

A Word Fitly Spoken
Proverbs 25:11-13

We all have met that person “*You can talk until you are blue in the face and it will do no good.*” No amount of reasoning will dissuade this person I am describing. We use another idiom to say of such a person, “*he is as stubborn as a mule.*” Ever met such a person?

Sometimes that person is us. We all have opinions and ideals that are heartfelt and we are unbending in our convictions about them and quick to defend our convictions. This is especially true in matters of spiritual significance. Everyone has an opinion about spiritual matters.

How many times has the Lord had reason to say of you and me, “*you can talk to him till you are blue in the face and it will do no good. He’s as stubborn as a mule.*”

How many times does God declare something in scripture and we deny it. How many times does God command something and we disobey that command? How many times does God say salvation is by grace and we insist on salvation by works? If any could say of me, *øheø stubborn as a mule,*ø God could.

His word has a name for such sinners as are we. **Read Acts 7:51** “*Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist (oppose) the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.*”

What will change the attitude and actions of such sinners toward God? What will bend the stiff neck? What will circumcise the heart and ears to follow not the ways of our fathers? **A word fitly spoken.**

What is a word fitly spoken? The word in the Hebrew for *øfitlyø* is *øO-fawn,*” meaning *øto revolve as a wheelø often.* It means to speak in season, timely, as in Godø appointed time. Isaiah said it this way: “*Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.*” Fitly means effectual.

Read 2Timothy 4:2 “*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*”

To be instant in season is to preach the word when a door is opened to you. When not preaching, rebuke, reprove and exhort **with doctrine.**

Read John 6:63.

As Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum he spoke these words; “*it is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*” This offended many and some *øof his disciples (V-66) went back and followed him no more.*” Then Jesus said to the twelve, “*will you also go away?*” Peter answered, “*Lord to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life.*”

The Eternal Word who, by his word spoke and the worlds were created, was made flesh and dwelt among us. And the words he spoke in creation are magnified by the words he yet speaks in revelation. God the Father spoke and creation heard and responded in obedience to his voice.

God speaks in revelation and his people hear and respond in obedience to his voice.

The question, how can God remain just and declare just, the ungodly, is revealed and answered by him who is the Word of Life in his gospel. He said in John 20:31 *“these things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* (John 20:31)

How important are words? **Read 1 Corinthians 1:21** *“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”*

What about our words?

. (James 1:19) *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”* **Mathew 12:37** *“By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”* You can't hide what's in your heart. A man's words reveal his heart. *“For from within, out of the heart are the issues of life.”* What did the Lord say about words? Hear a man of many words.

Read Proverbs 25:11-13.

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprove upon an obedient ear. As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that sent him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.” Here God extols a word fitly spoken.

A word fitly spoken is:

- 1. priceless. V-11** It's so priceless you can't buy it.
- 2. powerful. V-12** It's so powerful you can't resist it.
- 3. profitable. V-13** It's so profitable it cannot fail.

A word fitly spoken is priceless V-11

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Apples of gold are of great value. Apart from their intrinsic value as artifacts, with the price of gold flirting with \$2,000 per ounce and the instability of world currencies, its price could become unattainable.

In parabolic language, Solomon compares this “word fitly spoken” to be like apples of gold in “Pictures of silver.” A picture is an image of, not the real thing. It is a figure of or representation, a type of the antitype.

What “fitly spoken word” is priceless? What word must we hear and believe to have eternal life? What word can compare with apples of gold? Only the Gospel of *“the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us,”* Jesus Christ. (John 1:14) The Gospel is “a Word fitly spoken.” The word is God's standard of judgment and it is his means of justification.

With the cost of sin so high, (eternal death) something of high value is required to pay sin's debt. Since sin is against an infinite God, infinite payment is required of the offender. But finite man cannot render perfect satisfaction to an infinite God. Only God can satisfy God. Only the God-Man meets the qualifications of God to be the sinners' Substitute.

That's why the Gospel is more valuable than apples of gold: because *“therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith,”* that righteousness borne of the obedience, suffering and death of the God-Man. You'll find it nowhere else. In this “word fitly spoken” God communicates to his people that which he requires, what Christ has provided and what this means to those with an obedient ear.

What does God require for sin's payment: Full payment which is eternal death. *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."* This must be qualified, for an eternity of suffering in hell by the sinner will not pay his sin debt. God would not owe him anything since he would have done only that which was required of him. If God should mark iniquity in any of us, who could stand? The answer is none. But then the good news of the gospel is that God does not have to charge sin to his people. He's already charged it to their Representative and Surety and that in eternity past. That's the blessing of being in Christ from eternity past. If sin had at any time been charged to me, I would not have been in Christ. The legal responsibility for my sin has been laid on Christ, my Surety, and he put it away on the cross of Calvary. It's not my works, but his. It's not my faith but his. It's not my blood but his. Talk about a precious commodity; his blood is far above apples of gold in silver pictures. **Read 1 Peter 1:18** *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation (legalism) received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."*

The blood of a sinless, suitable sacrifice and his righteousness imputed is all that stands between sinners and eternal misery. Don't you want to know about that?

