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"And straightway, his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly"

(Mark 7: 35).

All the words that come out of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understands, and right to those that find knowledge "(Proverbs 8: 8–9).

We have discussed the case of this mute man (Mark 7:35) in four series topics—"Spiritual deafness," "Spiritual dumbness," "The gates must be opened" and "Whatever you lose on earth shall be loosed in heaven". We learnt that we must hear God clearly, speak his words, and pass-through certain gates to serve him effectively; then Heaven will assist us to lose whatever we lose on earth. All glory be to Almighty God for the understanding of His words.

He looked up to heaven, sighed, and said unto him, "EPHPHATHA," (Mark 7:34); immediately his ears were opened and his tongue, which was tied by unseen forces, got loosed, and he spoke plainly. He could not utter a word before. He lived in a "wordless" world. But with God’s command, he was transferred by an unseen chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11) to a "WORD" world- the world where words are majorly used for communication. Ordinarily, we would expect him to start babbling like a small child, but instead he spoke like a linguistic expert.

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His grammar was perfect, and he had a clear and soothing voice. His vocabulary was succinct, and he had good communication skills. His words flowed into people’s ears like the "stream from Lebanon" (Song of Solomon 4:15). He was forsaken before; no man went through him, but he became an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations (Isaiah 60:15). What a great miracle!

Can this kind of miracle occur in our age and time? Can a dumb man speak plainly? Medically, there is no cure for stammering, but the scripture says, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me? (Jeremiah 32:27)", "With men, this is impossible; but with God, all things are possible (Matthew 19:26)". Brethren, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent (John 6:29)"; "the dumb shall sing (Isaiah 35:6)" and "the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly (Isaiah 32:4)".

For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he will beautify the meek with salvation (Psalm 149:4).

We were created by God to speak plainly, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day (Genesis 1:31)"; man was created on the sixth day, and the Lord rejoiced in his perfect work on man (Psalm 104:31). Sin came to distort God’s plan for mankind, but Jesus has redeemed us from this disruption by the power of his blood (Galatians 3:13).

The word of God is plain, simple, pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times (Psalm 12:6), so we should speak and teach this clear truth in an easy language that our hearers can understand. There are different categories of hearers. Some are quick to assimilate the message, while it may take others some time to digest the truth. Some people are smarter than others, some have more opportunities because they were born with them, and some are born with gifts beyond the normal scope of men" (Harper Lee quote).

The design of speaking is for the refreshing of listeners rather than of the speaker. Our speech will be in vain if it does not refresh others but only gives us applause and commendation for eloquent speaking. Unless we speak that others may be informed, converted, comforted, edified, and saved, we are as good as to hold our peace and say nothing.

As ministers of God, when we speak, our doctrine should drop like the rain, our speech should distil like the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon their grass (Deuteronomy 32:1-2).

THE BENEFITS OF SPEAKING PLAINLY

• People will hear God’s word through us and be blessed accordingly. "Blessed is the man that hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors" (Proverbs 8:34).

• "Our lips will drop like a honeycomb" (Songs 4:11). When Jesus Christ was preaching, the people were attentive to hear him (Luke 19:48). They hung upon him hearing, as bees upon a flower, to suck out all the sweetness and the honey of his holy and heavenly counsels. Grace was poured into his lips (Psalm 45:2).

• People will remain silent at our words, acknowledging their acceptance of our speech, and will have no objections, especially if what we said is already to the point.

• When we speak plainly, nobody will iterate or turn on us again to draw the matter into further debate. Nobody will resist nor revolt against us. Our words will reconcile and heal all their differences; they will be of one mind.

• When we speak plainly, people will give ear to us and accept our counsel. "Unto me, men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel" (Job 29:21).

SPEAK PLAINLY TO OBTAIN AND RETAIN THE ATTENTION OF OUR HEARERS.

Their attention must be gained, or nothing can be done with them; and it must also be retained, or we will continue to spin words, but nothing will come of it.

When we speak plainly, people will listen to us with keen attention and diligence. They will esteem us with great reverence and observance. It will be a pleasure for them to cheer us and give credit for what we say. Our hearers will carefully obey us, submitting to what we speak and yielding to our counsel.

We must meet certain conditions to enable us to speak plainly:

1. DEPEND ON GOD.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1)

We must be connected to the source and origin of words. At the same time, God has the power to breathe on our words to make them alive and transmit those words to the hearer; "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turns it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1). He will make our lips drop like honeycomb (Songs of Solomon 4:11) while his words pierce through the soul, spirit, joints, and marrow of our hearers (Hebrews 4:12).

We should depend solely on the Holy Spirit, who will teach us how to speak plainly, irrespective of our gifts and talents (John 14:26). The Holy Ghost teaches us by suggestion, direction, and illumination. Thus, he leads us into all truth by suggesting ideas, directing our thoughts, and illuminating the Scriptures when we read them.

Those plain words can only be revealed to us by his spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10) And He will speak through us, especially when we are persecuted, "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak; neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost (Mark 13:11)".

