

# Knowing God in the Word

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. Philippians 3:10.

## The Privilege of Speaking

In II Timothy 4:2, Paul writes to Timothy, *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season.”* I like the way the old King James puts it “Be instant.” It is as if you are ready at any instant to preach the word of God to those who need to hear it.

I wonder if we ever think of the privilege it is not only to hear the Word of God but also to preach it! A few years back I was visiting my great aunt with my parents. She recently had had a debilitating stroke and was in a nursing home. As my mom visited with her aunt, I was just sort of standing looking around the nursing home when all of a sudden a woman in a wheelchair came up to me. She seemed greatly agitated about something, and started waving her finger in front of me, pointing at me. It quickly became obvious to me that this woman had had a stroke, and that it had affected that part of her brain that converted her thoughts into speech. She seemed still as sharp as ever, and she definitely had something in mind that she wanted to say to me, but her brain just wouldn't give her the words to make plain her thoughts. She was trying to get words out, but could only speak nonsense phrases. Yet she was intently waving her finger in front of me, and I quickly realized that she must be pointing at my shirt. I looked down at it, and remembered that I was wearing that day a Northern Grace Youth Camp shirt that boldly read, “Discovering God's Word.” She was waving her finger in front of those words, and so I realized that she was trying to tell me something about what it said.

I talked with her and tried to figure out what had her so excited. My first thought was that perhaps she needed to come to the Lord, and so I asked her if she realized and believed that the Lord Jesus had died for her sins and rose again so that she could be saved. Yes, yes, she knew all about that. Well, then I was stumped as to what exactly she was trying to tell me. She obviously had something very definite in mind, but just couldn't get her brain to come out with the words to express it. The most she could seem to say that I could even remotely understand was “They just keep walking around,” gesturing to the other residents of the nursing home who were gathered all around us. The rest of what she said, though, seemed to be only nonsense to me, and try as I might, I couldn't understand it. Finally I had to leave the nursing home without having figured out what it was that she was trying to tell me.

It was only later as I thought over the woman's words and actions that it occurred to me what it might have been that she was trying to tell me. I imagined this woman as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, secure in the hope that she had in Him for a new life and a resurrection body to replace the old, broken down flesh she lived in now. And yet I imagined her daily surrounded by these people in the nursing home, many of whom were in sad physical shape and none of whom had any hope of ever recovering and getting out of that place for the elderly and infirm. And I imagined her wanting to share with these sad, hopeless people the hope and life that can be found in Jesus Christ. And yet she could not speak it! Her brain had failed her, and would not give her the words she so desperately wanted to speak to witness to her fellow residents in this nursing home. Imagine how frustrating that must have been to her...to have the words of life and hope that could sustain her through her physical infirmities, and yet to not be able to share those things with the depressed and needy people around her! No wonder she had become so agitated when she saw those words on my shirt. She was hoping that I could tell those hopeless people the crucial truths that she could not.

You know, when I think about that woman, I can't help but think about all the times I've had the opportunity to speak those same words of life to people around me and yet I have not done it. What are the excuses I've used? Perhaps that they don't want to hear those words. Perhaps that someone else might speak it to them. Perhaps that I simply don't want to appear foolish to them or to have them ridicule me. Yet if I wished, how easy it would be for me to simply form those words in my mind and speak them to the needy around me. And yet so often I do not. And then I think of this woman, so desperately wanting to speak those words, and yet no longer able to because her body will no longer allow her. What a sad thing! Not just what happened to this woman, but the fact that I still have the privilege and the ability to do what she could not do and yet so wanted to, and yet I do not take advantage of that privilege.

In Ephesians 6:18-20, Paul says, *"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints---and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."* As I read through the stories in the book of Acts, it seems to me that Paul is one of the bravest men I've ever heard of. His boldness in preaching, his willingness to stand up to trouble and persecution, and his dedication to the Lord and His truth seem to be unequalled either in Scripture or in my own experience. Yet here in Ephesians we read of him asking Timothy to pray for him, that he will open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel as he ought to. So we see that Paul, this one we often think of as this great, bold speaker, asked for prayer that he might speak the Word of God as he ought to speak it! And so this gives me hope as well. If Paul was willing to admit that he needed prayer to have boldness, then I don't need to be ashamed to admit that I need that same prayer as well. Yet I hope that each one of us will admit our need for this, and will grow bolder in our desire to speak the words of Christ to the needy around us.

We often think about the privilege it is to have and to be able to read the Word of God. We realize that there have been many down through history and that there are many even today who do not have that privilege. Yet have we ever thought about the privilege it is to be able to SPEAK the Word of God? To just open our mouths and tell others about the truth? It is a great privilege that we have been given, and one that we may not have forever. Let us take advantage of this blessing while we can, even as we are thankful to the Lord that we have the privilege to know these words and speak them.

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