

## Speak, Part 2, Spring Training 2007

I argued last week that speaking truth in love means presenting the gospel in all its fullness, both the comfort of Christ & the cross of Christ, and that for every one of us we fluctuate between two extremes “comfort” & “call” as we seek to speak truth in love to our neighbor (big Lk. 15, great commandment “neighbor,”). I see it in myself, I see it at work in our midst.

As God has been at work in me & on me, I’ve tried to emphasize the comfort & the call in the content & structure of this class. It was not a mistake that we spent one whole week talking about God’s love for us in Christ before we talked about loving one another. The comfort is fuel for the call of the gospel. You can not have one without the other.

And dear friends, I think we forget that the gospel is powerful for salvation & powerful to change hearts & lives. You and I desperately need the gospel in all its fullness, and the world needs it too.

---

Let me summarize the epitaphs before we go on.

One error is to emphasize the “call” of the gospel at the expense of the “comfort” of the gospel: Sometimes harshly, sometimes nicely, this “truth-speaking” is pointing people to **carry a cross without Christ**.

It is reminding people of the demands of the law, the curses awaiting those who break it, and neglecting the fact that Christ took every curse & stands ready to bless covenant-breakers.

It is calling sin “sin,” saying like the Prophet Nathan “you are the man,” but then leaving no door open for forgiveness in Christ.

It is calling sinners to walk like Christ, but it forgets that our heart & our faith are fused to our actions: muslim discipleship corrects behavior, but offers no salve for the wayward heart.

Call without comfort assumes (in a way that Paul *never* does) that our hearers are actually saved because they say the right things, and act like it.

Emphasizing the call of the gospel *at the expense of* the comfort will produce a generation of joyless, beaten, but perhaps well behaved people.

This is Christianity without Christ, people blown about by every wind of doctrine, by human deceit & cunning, people who are ready to drop the hammer on sin, to function as the holiness police,...this is the Ephesian church in Rev. 2, they don’t tolerate wickedness & sin, they hate it,...but they have lost their first love.

Call without comfort is often benignly reflected in a devotional life that approaches the Scriptures asking “what do I need to different today?” “where do I need to repent”? *at the expense of* asking “how can I know my Savior better?” “Jesus let me know you through this.” It approaches worship with “what do I need to do” instead of “Jesus, meet with me.”

This falls infinitely short of the gospel because Christ is not part of the equation. It is a **cross without Christ**.

This was the first epitaph of the church.

The second epitaph is emphasizing comfort without the call. **This too falls infinitely short because it offers forward Christ without a cross.**

This, I argued, looks like a kind of dysfunctional niceness. I say dysfunctional because all comfort & no call usually means we will do anything to preserve the niceness in our relationship with our children, our neighbor, our spouse, our families even as we see sin corrupting these very relationships.

Comfort without call can often hide a desperate need to be liked & approved of by everyone because our other identities (co-worker, super-mom, husband, wife, member, student,)...usurp our primary identity as being united with Christ,...as ambassadors & disciples & witness to Jesus Christ .

Comfort without call may look loving, and say nice loving things. But as I argued last week, is not speaking the truth in love.

#### **Here's my thesis:**

- We lean towards comfort without call with those we know well, because it's, well, comfortable.
- We lean towards call without comfort with those we do not know well, because it saves us from having to spend the time to get to know them on a heart-level.

<!--Both are exactly the opposite of the model of Jesus & Paul. Again, the two are never separate but Paul & Jesus normally emphasized the call with those who professed Christ but weren't walking with Him (we'll look at some examples).-->

(we've dealt with the latter for a few Sundays  
 ...on how love means relationships & relationships grow through question asking  
 ...it was really delightful to see everyone's response to that question exercise  
 ...to see people light up & recognize 'hey' I can do this – so, I want to deal with the former as a hindrance to discipleship).

We love people, we get to know people,...but when it comes to the point of speaking-truth-in-love, I think we struggle most with issuing a call in love.

To counteract this, I want to look at God's loving call to us, the call for us to call others to follow after Christ, and Paul's examples

**Point 1** - God rebukes, reprovcs, corrects & trains us as part of his eternal loving plan for our lives & call us to follow him. His love for us overflows in this way.

**Proverbs 3:11-12** <sup>11</sup> My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof <sup>12</sup> for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

**Hebrews 12:6-14** <sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." <sup>7</sup> It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup> If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. <sup>9</sup> Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup> For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. <sup>11</sup> For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

And whereas physical trials are part of that refinement process, the principle means God uses to comfort & call (rebuke, discipline) his people, is His WORD.

I made the case last week that speaking the truth in love refers not to any truth, but to the truths of the gospel rooted in God's word which is powerful & effective in ways that we are not. (**Isaiah 55:11**)

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Father, Son & Holy Spirit come to us in love as his Word comforts, challenges, confronts, calls, chastises, commends, constructs, collapses, creates, it (running out of words that begin with "c" – but you get the picture).

