

Speaking The Truth In Love

Reflecting God's Light in Our Heart, Thoughts, and Words

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I think we will see some great tie-ins here on all four of the messages, all three of the messages today and the messages from last week as well. So it is always really exciting.

Sharon and I were recently in Bordeaux, France and visited some famous monuments along the Port de la Lune, translated Port of the Moon. It is named this because of the shape of the Garonne River that crosses the city there. And we were just across from that famous courtyard (you have probably seen pictures of this), in the Fountain of the Three Graces where we came to the Miroir d'Ile or Water Mirror, the most photographed spot in all of Bordeaux, although I must say I prefer the vineyards and the chateaus.

Now here at the Water Mirror, water is stored underground so they can cool, and it is periodically pumped up to the surface and spread less than two centimeters deep across a massive 37,000 square foot slab of granite and it forms an absolute perfect reflection pool. Now you could Google it and see many, many mirror-like images of the sunlit monuments that reflect in the still water.

This brings to mind Proverbs 27, verse 19. Still water and mirrors reflect light by bouncing it off their surface. This is called specular reflection, where rays of light are reflected at the same angle they hit the surface.

The Water Mirror was designed to perfectly reflect images, but only when it is not hot enough to attract all those young and old children splashing around in there to keep cool because they create a lot of ripples in that water which distorts the reflection. And that can kind of tie in here to this message.

Proverbs 27:19 As in water, face reflects face, so a man's heart reveals the man.

Solomon here is comparing our heart to smooth water or a mirror that literally reflects an image back and out to God, and out to each other. In I Samuel 16:7, we read, "For the Lord does not see as a man sees, but the Lord looks at the heart." Psalm 139:23-24 reads, "Search me, O God, and know my heart and see if there is any wicked way in me."

We could jot down several more, Jeremiah 17:10; Psalm 7:9; Luke 16:5; Revelation 2:23. These all confirm that God looks right into our hearts and there is no fooling God. We can fool each other, right? But we cannot fool God.

He sees our heart and He knows it.

Now, let us reflect (pun intended) as God looks at our heart right this very minute. What image is reflected back to Him? Turn with me to Romans 8. Now, as you are turning, I will read Genesis 1:26-27, "Let Us make man in Our image. . . . God created man in His own image."

We all know these memory scriptures.

Romans 8:28-29 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

We are being created in God's image and to the image of His Son, but none of us, even on our best day, is a perfect reflection of God and His light. We must be transformed to overcome the natural distortion, the ripples of darkness from our carnality and prideful, selfish hearts. We could tie this right into Richard's sermon series on the "The Christian Paradox."

Our process of sanctification is a cleansing, transforming process where gradually, each and every day, our image is transformed through God's Holy Spirit to look more and more like His Son. Remember, a reflection is simply a reflection of light. Darkness cannot reflect.

And we can see the beautiful metaphor here of God's light in the Bible, can we not? John 8:12; 9:5; Matthew 5:14 and 16. Jesus Christ is the light of this

world, and we are called to reflect His light back to Him and out to each other. Psalm 119:105 and 130, we could also add: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and light to my path. . . . The entrance of your words gives light.”

God's words provide light and reflect the image and the very character of God to us. And we are to reflect it back to Him. Jesus Christ is an absolute perfect reflection of God the Father, of God's light.

Please turn with me to II Corinthians 4. And while you are turning, I am going to highlight just a few more that emphasize this fact.

In Colossians 1:15, “He is the image of the invisible God.” We read in Hebrews 1:3, “He is the radiance of God's glory and exact representation of His being.” It reads in John 14:9, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”

Jesus Christ and the Father are one. They are a perfect reflection of each other. And that is what we are called to become, a perfect reflection of Jesus Christ.

In II Corinthians 4:4, Paul warns, the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God does not shine on those who are blinded by the darkness of Satan. Darkness does not reflect God's image, brethren. Darkness *cannot* reflect God's image.

II Corinthians 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So we are created in God's perfect image, but this world has tarnished us and distorted that image through a darkness of carnality and self-seeking prideful flesh, we could say. Right now, as God looks at each and every one of our hearts, what image is being reflected back to Him? Think on that.

