

When revival broke out in Jerusalem, an angel spoke to the apostle Philip. He instructed him to go to the Gaza desert, and there Philip met an Ethiopian diplomat riding in a chariot. The man was reading aloud from the book of Isaiah. So Philip asked the official, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” (ACTS 8:30).

Apparently, the diplomat was stuck on a passage that baffled him. The passage was **Isaiah 53:9-11**: “*He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.*”

Up to that passage, the diplomat must have been thrilled to read Isaiah’s prophecy. It described a man to come who would swallow up death, wipe away all tears, and take away the reproach of His people. He would remove the darkness from the blind, bring captives out of their prisons, and deliver people from pits and dungeons. Finally, this man would redeem a people unto Himself, leading them on a path unknown to them. And He would be a covenant to those people, leading them to springs of living water.

According to Isaiah, this man to come would have the government upon His shoulders. And He would establish an everlasting kingdom, one that would never pass away. Kings would revere Him, and princes would rise up to worship Him. He would be a light to the Gentiles, bringing salvation to all corners of the world. **And He would be an everlasting Saviour.**

# Who Shall Prolong His Days?

## A Message About the Cleansing of the Mouth, the Ears, the Eyes

Try to imagine the Ethiopian’s excitement as he read these wonderful things. **Evidently, this diplomat was hungry for God, or he wouldn’t have been reading the Scriptures.** And now Isaiah’s prophecy revealed the coming of an eternal King. With every revelation, the diplomat’s thoughts must have mounted: “Who is this wonderful man?”

Yet he had just been reading about the coming man’s glory and greatness when he stumbled on Isaiah’s baffling words: “*Who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living*” (ISA 53:8). “*In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth...*” (ACTS 8:33). Finally, the diplomat read a verse that seemed to contradict these things: “*He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*” (ISAIAH 53:10).

This was all so bewildering. The Ethiopian turned to Philip and asked, “*How can I [understand], except some man should guide me?*” (ACTS 8:31). Here was what troubled him: “How can a dead man see his children? And how can he prolong his days on earth? Isaiah says this man will be cut off, killed and buried. How could he possibly carry out his Father’s good pleasure

then? How would his generation be declared to the world?”

It may be helpful to ask what is meant by the phrase, “*Who shall declare his generation?*” (ACTS 8:33). The Greek meaning comes from a root word signifying “to channel an act”. In other words: “Who will fully relate this man and all His actions? Who will show forth to the world everything He was about? Who will keep His remembrance alive?”

At that point, Philip began to open the Ethiopian’s eyes. First, “*Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus...*” (ACTS 8:35). Philip explained to the diplomat, “The man you’re reading about has already come. His Name is Jesus of Nazareth, and He’s the Messiah.”

Next, Philip explained **Isaiah 53:11**: “*He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.*” Philip told the diplomat, in essence, “Christ’s travail was the Crucifixion. That’s when He was cut off and buried. But the Father raised Him from the dead. And now He’s alive in glory. Everyone who confesses His Name and believes on Him becomes His child. Indeed, Christ’s seed lives in every nation. That’s how His life is prolonged, through the Holy Spirit in His children. Now you can be His child, too.”

What incredible news to the Ethiopian's ears. It's no wonder he was eager to leap out of his chariot and be baptized. *"He answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."* (ACTS 8:37-38).

**The question for us is, how is the life of Christ prolonged in our generation?**

I have to ask myself: "How do I prolong the life of Christ? Is my own life a full expression of who He is? Am I truly a channel through which Jesus' life is lived out? Does my walk reveal Him to be alive and at work today?" To answer these questions, I must also ask: do I take seriously the prophecy in Isaiah 53? Can I honestly say I'm Christ's seed, and that He's satisfied by what He sees in me?

When we talk about prolonging the life of Christ, we're referring to His life-flow in us. How do we maintain that flow, so that Jesus' witness may be extended through us?