And we listen to his Word regularly with joy that we might see Jesus (comfort), see our union in Him, and hear his call to take up our cross & follow Him.

**Point 2 – Sharing the call of the gospel & calling others to follow Christ is to be normal, & regular.**

“Call” is not a word you will find too often in Scripture, but there are terms synonymous with it that have this built in to it. You’ve heard a few of them. “Rebuke,” “Reproof,” “Correction” all of which are part of calling people to follow Christ & discipling others, ...all a part of training in righteousness. They are built into the Great Commission.

Proverbs presents rebuke & reproof not as a red-faced rare encounter where emotions are flying & everyone is upset, ...but more as part of a healthy diet for the

believer. It's part of the "lifestyles of the wise & humble." Listen to these proverbs, that focus not so much on one intense, red-faced encounter, . . . but broaden rebuke & reproof to part of everyday life & speaking truth with one another.

**Synonymous with everyday instruction:**

**Proverbs 13:1** A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

**Proverbs 10:17** <sup>17</sup> Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof leads others astray.

**Proverbs 13:18** <sup>18</sup> Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is honored.

**Proverbs 15:31-32** <sup>31</sup> The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. <sup>32</sup> Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.

**One of the most precious gifts you can give your children on mother's day? Rebuke.**

**Proverbs 29:15** <sup>15</sup> The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

**Proverbs 27:5-6** <sup>5</sup> Better is open rebuke than hidden love. <sup>6</sup> Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

Think about how God is with you. Heb 4 – the word of God is a double-edged sword piercing the joints & marrow, . . . but faithful are the wounds of our Savior, brother & friend, Jesus Christ who approaches us with love & the promise of forgiveness even as he wounds us, pierces us with his Word.

Faithful is the wound of a friend who comes to us, and incarnates Christ to us, . . . being willing to be used as an instrument to help accomplish Jesus' work in my life.

**Reproof is even more incumbent on those in a position of spiritual authority:**

**2 Timothy 4:2** <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

Husbands as spiritual heads of their homes are the principle truth-speakers to be guiding & directing the flock God has given Him. Parents with children, . . . you begin to see that this is part & parcel of walking with Christ & there are no relationships unaffected by this.

So here we are, we love people enough to draw near to them & get to know them and now it's time (maybe after 2 months, maybe after 20 years) to help them see where Christ's fullness intersects with their deficiency & Christ's grace intersects with their weakness & to call them to follow after Christ, . . . and we know we need to, . . . so what does it look like?

### **Biblical Examples of Reproof:**

**2 Samuel 12:1-7** And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had very many flocks and herds, <sup>3</sup> but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup> Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." <sup>5</sup> Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, <sup>6</sup> and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." <sup>7</sup> Nathan said to David, "You are the man!..."

2 Samuel 12:13 <sup>13</sup> David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

Note: (Tripp – 233)

- a. the severity of the blindness
- b. the story is crafted to help David see what he has not seen – himself through the lens of Scripture
- c. David confesses,...Nathan doesn't confess for him
  - a. We're often so ready to flee an encounter will put words in other people's mouths to get things resolved quicker!
- d. The resolution: <sup>13</sup> David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

[tripp says – therefore use metaphors ???]

### **Another example:**

Embedded in a letter which is an extended rebuke let's look at how Paul rebuked, confronted the Apostle Peter.

**Galatians 2:11-16** <sup>11</sup> But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. <sup>12</sup> For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. <sup>13</sup> And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. <sup>14</sup> But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?" <sup>15</sup> We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; <sup>16</sup> yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

What does Paul do first?

What's the root reason, why did he confront Peter? (v.14)

For the advancement & purity of the gospel

For Peter's growth

For the vindication of Christ

What's the basic jist of what Paul says to Peter, (boil it down, summarize it)?

You should know better,

Your actions proclaim a different gospel

Here is the true gospel

Paul is not content to rebuke his actions without reason. He speaks to show the connection between this action & the truth of the gospel.

### **Other Pauline Examples:**

**Here we learn about the ultimate goal of rebuke/call**

**2 Corinthians 7:8-10** <sup>8</sup> For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. <sup>9</sup> As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. <sup>10</sup> For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

What's the goal of my rebuke? Make someone stop? Force someone to apologize to me? Wound them to get them out of my way & out of my time? We're talking about people's hearts here. We're talking about being used by God to help one another focus on Christ & delight in Him & walk with Him.

This kind of zeal for growth in Christ is what leads Paul to rebuke, correct, challenge the Corinthian church in addition to comfort them with their union in Christ.