We should depend on the Holy Spirit to lead our audience into an elevated and devout state of mind. If our people are teachable, prayerful, active, earnest, and devout, they will come up to the house of God on purpose to get a blessing. They will take their seats prayerfully, asking God to speak to them through us; they will remain on the watch for every word, and they will not be weary. They will have an appetite for the gospel, for they know the sweetness of the heavenly manna, and they will be eager to gather their appointed portions. It is only the power of God that can make this happen.

Come fresh from the closet and from communion with God, to speak to men for God with all your heart and soul.

2. IMPROVE YOURSELF.

Be prayerful! "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Commit your speech and audience to the Almighty God to give you a resounding success. "For without God, you can do nothing (John 15:5)". Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, declares the Lord of Hosts (Zechariah 4:6).

Spend more time in the study of God’s word so that you may need less time in the pulpit. Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15)" and "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may do according to all that is written in it. "For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success " (Joshua 1:8).

Charles Spurgeon defined the work of the preacher like this: "To know truth as it should be known, to love it as it should be loved, and then to proclaim it in the right spirit, and in its proper proportions".

Be interested in yourself, and you will interest others. Your subject must weigh so heavily on your mind that you devote all of your faculties to the deliverance of your soul concerning it; and when your listeners see that the topic has engrossed you, it will gradually engross them.

Our whole life must be such as to add weight to our words, so that in after years we shall be able to wield the invincible eloquence of a long-sustained character, and obtain not merely the attention, but the affectionate veneration of our flock.

We need not be concerned about losing our people's attention if, through our prayers, tears, and labors, they become spiritually healthy. A people hungering after righteousness (Matthew 5:6) and a minister anxious to feed their souls (Jeremiah 3:15) will act in sweetest harmony with each other when their common theme is the Word of the Lord.

It is an honor to speak, but it is a great honor to speak plainly and be rightly heard.

3. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE.

"The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he awakens me morning by morning, he awakens my ear to hear as the learned (Isaiah 50:4)".

If a man does not comprehend your message, it will be of no use to him. You might as well have spoken to him in the language that he understands, but if you use phrases that are quite out of line and modes of expression that are not suitable to his mind, he will be confused. Go up to his level if he is a poor man; go down to his understanding if he is an educated person. If possible, tell your story. Put a little humor for the female audience and give more facts when you are with the men. Our Lord and Master was the King of preachers, but he was never beyond anyone's comprehension, except in terms of the grandeur and glory of His matter; His words and utterances were such that he spoke like "the holy child Jesus.

Have something to say, and say it earnestly, and the congregation will be at your feet.

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4. ADEQUATE PREPARATION

There is always a place for preparation in giving sermons. It is part of the planning process that will enhance our success. When we pray to God and study His word, He expects that we prepare, rehearse, and play the speech in our hearts.

He has chosen us to be a prophet to the nations (Jeremiah 1:5) and as a shepherd to feed his people (Jeremiah 23:4). "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth," says the Lord (Jeremiah 1:9).

People do not want raw food; it must be cooked and made ready for them. Do not go into the pulpit and say the first thing that comes to hand, for the uppermost thing with most men is mere froth. Your people need discourses that have been prayed over and laboriously prepared. We must give out of our very souls, in the words which naturally suggest themselves, the matter which has been as thoroughly prepared by us as it possibly could have been by a sermon-writer; indeed, it should be even better prepared, if we would speak well.

Our sermon should not be a soliloquy; we must interest all our audience, from the eldest to the youngest. We ought not to make even children inattentive. Put them into your plan during preparation. Don't go out of context. Speak what you know and testify about what you have seen.

5. ALWAYS SAY SOMETHING WORTH HEARING.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine (2 Timothy 2:4)." Feed your congregation with spiritual food, not just "words". Don’t keep repeating words or bombard them with plenty of words that they won’t be able to comprehend. In the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin (Proverbs 10:19)", even in the best preacher.

Give your hearers something which they can treasure up and remember; something likely to be useful to them; the best matter from the best of places, "speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). Give them manna fresh from heaven, not the same thing repeatedly; give them something striking, something that a man might get up in the middle of the night to hear, and which is worth walking fifty miles to listen to. You are quite capable of doing that. Do it, brethren. Do it continually, and you will have all the attention you desire and be grateful to Almighty God.

A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!" (Proverbs 15:23)

6. LET YOUR SPEECH BE IN ORDER.

Let the good message that you give them be very clearly arranged. Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40). We need the earnest, candid, wakeful, continued attention of all those who are in the congregation. If men's minds are wandering far away, they cannot receive the truth, and it is much the same if they are inactive. If your words are not in order during the presentation, you will add salt to their injury. They may be lost, and the purpose of the speech will be defeated.

Divide the word aright and give it to each person according to his or her proper portion, as he or she is fit and able to receive it. One must have milk, and another must have meat (1 Corinthians 3:2).

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Allow your hearts to inscribe a good matter, clearly arranged and plainly stated, and you will almost certainly gain the ear, and thus the heart.

7. A MANNER OF PRESENTATION.

Do not arouse your audience solely through your subject matter, but also through your mode of speech. It is very important; this will go a long way towards making your audience ponder and value your speech.

