were about it, or around him. He said, I speak the truth. And we know that our Lord only spoke the truth.

So that's what we should be doing also. The person who is perverse or wicked in his lips is described as a fool. Now, that's not a very nice thing to say about somebody, is it?

If you go up to somebody and say, hey, you're a fool. I think we can do that because Proverbs 19.1 says, what kind of words flow out of your mouth? Corrupt words?

Improper words? Swear words? Rotten words? Do you swear and use filthy language in public, in private? Do you copy the language of your unsaved friends?

[24 : 25] Or are you a testimony to them by the words which are used, which you are, and what you do not use? So I think Proverbs 19.1 is saying, anybody that speaks like this is in actuality a fool.

And a fool is a person that they'll want to be involved with. Paul in the New Testament and his epistles, he always wrote, tells us, no corrupt or filthy communications should come out of the believer's mouth.

Don't let the garbage and the filth fly all over the place. Remember, our language reveals our heart. Filthy words come out of our heart. So all these things that are locked in there, and they come from our heart.

If our heart is not right, then what comes out is not going to be right also. Have you ever seen a person exposed like a volcano in a fit of anger?

Next time, using the weapon of soft words. Soft words quelches, angles fire. But when somebody blows up, it's hard.

[25 : 38] It's hard to do that because they go radical. And I think we've seen some of that this week. I really think a lot of those people were not, did not go there to do what they finally ended up doing.

Because the things they heard just came, and the anger and all the stuff that was there just kind of exploded in that. Excuse me, I was there, and there was nothing sent by the president that would excite a riot.

Okay. But it got started because of what other people were saying, right? Yeah. So all this comes about from the things that are being said about us, and they can grab a hold of people, and make them do things that they don't want to do.

Usually, like when he's talking about somebody that blows up, usually the angry the person gets, a lot of the words get, and a lot of the words get the angrier the person gets. And I think we can see that when we see some of these demonstrations going on.

You know, it starts out by some small talk, and it gets a little bit louder, and gets a little bit louder, and then we see the anger start happening, and then we see the destruction start to happen.

[26 : 53] It's just a cycle that gets started, and it's all because of things that people say. So general answer turns away wrath, Proverbs 15.1.

Have you ever tried the soft answer approach when talking to your loved ones, especially during times when we have difficulties with, everybody has a different opinion about something?

What do we do? Do we use the soft answer, or do sometimes we blow up and start using things, or saying things that we shouldn't be saying? So use the soft answer. I think we see that in Proverbs 15.1.

Gossip is a terrible weapon of destruction. The person who uses this weapon loves to reveal very personal and sensational facts about another person. The gossipier loves to do everything, anything except mind his own business.

And you all got to remember that when the gossip is going on, usually the person that you're gossiping about is not there. So a gossipier is a person that talks about somebody when the person is not there, and we don't want to do that.

[28 : 04] According to Proverbs 11.13, a tailbearer reveals secrets about, but he that is of a fruitful spirit conceals the matter. There are some things that we are told and that we know about that are not meant to be repeated.

There are some things that if said would hurt and harm, so keep them to yourselves. Have you ever heard someone say to you, don't tell anyone that I said this?

If it is not worth repeating, then it's probably not worth saying in the first place. In spreading gossip, sometimes the gossipier pretends that it is with great reluctance that he is speaking this to you, but he's grieved to even repeat it, but he goes ahead and repeats it.

So if you're really grieved, then why would you keep this and let it out? Just keep your mouth shut to begin with, but sometimes we don't do that. Proverbs 17.9 says, he who covers a transgression seeks love, but he repeats a matter, separates intimate friends.

Have you ever bitten someone in the back? Proverbs 25.23 says, the north wind brings forth rain and a backbiting tongue in an angry countenance.

[29 : 27] Of course, when the Bible speaks of a backbiter, it does not mean that he is in a literal sense. It means that you talk about a person in a bad way when his back is turned from you.

When the person is not present, would the backbiter dare to say those things if the person were present at that particular time? So a backbiter, somebody that spits forth things that shouldn't be coming.