**1 Corinthians 3:1-4** But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup> I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, <sup>3</sup> for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? <sup>4</sup> For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

**1 Corinthians 4:21 - 5:2** <sup>21</sup> What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness? <sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 5:1** It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. <sup>2</sup> And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

**Now, there is another category of “call” that Paul uses. He uses it with those he knows to be outside of the kingdom, and he uses it with those older than he is, it’s simply along the lines of encouraging, challenging, & appealing to people’s hearts.**

Romans 1-11 Comfort

Romans 12-16 Call,...how does he begin?

**Romans 12:1** <sup>ESV</sup> Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

**Philemon 1:3-10** [comfort] <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, <sup>6</sup> and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup> For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. <sup>8</sup> [call] Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, <sup>9</sup> yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you- I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus- <sup>10</sup> I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.

1 Timothy 5:1-2 <sup>ESV</sup> 1 Timothy 5:1 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father. Treat younger men like brothers, <sup>2</sup> older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.

### **Objections & Hindrances:**

Obj 1 – time (yeah, 1 day to 50 yrs. – and any of this is really premature without developing our relationships through questions & listening)

Obj. 2 – but rebuke/confrontation might suggest our love is conditional. Won’t that push people away from Jesus, instead of towards him? Won’t that alienate me from my children, my spouse, my friend?

A. “Rebuke does not meant that our love is conditional. However, the self-sacrificing love...exists at the intersection of patient grace & intolerance for sin. This means that I love you and I will not walk away from you at the first sign of weakness or sin. I will extend to you the same grace I have received. At the same time, however, my love for you does not close its eyes to wrongdoing. It does not stay silent while sin is allowed to grow. The love I am called to extend is the love of the cross of Christ, which stands at the intersection of God’s grace & his complete intolerance of sin. His intolerance does not cause God to move away. He moves *toward* me in redemptive love, so that someday I will stand before him without sin. This is what we are called to embody in our relationships. Anything less is to be a moral accomplice in the sin.” 203

Obj. 2 – Aren't I getting in the way by doing this? Who am I to rebuke this person, when I have so much they can pick at as well?

Tripp: “Confrontation does not force a person to deal with you, but places him before the Lord. The most important encounter in confrontation is not the person's encounter with you, but with Christ. Rebuke does not force a person to face your judgment; it gives him an opportunity to do business with God...” (208-209)

This is monumental from a giving & receiving perspective. As a truth-speaker, my goal is to bring someone into contact with Jesus, both the cross that he bore for them & the one he calls them to bear (“You know brother, I think that's your flesh coming out, but I forgive you & Christ will forgive you, but let's call it what it is.”).

As a rebukee / receiver – It means I stop dismissing or accepting a rebuke/correction/reproof because I like someone enough to let that through,...and I start asking the Lord to examine me. Proverbs makes no provision for “listen to a rebuke if it comes from someone you really like who you know really cares about you,...” Solomon just lays it out there as something we ought to be receptive to.

Nitty-Gritties:

1. Don't forget the sinfulness of sin
  - a. How it blinds both the heart & the mind of ourselves & others
  - b. How it taints the whole man, our desires, our emotions, our experiences
2. Don't forget the power of the gospel & the Holy Spirit – Jesus changed you & he is mighty to change others & will be faithful to use you as an instrument in accomplishing his change in someone else's life & heart.
  - a. What a gift! What a blessing!
3. Start with an examination of your own heart
  - a. otherwise we will tend to: (Tripp, pgs., 209-211)
    - i. Turn moments of ministry into moments of anger
    - ii. Personalize what is not personal (my relationship with that person becomes the point of friction rather than their relationship with Christ)
    - iii. Be adversarial in our approach (“stand against” instead of “stand with”)
    - iv. Confuse our opinion with God's will (“My job is to hold the mirror of the Word of God in front of him so that he can see himself accurately.”)
    - v. Settle for quick solutions that do not address the heart
  - b. Are my words going to help this person see themselves through the lens of Scripture?

- c. Am I confronting this person because I have anger & hurt I haven't dealt with, or am I confronting this person that they might do business with God?
  - d. Am I willing to communicate both the comfort and the call of the gospel?
  - e. Eph 4:13 - Is my goal to help build this person up in the unity of faith in Christ, unity of knowledge of Christ, maturity in Christ? Or am I trying to change them for my own personal reasons to draw them closer to *me*?
4. Process of Confrontation (Call, rebuke, etc.) (Tripp, pgs. 223-
- a. Consideration – “what does this person need to see about himself, God, others, life, truth, change) that he does not see, and how can I help him see it?”
  - b. Confession – “What does God want the person to admit & confess?”
    - i. this is the coming to grips with and putting off the “old man”
  - c. Commitment – “To what new ways of living is God calling this person?”
    - i. this is the coming to grips with and putting on the “new man”
    - ii. Note – the comfort & call of the gospel **together** are the only means to both “put off” “put to death” & “put on”
  - d. Change – “How should these new commitments be applied to daily living?”