A word fitly spoken is like a portrait of God the Son. That's why it's priceless. Priceless here means it can't be bought. It's **One of a kind characteristic** makes it so priceless the richest of the rich can't buy it. It's so priceless the poorest of the poor can have it freely in abundance. (Isaiah 55:1) It can only be had as a gift from God. *"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."* Only the poor can afford that which is priceless. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, (those who see their need of Christ's righteousness imputed) for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."*

1. A word fitly spoken is priceless. V-11

2. A word fitly spoken is powerful. V-12

As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovener upon an obedient ear."

The fall of man in Adam was so devastating and so damaging, man is helpless in himself to alter his state before God. He is so alienated and enemies in his mind, evidenced by his wicked works he doesn't even know his state before God. He thinks he's alright evidenced by his works of self-righteousness. He thinks he's meeting God's standard of righteousness, not knowing all his righteousness is as filthy rags.

Why is this his state? He hasn't heard this *"word fitly spoken."* He has not an obedient ear. He's ignorant of and going about to establish a righteousness of his own. In all probability he's read the word many times. He needs the saving power of a wise reprovener. *"How can they hear without a preacher? He needs to hear and obey the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. It is this gospel which is living and powerful and sharper than a two edged sword. It is *"these things written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."* (John 20:31)*

In Psalm 110:3 God says *“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”* The day of God’s power is that day when a wise reprove speaks to the heart of the obedient ear. This wise reprove is the Holy Spirit of God who, **(John 16:8)** *“when he is come he will reprove the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.”* He will take the things of God and show them unto the sinner. (John 16:15) What things of God does he show to the sinner? After showing a sinner his need of a righteousness he cannot produce, he shows us one already imputed to those in Christ before our fall which is all our salvation. Though we fell in Adam, our position in Christ did not change. God’s elect have always been sons and daughters of God. Satan deceived us into thinking we did fall out of Christ. **If** we could fall out of Christ, (if he couldn’t keep us) *“there is no more sacrifice for sin.”* **Read V-12** again. *“As an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprove upon an obedient ear.”*

Just as golden earrings adorn the ear, so a wise reprove adorns the obedient ear with the truth of the gospel. The good news of the gospel is that Christ has accomplished the redemption of his people. *“Blessed are your ears”* if they hear and obey this truth.

This wise reprove will not fail to adorn the ear of every sinner for whom Christ died with the truth of the gospel because not only is the word priceless, not only is it powerful:

3. A word fitly spoken is profitable. V-13 *“As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.”*

In this metaphor God teaches us the diversity of the Word fitly spoken. Snow is one of those phenomenon that is both a blessing and a curse. In moderation it blesses. In excess it kills. Hearers of the word are either blessed or cursed, evidenced by their reaction toward the truth and like a vessel of snow in the day of harvest it either convicts and condemns or converts and comforts.

The result of snow at harvest time is devastating. It will destroy a year’s work overnight. A blanket of snow is death to tender crops full of sap. The fruit and the leaves burst and the plants die. A snow storm at harvest time is a farmer’s worst nightmare.

But a vessel of snow in the time of harvest is another matter. The hottest time of the year is typically July through September. This is also harvest time. At this time when temperatures reach well above 100 degrees, the cold of snow is refreshing. Thirty two degrees feels much better in August than 100 in the shade.

Strangely enough this was a reality in Palestine in Christ’s day. Caves on the shady sides of hills were packed tight with the winter snows and their excellent insulation values could hold ice through the next year’s harvest. To the weary, hot and tired laborer, these shelters from the heat offered cool temperatures and cool drink for the thirsty.

In this metaphor God teaches us the realities of life and the certainties of judgment. The scene of his teaching is the field of harvest.

God is comparing the effects of cool temperatures on the weary laborer to that of a faithful messenger of the gospel to the sin sick weary soul.

Like the farmer in Palestine the average day for sinners begins with his going about in his fields to sow and cultivate, expecting to reap a harvest. The harvest they sow is what they will reap. This includes all their so called good works they think will recommend them unto God. They labor from dawn to dusk to fill their barns and build bigger with vigor and perseverance.

What none know by nature is that all **our sowing** and plowing produces is a bumper crop of tares. In our ignorance and idolatry we spend our days sowing and watering what God will destroy at harvest time. Tares don't stand a chance in God's field. Their destruction is imminent and permanent.

