

Is God's Word in Your Mouth?

Isaiah 59:12–21, Romans 10:5–15

Our sermon text this afternoon is Isaiah 59:21. We have just heard it in the NKJV. It is a good translation, but the KJV is more literal: “As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy *seed*, nor out of the mouth of thy *seed's seed*, saith the LORD, from henceforth and forever.”

What's good about the KJV is its rendering of the Hebrew זָרַע by its literal translation, “seed.” The same word is used of seed planted in the ground; and of a person's posterity or descendants, conceived by the male seed.

The words of Scripture, words *inspired*, *inscripturated*, and *kept* down to the present day by the deliberate action of God Almighty, are put into the mouth of his elect. God uses the second-person singular, addressing the elect as the covenant people, reminding them of “words which I have put in thy *mouth*,” and promising that they shall not depart out of *thy mouth*, nor out of the *mouth* of *thy seed*, nor out of the *mouth* of *thy seed's seed*, saith the LORD, from henceforth and forever.

Again, in Roman's 10 the apostle Paul cites this OT teaching when he writes: “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your *mouth* the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the *mouth* confession is made unto salvation.” The text ends with the statement, “For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’” Calling on the name of the LORD in biblical times was done by mouth. Praying silently was considered strange.

“And it happened, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her *mouth*. Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, ‘How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!’ But Hannah answered and said, ‘No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now.’ Then Eli answered and said, ‘Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him’” (1 Sam. 1:12–17).

As we look at this more carefully, consider with me three points this afternoon: (1) A forgotten duty; (2) A distinguishing mark of the covenant people; (3) An emphasis in both our Old Testament and New Testament texts. First,

1. A forgotten duty

Consider the following Scriptures:

Ex. 13:9, “And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD’S law may be *in thy mouth*.”

Deut. 30:14, “But the word is very nigh unto thee, *in thy mouth*, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.”

1 Kgs. 17:24, “And the woman [the widow of Zarephath, whose child Elijah resuscitated] said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD *in thy mouth* is truth.”

Ps. 50:16, “But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant *in thy mouth*?”

Isa. 51:16, “And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”

Jer. 1:9, “Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words *in thy mouth*.”

Jer. 5:14, “Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words *in thy mouth* fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.”

Rev. 10:9, “And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be *in thy mouth* sweet as honey.”

Here, then, are more than ten references to God’s word being not just on the believer’s shelf or table, but specifically in his people’s *mouths*! With all these specific references, one would think that pastors would be preaching sermons on this topic, and that God’s people would be discussing this. But it isn’t happening. Truly this is a forgotten duty!

What are we going to do about it? Just roll our eyes and accept the status quo? Or should we do something about it? I say, let’s do something about it!

Second, notice that this is

2. A distinguishing mark of the covenant people

Covenant families talk about the Word of God. They read the Word of God aloud together. They frame their lives around the Word of God. They live according to the Word of God.

How different are the families of the wicked! They have no interest in the Word of God. They “mind earthly things.”¹ They have little to no knowledge of the Word of God. They are offended by the teachings of the Word of God. They want to live their lives according to their own plan.

Christ wants his Word to dwell in us:

¹ Phil. 3:19

“I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you [ὁ λόγος ὁ ἐμὸς οὐ χωρεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν]” (John 8:37). The New American Bible has “my word has no room among you”—a very good translation.

What did Jesus mean by these words? Not that their library shelves did not have room for copies of the Bible, but rather that the truth of his word—his very words—did not have a place in their *hearts*. God wants us to have his word, not as a book on a shelf, but as his living word in our hearts. Thoughts take expression through words. We have room for many different kinds of thoughts. What kinds of thoughts fills our minds? If we think about other things but have no time or interest or desire to fill our minds with thoughts of God’s Word, then God’s Word has no place in our hearts. That is not a good situation. It is sin. If we want to bring our lives into conformity with God’s Word, then that sin has to be confessed, forsaken and replaced with God-glorifying behavior. If we have no time to think about and meditate on God’s word, then we are living in sin. God is not pleased with our lives.

The Christian life is to be filled with God’s word. How does your life measure up? What fills your thoughts? Hobbies? Games? Friends? Facebook? Sex? Porn?

How much time during a typical day do you meditate on God’s word?

Why don’t you do it more? Be honest now.

God wants his people to be sanctified, to grow in grace and be more and more conformed to the perfect image of Christ. How does that happen? As we meditate on God’s Word day and night. “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Ps. 1:1–2). The word for “meditate” in this verse is an imitative word that literally means *mutter*. It can refer to the *coo* of a dove, the *growl* of a lion, to *ponder* by talking to oneself, to *read in an undertone*.²

This is not rocket science. The way that we meditate on the Word is by talking to ourselves as we read it aloud and ponder its meaning. If we did this more, we would grow in grace.

Will you take up the challenge? Don’t just speed-read your Bible with your eyes. Read it aloud! Reading it aloud forces you to slow down, to chew and ponder its meaning. It will be good for you. Don’t just take my word for it. Look at all the references to this practice in the Bible.

3. An emphasis in both our Old Testament and New Testament texts

Exodus, Deuteronomy, 1 Kings, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Romans, Revelation. This is not some obscure Old Testament practice. It is found in eight different books of the Bible, and in a couple of them more than once.

² William L. Halladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, הגה (Logos Bible Software)

Is God trying to tell us something? Yes, he is!

If God says something once, man's duty is to obey it. But in the case of reading Holy Scripture aloud, we have perhaps a dozen or more different references, all speaking of "thy mouth."

The Bible, the Word of God, was given by God's mouth: "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words *of his mouth* more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

So what should be our response?

Psalm 119:103, How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Gospel (recite)

We ought to preach the gospel to ourselves.

Husbands and wives ought to read Scripture aloud to each other.

Families ought to read Scripture aloud together.

Those who live alone ought to get into the habit of reading Scripture aloud.

The more we do this, the more God's word will become like honey to our taste.

Amen.