Can words of gossip hurt someone? Proverbs 26.22, the words of a tailbearer are as wounds and they go down into the innermost parts of the valley.

In this case, a wound is inflected even though no blood is drawn and no outward hurt is seen. And sometimes, and you know this for yourself, if you've been hurt because of gossip or because of what somebody has said, you're wounded.

You're wounded in the heart. People can't see that and usually we put it down deep where people can't see it. But we are wounded and it hurts. There is a simple way to kill gossip.

[30 : 42] Gossip can never survive unless there is someone to listen to it. So gossip can be stopped right from the beginning if there's nobody to listen.

And how do we go about that? Well, you're sitting there and somebody said, you know what so-and-so said or you know what this, just say, no, I don't and I really don't want to know.

And you can quell that right from the start. We must be careful never to gossip, never to receive gossip from others. Don't give it out and don't take it in.

So in conclusion about speaking with the tongues, a bridle is used to control a horse and hold him back and keep him in check. That big old horse can be controlled by a small little bridle.

A man's tongue is like a wild horse but must be controlled and held back in check and restrained.

We must not let it run loose. God is the one who can help us control the tongue as we trust in him and seek to please him in all that we say.

[31 : 51] And again, the tongue, what comes out from it, what comes from the mouth, usually is an indication of what's in the heart. And we as Christians, as we grow, we can take in more of God's word and see the love and the truth that he speaks in the scriptures.

And that's, as we grow, we need to put that out so others can see it. And James 1.19 says, but everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and also slow to anger.

You know, God gave us two ears. I think he intended us to listen to people more than to speak. Because when we speak, that's when the anger comes in.

So, I think God is pretty wise. You know, I don't know why he created us like he created us with the nose and the ears and the eyes. I mean, it looks good.

But he gave us two ears. So, I think he intended us to hear what other people were saying more than us speaking to other people. So, and that's a hard lesson to learn also.

[33 : 08] A lot of times we have difficulty listening to other people. We want to put forth what we think because we think that's more important. I think God was wise when he made these kind of

statements and the apostle, when he wrote those statements and James brought them forth like he has.

So, the book of James is a good book. It's a very practical book. We've gone over it before. Today, I dealt particularly with the tongue because in every chapter, he does speak about the tongue.

So, it's a very important subject how we communicate with other people. And I think it comes forth and I think we see it every day how it doesn't come forth the right way.

All you have to do is turn on channel 2, channel 7, listen to the news. And it becomes very evident that that's exactly what's happening today.

So, that's the study that I did for the prison when I was talking about the tongues. And another thing that I taught there I want to talk about this morning has nothing to do with the tongue but it has a lot to do with transformation.

[34 : 22] And that's a very important thing too when we was in the prison ministry because transformation was what we was there for. I mean, what's the whole thing that you hear when they talk about prisons and all the numbers coming in is rehabilitation, right?

Well, rehabilitation is very difficult to accomplish especially in a prison environment because of all the attitudes and the things that come with these people when they come in.

So, a lot of times how do you deal with this? How do you transform somebody or how do you rehabilitate somebody? Well, transformation of the heart as far as what Jesus Christ can do for your life is the most thing that you can do.

So, that's one of the things that we always tried to do when we went into prison was to talk to them about being transformed. Guys, you can change from the way you were and you can become somebody different.

how do you do that? Well, number one, we talked to them about what, you are a sinner. Don't even sit there and think that you tell me that you're not a sinner, you're in prison.

[35 : 39] and they all agree. So, we're all sinners. Me, I'm sitting here talking to you this day, I'm telling you that I'm a sinner also.

And I had to come to Christ to confess those sins and he took those sins when he died there on the cross.

And once he did that, I don't have to come to him again because he took all those sins. You can't tell me he took the sins, you don't know what I've done. Yeah, I do because you just told me what you've done.

And that doesn't matter because what you've done, God will forgive you if you come to him. And that's the most important thing we could tell those guys in prison.