Consider **Proverbs 4:23**: *"With all watchfulness guard your heart, for out of it are the issues of life"* (original Hebrew). I preach extensively about the need to pray, fast and study the Scriptures. I also plead with God for a deeper hunger to seek Him, a closer walk with Him, and a greater passion for Jesus. But Proverbs tells us we must reckon with even deeper issues than these. **This verse speaks of heart issues, hidden, secret things that determine the life-flow that comes out of us.**

You see, even if I pray longer hours, fast more often and read the Bible more diligently, **I can still be defiled in my mind.** There can be roadblocks in my heart that hinder the flow of Christ's life in me. And I can become so defiled that I shut off all but a trickle of that life. Then I'll be hindered from prolonging His life, from fully declaring His generation.

Jesus tells us clearly what defiles a person: *"Hear, and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."* (MATT 15:10-11). What are these issues of the heart? What

are the ways that pollute first our inner man, then our entire being?

The Bible points to three issues: a defiled mouth, defiled ears and defiled eyes. As servants of the Lord, we can't allow anything to hinder the flow of Christ's life in us. If I am His seed – chosen to proclaim His generation, to channel His resurrection life through my walk – then I have to rule my heart and actions by His Word. And if any part of my inner man is defiled – my mouth, ears or eyes – my outward life and testimony will be hindered.

**1. A Defiled Mouth**

Once again, we return to Isaiah 53 for a picture of who Christ is and what He's about. This chapter says of Him, *"Neither was any deceit in his mouth."* (ISA 53:9).

How do we show forth Christ in this particular issue of the heart? The question is addressed in both Testaments. James warns the church, *"The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."* (JAS 3:6).

We read a similar warning in Isaiah: *"Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity."* (ISA 58:9). The Hebrew meaning of vanity here signifies rudeness, irreverence, disrespect.

Isaiah is making an astounding statement. The very reason we pray, fast and study God's Word is to be heard in heaven. But the Lord attaches a big "if" to this. He declares, "If you want me to hear you on high, then you have to look at your issues of the heart. Yes, I will hear you – if you quit pointing a finger at others, if you stop speaking about them disrespectfully."

It's a great sin in God's eyes for us to speak in ways that tarnish someone else's reputation. Proverbs tells us, *"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold..."* (PROV 22:1). A good reputation is a treasure that's carefully built up over time. Yet I

can quickly destroy anyone's treasure with a single defaming word from my mouth.

Now, we wouldn't dare rob somebody of his gold watch or bank account. Yet God states clearly that slandering someone's name is robbery of the worst kind. And we can do it in the subtlest of ways: by pointing an accusing finger, questioning his character, passing on tidbits of gossip. Indeed, three of the most damning words we can speak are, "Have you heard?" **The mere suggestion of the question robs a person of something valuable. And it defiles our own mouth.**

Many in God's house have taken His Word lightly on this matter. **Psalm 50** spells out both the sin of defiling the mouth and its consequences:

*"Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."* (PSALM 50:19-23).

So, why do we do it? Why don't we fear and reverence God's Word on this matter? Why do we so easily speak of others with vain words? Why do we continue to use words carelessly, with an uncontrolled tongue? This Psalm tells us why: *"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."*

Simply put, we make God out to be like ourselves. We bend and conform His Word to reflect our own tendency to judge the outward person. And we ignore God's ways of considering the hidden, deeper issues of a person's heart.

Now the Lord is telling us, here in Psalm 50, "I'm going to reprove you, because I want you to set this matter in order. You have to see your defilement the way I do: as wicked and evil, a serious danger to your soul."

As a minister of the Lord, I want Christ's life to flow out of my

preaching. And as a husband, father and grandfather, I want it to flow out of me freely to my family. Therefore, the fountainhead of Christ's life in me can't be polluted. I can't allow any poison in the spring, or any roadblocks to hinder its free flow in me.

**But I have to make this a conscious decision on my part.** I have to cry out to the Holy Spirit continually, "Lord, convict me each time I defile myself." David made this kind of determination. He wrote, "*I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress...*" (PSALM 17:3). "*Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.*" (PSALM 141:3).