• It is advisable not to start your speech at the full pitch and tension of your mind, but in such a way that all will be led to expect a good time. Be alive at the very commencement.

• Eye to eye contact conversation is a better way of presenting than reading your sermons without carrying your audience along. If you must read, just make sure that you do it to perfection.

• Occasional resorts to this system of surprise will keep an audience in a state of proper expectancy.

• Do not repeat the same idea in other words. Let there be something new in each sentence. Our hearers do not want the bare bones of technical definition, nor theology, but meat and flavor.

• Richly and appropriately illustrate. Multimedia has come to our aid in this regard.

• Do not indulge in monotones. Vary your voice continually.

• Control your presentation speed and travel forward in quiet

majesty.

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• Let your speech be conversational, always with grace and seasoned with salt, so that you will know how to respond to every man. (Colossians 4:6) Put variety in your sermon, humans love variety and God approves it too.

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• Avoid being too long in your sermon. Speak within the set time. If you can’t say all you have in that time, when will you say it? Jesus didn’t preach long sermons while on earth. Remember that the kingdom of God is not in words, but in power (1 Corinthians 4:20). Short sermons with God’s power are better than long sermons with no effect. Your audience must be diligent in their business and career too. Save their time too by keeping your sermon short.

• When a man has a lot of well-prepared material, he will probably not go over forty minutes; when he has less to say, he will go on for fifty minutes; and when he has nothing to say, he will need an hour to say it.

• Convey your message sarcastically. Preach on practical topics, current events, or personal matters, and you will get an attentive audience.

• Don't say what everyone is expecting you to say. Keep your sentences out of ruts.

My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart, and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly." (Job 33:3)

8. SPEAK THE TRUTH EXPLICITLY

Don’t only speak the truth but speak it clearly. Some preachers speak great truths but observe them in their own way; those who wrap sound doctrine in hard, uncouth words or deliver it in an unnecessary multitude of words confuse and confound their audience rather than inform or instruct them.

The Lord promised, "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent" (Zephaniah 3:9). What they speak should be the pure truth. Their language should be not only grammatically pure, proper, and genuine, but theologically pure, without any tinge of error in it.

We would rather speak five words to edify others than ten thousand words in difficult and strange expressions.

If any man speaks, let him speak as God's oracles; if any man ministers, let him minister according to the ability that God gives him, that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen " (1 Peter 4:11).

"As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak." (See 1 Kings 22:14.) We should speak neither less nor more than God's word, and we are bound to declare it with the mind of God, whom we believe in and are not to be shaken in our confidence in him.

Don’t speak falsehood plainly so that the wrath of God will not come upon you like the foolish prophets in the book of Ezekiel.

"Woe unto the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, "The Lord saith" and "the Lord hath not sent them." And they have made others hope that they would confirm the word. Have you not seen a fictitious vision, and have you not spoken a false divination, while saying, "The Lord saith it," though I have not spoken? Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; because ye have spoken vanity and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God". (Ezekiel 13:3,6,7,8)

CONCLUSION

1. How do we present the gospel truth to our congregation? Do they really understand it the way Christ preached it to us? Are we concerned more about their applause or the conviction of their hearts while preaching? Are we moved by their influx into the church, only to be entertained by comedians, not by the truth of the Gospel that was purchased by the blood of Jesus? God sends "the doves" to His ministers to feed them with pure, holy, wholesome doctrine, not with the chaff of unwritten traditions, nor with the mixtures of human inventions.

I have loved you with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3), therefore I have not delivered the soul of my turtle dove into the company of the wicked" (Psalm 74:19).

2. God usually speaks his words to us plainly so we can deliver the messages clearly to his children, but we don’t hearken to his voice (Psalm 81:11). When men refuse to listen to God's counsel after he spoke plainly to them, their eyes will see and their hearts will tremble when they see his judgments; he said, "I will spue you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16)

So now, change your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will repent of the evil he has pronounced against you. (Jeremiah 26:13)

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I have good news for you. When we speak plainly, the Lord will make us pillars in the temple of God (Revelation 3:12).

3. When God bid Moses to go to Pharaoh, he said, "I am not eloquent, slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exodus 4:10). Therefore, the Lord does at once reprove and encourage him; "Who has made man’s mouth? Or who make the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the lord? " (Exodus 4:11).

Whenever God sends us on an errand, he will give us the facility and fluency of speech.

4. After His words, we must not speak. The word of God must be received for its own authority. The scripture has its perfection and proof. It does not receive confirmation or addition from man. If any man adds to these things, God will add the plagues written in this book to him (Revelation 22:18).

5. The Apostle Paul gave thanks without ceasing, because when the Thessalonians received the word of God, which they heard from him, and from his fellow laborers in the Gospel, " They received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works in them that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Ascribe all glory to the Almighty in your speech. King Nebuchadnezzar was smitten by an angel for taking God’s glory during his speech. Immediately, he was eaten by worms and gave up the ghost (Acts 12:23).

Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 3:6)

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the exposition and understanding of your word. We repent of our sinful ways. Kindly sanctify and purify us; bless all our instruments of speech, caution our lips; and cause us to speak plainly in Jesus' name, Amen.

And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11)