Back one book now to I Corinthians 13, as we tie into brother Clyde's message from last week on the identifying sign of a true disciple of Jesus, which is love. Now, after describing what love is and what love is not in

verses 9 and 10, Paul goes on to explain that we are all still learning and growing to become like Jesus Christ. We are still spiritually immature, he says.

Our image is incomplete, and we need to wake up and we need to put away childish things, he says, and grow into God's holy image, which is love.

I Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

The childish things Paul is referring to here are childish words that go against the very definition of love provided in the prior verses. What does an immature child do when someone calls them a name? “You're a stupid head!” “Well, you're a stupider head!” “Well, you're the stupidest head!” “Well, you're stupider, it's your head!”

I mean, it is childish, but how many times do we see brethren, spiritual children of God acting childish in this way, retaliating, instead of just putting away the childish things and letting it go? We heard from Ted about this earlier. God tells us we cannot overcome evil with evil. Why does conflict exist in God's church? Because we are still immature spiritual children who cannot take Ryan's advice from last week to just let things go.

And Ted's advice this week as well, let things go. Reading on,

I Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Can we see the transformation process of our image becoming and growing more like our great God? As we spiritually mature with humility, we can see God's image and His light in our heart more clearly. Fellow Family members, just as the Word of God reveals His marvelous light that reflects His holy image, so too our words reflect our heart's image out to each other and out and back to God.

If our words reflect God's light and love, then our image is conforming to being like God.

Let us tie this to Jesus' instruction in the book of Matthew, the 12th chapter. We are going to pick up the dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees after the Pharisees speak words that accuse Him of healing through Satan's power. And wow, does Jesus bring a stern warning on the importance of our words here.

Matthew 12:30 “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”

Words are very important to God.

We see some clear criteria here. God's spoken words produce good fruit that gather, but Satan's words produce bad fruit that scatters. A review of God's Holy Spirit detailed in Galatians 5 confirms the same.

Words spoken in the image of God's Spirit gather and create peace. This is the foot-washing attitude that we heard from Ted. Whereas words spoken from Satan's prideful spirit will scatter.

When we shine God's light in His words, the result is we gather, we bring together, we build up God's Family. But when we reflect Satan's evil spirit, words of self-seeking, words that put others down, words that are harsh and corrective, we create conflict, we divide. Remember, the reflection of an image is based solely on light.

Darkness cannot reflect. And we could tie this to I John 1:5, “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

The words we speak reveal what is truly in our hearts. You see, the motive or the intent of our words we speak is as important as the words themselves. If the motive is selfless—spoken to gather, encourage, promote—they are of God's light.

But if the motive is selfish and spoken to exalt, condemn, correct, and scatter, they are dark. Even words that are technically true can be spoken in darkness and scatter, brethren.

Let us read Matthew 12, verses 33 through 37 as we tie back remembering Proverbs 27:19 and the reflection of our heart back to God and now to each other as we grow in His image.

Matthew 12:33 “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.”

The word translated bad for both tree and fruit is *Strong's*, *sapros*, meaning rotten, worthless, bad.

Matthew 12:34 “Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

We can tie this right back to Proverbs 27:19.

When God looks on our heart, what image is reflected back to Him? Our words reflect what is in our hearts. Do our thoughts and our words reflect a pure heart of light that gather?

Matthew 12:35 “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bring forth evil things.”

Matthew uses a word here, *poneros*, *Strong's* #4190 translated evil here four times in these two scriptures, meaning hurtful, diseased, very similar to rotten, vicious, malicious, wicked. Our words reveal the image of our hearts. And when our words about anyone else are negative, hurtful, malicious, this is rotten fruit.

This reveals a darkness in our heart that is influenced by Satan. Dark, negative words cannot reflect God's light, brethren.

Matthew 12:36 “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.”

Words are very important to God. It is how He communicates to us and how we communicate to Him and each other. We will give account of *every word* we speak and whether or not that word built up and gathered or whether or not that word scattered and tore down God's Family.

Our words are merely a reflection, a mirror image of what is in our hearts. Out of the abundance of our heart our mouth speaks; and a good tree produces no bad fruit. When we speak negative words about someone else to anyone—it could be our spouse, could be a family member, a friend—those words never reflect God's image.