You may wonder, "Is it really possible to control the tongue, to purpose not to sin with the mouth?" David answers with this testimony: "*I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.*" (PSALM 39:1). He's saying, in essence, "Every time I mount a horse, I have to put a bridle in its mouth. And as surely as I do that with my horse, I have to do it with my tongue."

## 2. Defiled Ears

How do I proclaim Jesus' generation in regard to this issue? How do I prolong His life when it comes to keeping my ears from defilement?

Again, Isaiah speaks of Christ's example: "*The LORD God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The LORD God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back...*" (ISAIAH 50:4-5).

Note the last verse: Jesus was awakened every morning by the Holy Ghost. **And the Spirit attuned his ear to hear the Word of his Father.** When Christ testifies, "I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." He's saying, "When I was on earth, I was taught what I should say, do and hear. And I never turned away from it." **According to Paul, Jesus learned obedience through His sufferings.** Now Christ is saying, "Whatever the Father said for me to do, I took it on. I received His

Word, no matter what the consequences."

Beloved, I need this kind of spiritual wake-up call every day. I have to have a reminder from the Holy Spirit, "David, close your ears to all slander, gossip and filth. Keep yourself from being defiled."

Jesus' own disciples had defiled ears. On one occasion, He told them, "*Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.*" (LK 9:44). He was saying, in other words, "Pay close attention, because I'm about to give you an important revelation. I'm going to be crucified. Now, let that sink deep into your ears. It's something you need to know."

Jesus had never been this emphatic with His disciples. He had never said, "Let these words sink in with you. If you've ever heard anything I've said, listen now." So, how did they react to this? Scripture says, "*They understood not this saying...*" (LK 9:45). Why couldn't they hear what their master was telling them? Their ears had been defiled by self-interest. Immediately we read, "*There arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.*" (LK 9:46).

Here is proof positive that defiled ears can't receive the deeper revelations of God's Word. These men couldn't hear Jesus' voice, even as He stood before them in the flesh, speaking to them plainly. Instead, Scripture says, "*It was hid from them, that they perceived it not.*" (LK 9:45). I have to wonder: would the disciples' experience at the Crucifixion have been different if they'd been able to hear Jesus? Would they still have run as they did? Or would they have reacted differently?

The truth is, anyone who's engrossed in his own interests can't see that fact about himself. And if he did, he wouldn't admit to it. That's why the disciples couldn't hear what Jesus was telling them. **They were so self-centered, so bent on boasting on themselves, they couldn't hear the voice of Christ, or of any godly person.**

I didn't realize how guilty I was of this awful sin until my recent preaching trip to the British Isles. My son, Gary, and I were being driven to a preaching event by a

pastor. He politely asked how our meetings had been going. When I tried to answer, however, he interrupted me to talk about his own preaching. This happened several times. Each time, he "one-upped" me, with stories of having bigger crowds and visiting more countries than I had.

Finally, I was so upset, I just shut up and let him talk. At one point, I looked at Gary and rolled my eyes. I thought, "How boastful. This preacher is a nonstop talker."

**Then I felt the nudge of the Holy Spirit.** He whispered to me, "Think about why you're upset, David. It's because this man isn't listening to you. You wanted to do the talking. And now that you're hearing his stories, you want to boast about your own ministry. You may have stopped talking, but you have a boastful spirit in your heart."

**What's more, I had defiled my mouth. Notice that I didn't speak anything terrible about this man. In fact, I hadn't said a single word about him. Yet, by merely rolling my eyes, I had slandered him to my son.**

I can speak about holiness, I can expose society's sins, I can preach on the victory of the New Covenant. But if I allow my ears to be defiled – if I shut out another person by focusing on my own interests, if I can't listen to him with respect – **then the life of Christ isn't prolonged in me.** I'm no longer leading a life that satisfies my Lord. And I'm not bearing the fruit of His travail.