To get them transformed from where they were before they came in, before they went out. Because another thing we told those guys was once you leave this prison and you go back to that outside world where you were before, it's not going to be any different.

[36 : 52] so unless you're different from the heart, you might as well not go out because most likely you're going to be back in.

I'm going to tell this story. I was at London getting ready to do a study and a guy comes up and says, Ron, he says, I'm getting out of here this week. Well, congratulations. I hope what we've been talking about is going to help.

help. Oh, yes, it is going to help. That was at London at the prison farm. that Thursday, I went to the Clark County jail to do the service there.

And as the guy started coming in, guess who came in? That man. That man.

and I looked at him and I said, how can you possibly be back in jail? You just got out this weekend.

[37 : 59] Well, I was sitting at home and I was kind of lonely and I didn't want to do. I called my friend and we went down to the local bar. There you go. They have to be transformed before they leave there.

And if they can't be transformed, then there's not going to be any help for them because they come back out and they go into the same environment that they had before. So you guys, if you know the Lord, when you get out, don't go back to that environment.

Go back to another environment, which is a church. And I know you probably hate churches.

You've hated them all your life. But you're a new person now. Get involved in a church.

Get involved with people who know the Lord. Get involved with somebody that can hold you accountable and keep you accountable. Because if you go back to the old, nobody's going to hold

you accountable because they don't want to be accountable.

So that's what we do. And that's what this message was about. And I'm not going to be able to finish it because we'll run out of time, but that's okay. But we need to tell them that transformation and what it is, and it's the fact that the change in composition, structure, or character, to press or to squeeze into shape or to straighten.

[39 : 18] The Greek word for transform gives the idea of a complete change or shape or fashion, like the abrupt change in the form and habits of some animals during the transition of larvae in an adult.

And you know, that's exactly what I'm talking about. because when you accept Christ's interior life, there is a change. There's a change that happens.

And it may not be exactly like the larva and the butterfly. You don't change physically or anything like that. But people see that change. People see it because now what's coming from the heart and what's coming from the mouth is different than what it was before.

So this transformation, it's a change. It's not a physical, but it's something that's spiritual that happens to them. Transformation is much more than merely a change of outward conduct.

It is a renovation of the inner being or true self. It means our motivations and convictions are to be changed so that we want to change our outward conduct.

[40 : 28] And when those guys get to that place, when they finally realize I can change and my conduct can be different, then I think they're ready. They're ready.

And that's what we work on. So if you are to grow in Christ likeness, one of the things you must do is develop Bible based convictions. And, you know, I'm talking about the London prison and talking to prisoners, but I'm also talking to us because all of us was in this position position ourselves before we came to Christ.

What is a conviction? It's a determined belief, something that you believe so strongly that it affects the way you live. Convictions are stronger than beliefs.

A belief is what you hold, but a conviction is what holds you. You may sometimes live contrary to what you believe, but most of the time you cannot live contrary to those innermost convictions.

You just won't do it most of the time. So be careful what your convictions are. They can be good or they can be also bad. See, we want to make sure our convictions are Bible based.

[41 : 40] We want to be sure the things that are important in our life are in accordance with God and his standards. And that is so important to know.

that you have to everything that comes and all the convictions you have have to be based on God's word and on his standards. How then do we develop Bible based convictions?

Well, I think one of the best scriptures to go to is Romans chapter 12 verse 1 and verse 2.

Therefore, I urge you brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Verse 2, and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. The renewing of your mind.

[42 : 42] What was there before? Get new information to change what was in there so that you may prove that the will of God is that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

That's how we can change, be transformed. And the whole book of Romans, well, once we read verse 2, it goes into practical things that the Christian life can be.

And we've done those studies here at Grace before. So to be conformed means to be similar, identical, adapt to prevailing standards, Christ's standards, God's standards, the Bible.

Paul tells us that we have two alternatives here. Our convictions and our values will come from society around us or the world, that we see out there every day, or we'll come as our minds are renewed by the word of God.

There is no other option. We're either of the world or we're of the spirit. Which are we going to be? The writer in Psalms stated this truth in a similar fashion.