They are dark, they are rotten fruit. There is no good that comes from these words. Think about this.

I love raspberries and I am sure you have a favorite fruit, but what happens if I have a package of raspberries and even one of them has a little spot of mold on it? I kid you not, it is a day later and the whole stupid package is rotten. And that is exactly what happens with rotten words. We speak them and they defile everyone that hears them.

They cannot be unheard. They taint that other person in that person's eyes and it cannot be undone, it is rotten. And that is why God despises those words, brethren.

The best way to teach our children to be like Satan is to speak evil of others in front of them. Multiple generations of families can be killed spiritually by careless, reckless, negative words about someone else that plants Satan's seeds of darkness into their minds. In fact, Satan's primary weapon of spiritual mass destruction is our spoken words.

Satan encourages us to speak evil by throwing his fiery darts into our mind, into our heart. And that is where it starts. Thoughts about something they did or said. Thoughts about something they did not do. Thoughts of envy or jealousy, the list goes on and on. But when we think badly about someone else in the Body of Christ, that is not God's Spirit, brethren.

That is Satan's spirit, and we need to recognize it and we need to stop it and extinguish it out. Ask for God's help to rebuke Satan from us. When we think badly about someone else, eventually Satan convinces us that words of darkness are only trying to help God and others see evil in someone else.

He convinces us that we are doing God's labor by speaking evil about others. How awful is that? He actually convinces us that, oh, it is okay for us to have this conversation because we are just talking about the truth. We are talking about the fact that this person has a problem over there.

It is evil, it is dark. God hates it. Satan will convince us that our harsh words are spoken out of love to correct someone, to try to save them.

But that is not the way God's Spirit works. It is *never* God's will for us to think badly or speak badly of anyone else to anyone else. This is just blatant sin.

And we are just as guilty, by the way, if we participate. If we just sit there and listen to the negative words or gossip about someone else, we are just like that fruit that gets defiled by that moldy fruit. It impacts us.

When we hear negative words about someone else, we need to take action to say something like, "Yes, it's unfortunate to see others' mistakes, but I know that God uses those mistakes to often teach us lessons of things that we need to learn, of the many, many, many, many mistakes that I make, that we make each and every day that we can't see yet. And well, just be glad you don't have my sins." That will shut that conversation down faster than anything.

Satan will urge us to feel justified that we are doing God's work, speaking the truth. He will make us feel justified to critique a speaker on a message. Now, we can certainly have a positive conversation about a message in the

spirit of seeking to understand, but as soon as we engage with someone else in a conversation about another speaker's message that is putting a speaker down, their style down, or a message down, that is not God's Spirit, brethren.

If we truly want to help them and help build up the church, we take any concern directly to them and only to them, and if they did not listen and it was that big a deal to us, we would then take it to the ministry and put it in their hands.

Our words reveal what is in our heart, but it is not just our spoken words, but all our communication that reflects the image of our heart back to God and out to each other. Our facial expressions communicate and reflect either Satan's darkness or kindness in God's light with a smile.

Think about it. Does an angry face gather or scatter? Even our non-communication reflects what is in our hearts. If we have God's light and love in our hearts, we communicate affectionately and effectively to all our brethren, we exclude no one.

And let us not forget written words on social media. Wow, talk about revealing what is in our prideful, selfish hearts! How many brethren reveal their spiritual immaturity through childish words that scatter and create publicly visible conflict and correction on social media? You know, the next time we go to post something, we would be wise to add a disclaimer. Something like this. "What I am about to post is likely further evidence of my spiritual immaturity and self-seeking pride that does not reflect the image of God's light." I know it sounds funny, brethren, but this is serious business.

Reading on now, verse 37, from Matthew 12,

Matthew 12:37 "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Now over to Ephesians 4 and we are going to read our cornerstone scripture.

Ephesians 4:15 But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.

Now some use Ephesians 4:15 as a justification for the need to speak the truth in love, even if it hurts. We have a common saying, even, that encourages this: “The truth hurts.” But brethren, we cannot just speak the truth without loving concern on what fruit it will produce. Make no mistake, when we lie, it is always a sin.