## 3. Defiled Eyes

Again we turn to Isaiah's prophecy of Christ. And this passage reveals Jesus to have pure, undefiled eyes: "(God) *shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears...*" (ISA 11:3). The literal translation here is: "He shall not judge according to the appearance before His eyes; neither shall He reprove according to the reporting to His ears." In short, Christ isn't going to judge a person just by looking at him or by what He hears about him.

Beloved, God is getting to the heart of the matter right here. Of course, we know pornography defiles the

eyes, as do many movies and TV shows. Indeed, we could list an entire catalog of things that defile the eyes. **But there is a deeper, hidden issue to be dealt with.** And that is "mental judging".

I ask you, why don't we consider our mental judgments of others to be a serious sin? Often when we meet someone, we immediately "size them up". After just a few glances and a brief exchange of words, we think we can accurately measure that person. **And we immediately judge their character by the little we've seen and heard.**

I can't tell you how often I've done this with people. I meet someone and think, "My spirit doesn't give me a good witness about this person. He can't look me in the eye. I can't put my finger on it, but something isn't right about him." And I trust my inner judgments as if they were infallible.

Worse, our quick judgments of people are often **polluted by evil reports from others.** A disrespectful word gets planted in our minds, and it colors everything we think about someone we haven't even met yet. Then, when we're in that person's presence, the awful word we heard comes rushing back to our minds. And we "size them up" according to what we were told.

During my trip to Great Britain, a well-meaning pastor took me aside and whispered, "You're going to meet a very rich man at the next service. I have to warn you, he thinks he owns the church because he's given so much money. As a result, he's driven away a lot of good people."

I allowed myself to be polluted by this word. And when I met the wealthy man, I barely gave him the time of day. I didn't give him a

chance, because I'd already judged him by what I'd heard.

I have repented of that. But over the years I've been guilty of this same sin, over and over. I have secretly judged thousands of men and women by **quick mental opinions** I formed about them immediately. At times, I've even refused or broken fellowship with people because of quick judgments.

I judged a minister this way when I was in Great Britain. Just as worship began to start the meeting, the pastor jumped up from his seat and ran down the aisle, rejoicing. My first thought was, "That man is putting on a show. He's acting in the flesh." Then the minister's associate leaned over and whispered to me, "Pastor David, do you know why he does that? It's because he has a clear conscience. He's a happy man."

**I had allowed my literal vision to hinder my spiritual vision.** And it defiled my eyes. Jesus warns of this very sin: "**Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.**" (JN 7:24).

Recently, I met a minister I've known for a number of years. Every time I'd encountered him in the past, I later vented to my wife, "That man is so shallow, such a boastful showoff. I don't know how God could ever bless him." Then I met this same man after the Holy Ghost had dealt with me about mentally judging others. This time, the Spirit told me, "Love him. Be quiet and listen to him. Then pray with him."

I obeyed. I loved the man, listened to him talk, and afterward took his hand and prayed. As soon as we parted ways, a strange thing happened to me: I was stricken with grief. A terror swept over me – the terror of what I'd done to this man

over the years. I saw the exceeding sinfulness of my defiling sin.

David exhorts, "**Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in my sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer**" (PSALM 19:14). The apostle Paul adds this perspective:

*"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you... Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."* (EPH 4:31-32,29-30).

Dear saint, there's not a person reading this message who is too holy to heed it and make a change. For my part, I feel God's grief over all the ways I've misjudged people through the years, whether knowingly or unknowingly. I urge you to cry out as my heart does:

"Oh, Lord why wasn't I ready to hear this sooner? Why haven't I dealt with this before now? I want to proclaim your gospel, to declare your generation. Please, Jesus, forgive me. Cleanse my defiled mouth, my defiled ears, my defiled eyes. And give me a renewed heart. I want nothing to hinder my life from being a full manifestation of who you are."

May the Lord hear our cry and move quickly to remake us. **He will give us strength to put away all evil speaking, evil listening and mental judging. Then we'll be better able to prolong the days of our Lord.**

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