[43 : 52] Psalms 1 verses 1 through 3. How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sleep in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night.

He will be like a tree firmly planted by stream of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and his leaf does not wither, and in whatever he does, he prospers.

So again, the psalmist points out two attorneys or groups of people. First, those who are drawn under the controlling influence of the wicked, the world, the society. the more we are under this influence, the more we start to influence others in that same direction. And that's some of the things we're talking about.

It's so easy to get other people to go in that direction. This group is captive to sin. The separate group are those who delight in the law of God. Meditate on it or think about it continually.

[44 : 57] The group of people we bear fruit for God and his kingdom. They thrive on God's water. That's what we drink in every day.

Again, there's new neutral ground here. We're either influenced by the forces of the sinful world or society or we are being influenced by the word of God. And I think of anything that's been more important to this church in the 50 years as it's been here is that the word of truth go out.

That we just don't take anybody's word for it but that we sit down and we do this during the week. We read the word of God so it infiltrates us and we drink in the water. Now where do we fit in on this?

Well, that's, I don't know. Let's just say we had society here. We got the word of God here. We got a line in between.

Where do we sit? Well, most of us, we're sitting somewhere in between that. We're not over here and we're not completely over here. We're somewhere in between.

[46 : 08] And as we grow in our Christian life, I think we go more to the right than to the left because we have God's word and we mature in God's word.

But for the person who does not have God's word, he's going to stay on that left portion. He's always going to be the world and the society that's about him. But with a new life, being fed the word, we gradually go from that left side over to the right side.

And one day, we're going to be completely to the right. And what a glorious day that will be. What a glorious day that will be. So we're all somewhere on this line.

Where we are on this line is determined and what we spend our time thinking about and doing. Are you conceived by the world or are you meditating upon the word of God?

And we talk about meditating and, you know, we started the service out by reading 1 Timothy about prayer. And I think that's the most important that people of God can do and that's to pray.

[47 : 23] Especially about the things that's going on today and our society and everything. How do we pray? When do we pray? All those type things. You know, folks, it really doesn't matter.

What matters is pray. Some people think that they can't pray unless they're in solitude. If you get up in the morning at 6 o'clock and you do a 15-minute prayer study and things like that, it's great.

But you know there's also nothing wrong with, as you're driving to work, to put up a word to God. And God hears that prayer as much as he hears that prayer of the guy that's sitting on his desk by himself.

So meditate on God's word and we can do that 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Are we going to actually be doing that 24 hours a day?

No. But any time during that 24 hours, hey, we can lift up words to God. as the situation arises, we lift it up. I mean, you're talking to a friend and they say something about another friend that he's sick or he's hurting or whatever.

[48 : 30] You don't have to sit there and bow heads and join hands and all that. But you can lift it up to God. And that's not a problem. So I'm running out of time and I'm not going to be able to finish, but that's okay.

Because transformation, we need transformation. transformation. And that's what happens when we believe Christ is our Savior and he's doing that transformation, that sanctification on a day-to-day basis.

And that's all we can ask for. And we can just pray and pray that as we get more mature in Christ, that the words come from our mouth and the way we treat other people change the way we live.

So I'll close with a word of prayer. Father, we just thank you this morning for who fought you are.

Father, we thank you for this gathering this morning and for what we was able to discuss.

And we just think about the tongue and what it can do and how it can hurt people and all the things that's there. But we also think about how we can use it in the right way. And we can love people, encourage people, treat people like we would want them to treat us.

[49 : 45] And Father, we just pray that that would be in our lives. And as we leave here, that we will be able to change and do those kind of things this week. Father, we just thank you for the opportunity you give us in Christ.

We also pray for those who are being exposed to the virus because we know that the more people that get the virus, the more opportunity there is going to be for us to get exposed to it.

So guide us as a people, guide us as a church, guide Marv and Marie this week. And Father, we just thank you again for your amazing grace at the cross, for this congregation, and for your love. We ask all these things today in our Lord and Savior's name. Amen. Amen. good. Thank you.