But we can just as easily speak the truth in sin at the same time if our words of truth are spoken in pride to show off, spoken to confront, spoken to gossip, spoken to overstep our authority, or correct others publicly. Our ordained ministers have the sole responsibility and accountability to preach the fire and brimstone and correct wrongful behavior.

Now as we examine the context of Paul's words in Ephesians 4 here, we are going to see the true meaning of this scripture on speaking the truth in love.

The first clue is the title of the chapter. It is subtitled, Unity in the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:1-3 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

When we walk worthy of our calling with a foot-washing attitude, I could add, in lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, our words will always gather and build unity and peace. Paul continues in Ephesians 4:4-11, explaining we are called to one body and one Spirit, and one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in you all.

We are all given a different measure of His Spirit and God's grace, and we are called into different roles. All of this for what? Let us pick up verse 12 now.

Ephesians 4:12 For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry [or service], for the edifying of the body of Christ.

All of us are called because God chose individually each and every one of us, and He put us here. This is exactly where He wants us, brethren. He has given us different gifts, He has given us different roles, but we are being equipped for one single purpose.

What is that purpose? The edifying and building up of the Body of Christ. Tying back to Matthew 12:30, we are called to be with Him in gathering together His people and building us up into His holy image.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

We are all here on the same path of spiritual maturing to reflect from our hearts the fullness of Christ's image.

Ephesians 4:14 That we should no longer be children [here is a reference to spiritual immaturity], tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.

Again, tying back to I Corinthians 13, what do children do when someone says something bad about them? They act like children. They say spiteful words back. They actually go to the entire class and try to build up a coalition against that other child sometimes.

If someone said something we did not like, we must forgive, forget. We must never retaliate or worse yet, spread the words and attempt to turn others against them. Proverbs 6:19 has a very, very stern warning here. Brethren, God hates a lot of things, but the thing He hates the most is “sowing discord among brethren.”

How do we sow discord? We spread negative words. We build up a coalition against other people. This is evil.

Paul is saying, stop acting like children with your negative words about others. Stop trying to one-up or correct each other. With this context, let us read Ephesians 4, verse 15 again.

Ephesians 4:15-16 But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does it share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Let us skip towards the end here and pick up in verse 29 now.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth. Corrupt, *Strong's sapos*. Same word we looked at earlier meaning rotten, worthless, bad. This is the same word used eight times in the New Testament in the *New King James*, once here by Paul to describe corrupt words and the other seven times by Jesus Christ Himself to describe the rotten fruit from a bad tree found in Matthew 7 and 12, and Luke 6, and then once in Matthew 13 to describe the corrupt that are actually thrown out and cast into the fire at the end time.

This is serious business, brethren. As Jesus explains, a good tree produces no bad fruit, no bad, rotten, corrupt words that scatter. A good tree produces good fruit that gathers and creates peace.

Speaking just the truth is not enough. We must speak the truth *in love* and not let a single word, a single corrupt, negative word about someone else ever come out of our mouth. We must only speak what is good for edifying and building up the body of Christ.

We could tie this to,

Proverbs 11:9 The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor.

Proverbs 12:18 There is one who speaks like the piercing of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health. [It builds up.]

Finishing this chapter now in,

Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Over now to II Corinthians 3, where we will conclude in just a minute.

When God looks at the reflection of our heart, does He see the fullness of Jesus Christ's light in our heart? Are we kind, tenderhearted, forgiving?

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Remember, only light can reflect. As in water, face reflects face. So a man's heart reveals the man.

God sees our hearts, and He is looking in each and every one of our hearts to see our growth to become more and more conformed to His holy image, to the fullness of Jesus Christ's light. As James in chapter 3 admonishes, we must bridle our tongues so that we do not deceive our own heart and render our religion useless. For out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing, and this ought not be so. For the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

It is out of the abundance of our hearts that our mouth speaks, brethren. Our communication to each other reveals what is in our hearts. We must put away childish communication and speak the truth in love, to speak words that build up, that edify and gather.

As we complete our walk to Pentecost, let us work harder to do our part, to reflect the fullness of Jesus Christ's light in our life, in our hearts, in our

thoughts, and in all our communication. Let us follow Paul's admonition in Titus 3:2, “to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.”