But among the tares in the same field is the wheat, planted by the Sower who went forth to sow and his seed fell on good ground and produced fruit. That Sower is Christ. Remember, he has the words of eternal life. He laid down his life for the wheat and sent us another Comforter. He sowed the seed, his body. It sprang forth and prospered. He sent the Holy Spirit to reprove, teach and convince the wheat. God's wise reprovener shows us the fruit of our labor to be dead works and fruit unto death. To our surprise we discover that our appearance and actions was no different than that of tares. Though God's elect are positioned in Christ, by nature our state is alienation and enemies in our minds by wicked works. The fruit of our labor revealed us to be ignorant of God's righteousness and going about digging and dunging our own righteousness. We were busy raising a bumper crop of tares.

(Read Galatians 6:7-8) *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh (works religion, tares) shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."* All we can harvest is what we sowed; dead works and fruit unto death. It is God who sows the good seed. **Read Romans 7:4** *"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law **by the body** (the woman's seed) of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."* *"Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?"*

What will your labor yield today? Is it fruit unto death or fruit unto God?

The answer lies in the effects of a faithful messenger sent of God. **Read again V-13**

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* The call goes out to that wheat among the tares laboring heavily to please God by their labors. I will give you rest for free. To the wheat, this message is refreshing; to the tares, it is repulsive. **Read 2 Corinthians 2:15-16.** *"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"*

God's faithful messenger brings the message of grace to those in the broad way that leads to destruction. His mission is to rescue those threatened by the killing snow of harvest. It is of these God instructs his disciples in **John 4:35** *"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."* God's elect are scattered to the four corners of the earth. The snow is already visible. The time of harvest is now, for the vast majority are like fields of snow in the time of harvest. They stand on the brink of death if they don't hear a word fitly spoken. Just as the snow in harvest destroys, so would his elect did he not send forth a wise reprovener to harvest the fields. The wheat (elect) are made to see how all of their salvation is conditioned, not on their labor but the labor of One who sent forth a wise reprovener to harvest them before the snow of harvest destroyed them. They are refreshed in his labor.

Those who reject this faithful messenger of the gospel will lose all as the farmer caught by the snow. To them the word is not fitly spoken. The means God uses to reprove a sinner is rejected

by the tares. Their rejection identifies them as tares. James illustrates this truth for us. **James, 1:22-25 speaking to** those who hear and those who neglect the *ōWord fitly spoken.ö* “*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*” The tare looks into the gospel and say $\text{\textcircled{a}}$, *ōlām ok.ö* In his carelessness he neglects the warning (the snow is coming) and the promise of the gospel preached. He neglects to “*give diligence to make his calling and election sure.*”

25 *ōBut whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, (the gospel) and continueth therein, (hears with an obedient ear,) he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*” His soul shall be refreshed.

Read V-13 again. The literal translation of this verse is:

ōAs a vessel of snow in a day of harvest, so is a faithful ambassador to those sending him, and the soul of his masters he refresheth.”

Who is a *ōfaithful ambassador?ö* Is it not Christ? Is not an ambassador a representative of a country $\text{\textcircled{a}}$ sovereign? Was not Christ sent of the Father to deliver his great salvation, (Hebrews 2:3) which was first began to be spoken by the Lord? Did not Christ send the Comforter to reprove the world of sin? Are not the souls of the masters of Christ refreshed by his word fitly spoken? The Hebrew for *ōrefreshedö* is *shoob* which means *ōto turn back to God,ö to öreturn.ö* To resurrect.

Christ $\text{\textcircled{a}}$ masters are those he turns back; those he regenerates.

In John 13:13 Jesus said, “*Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.*” But **Read Luke 22:27** “*For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.* A servant has a master. Christ is a servant to his masters. **Isaiah 42:1** “*Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.*” His masters are those he masters, his people. In his office as Prophet he served his people by proclaiming the name of the Lord to them. He came from the Father to declare God $\text{\textcircled{a}}$ gospel to the wheat. In his office as Priest he made the one sacrifice for sin and satisfied all claims against his people. In his office as king he rules and reigns to ensure the gathering of his flock into the fold. “*He took on him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man.*”

Now he sends his masters whom he refreshes into the world with a *ōword fitly spokenö* to those with and obedient ear. Will the harvesters beat the snow of destruction for you? Many have already succumbed to the cold of harvest, evidencing they were not wheat but tares. What will your works evidence, fruit unto God or fruit unto death?

Only a word fitly spoken in the hands of a faithful messenger to an obedient ear can expose the heart. God $\text{\textcircled{a}}$ masters are ready and willing to preach until they are blue on the face, knowing this gospel is the means he uses, in the day of his power to break the will of those wheat among the tares. And we do so to those as were like we, who before God made us alive in Christ, stubborn as mules.

Thank God he did not give up on me. Thank God he has the power and the right to make me hear and obey. A word fitly spoken is more precious than all the gold in the world. Is your ear obedient?

Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labors with a word fitly spoken. It is priceless, it is powerful and it is profitable.

By Winston Pannell