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# [Week 5] War of Words - He is King! Manuscript

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# Introduction

Good morning and welcome to the 5th class on the seminar we have been covering since the beginning of the year. If you notice, at the back of your handouts you will see that this is not simply a new class, it is the beginning of the second section of our series, *A New Agenda for our Talk.*

If this is your first time joining us, the first part focuses on making us aware of the War of Words that exist in our own hearts. All of us can bear witness to the fact that they have been injured by words and have injured others by words. And so the first part of this seminar sought to highlight how this problem of words is not a light issue. It is not a surface level matter that doesn’t count. You know, it is easy to be tempted to think of words as inconsequential – after all, aren't they simply a string of syllables put together in a coherent fashion? Truly, this is not the case. Think of how an off-comment someone important to you said to you this morning, last week or even 5 years ago. Some of those words still stings in our hearts as the memory of them rings in our minds. Therefore, words are not just syllables; they have value. *Talk is not cheap* (the title of the first part). One key verse that underpinned this idea that we looked at was Proverbs 18:21: **“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.”** For this reason, the solution to our word problems is not simply fixing our poor communication skills over an online course. Neither is it finding the necessary willpower within ourselves to commit to never use words in a damaging way. No. It goes much deeper than that. Nothing short of a gospel-induced heart change is sufficient to win the war of words.

And so, this is what the first part of the seminar was about. In the 1st class we saw the value of words as originating from God Himself who is the Great Speaker in Genesis 1:3 that made the world by the power of His Words. In the 2nd class we saw the effect of the speech of Satan in the Garden of Eden in corrupting the talk of all mankind. Adam and Eve gave heed to the lying tongue of the Devil and as a result their speech thereafter mirrored Satan's purposes rather than God’s. In the 3rd class we considered Jesus, the Word made flesh, as the hope for our words. And last week we saw how the idols of our hearts shape our talk. Praise God for all these things we have been learning so far.

Perhaps before we dive into the content of today's class, we could hear 2 or 3 people share on how the first part of the seminar has been of benefit thus far. [Allow for a few people to share]

If you are just joining us, welcome to the 5th class of this seminar on the War of Words. This class marks the start of the second part of the series, *A New Agenda for our Talk.* Why is it titled this way? In this section, we will get to see God’s grand plan for our talk. Today’s class and the next 5 that follow will seek to put before us a Biblical vision for our talk that we can aim toward by the grace of God. God is the author of speech and therefore it is only right to seek to understand His design if we’re going to align our speech to His. And so, where does His grand plan for our talk begin? It begins by understanding and valuing His sovereign rule. This leads me to the second and main point on our handouts…

# Understanding God’s Sovereignty

Having a firm grasp on knowing and loving the sovereignty of God is the bedrock upon which we build our world of talk that glorifies God and benefits others. A life of godly communication is rooted in a personal recognition of the sovereignty of God. I know, I know… this is quite jarring. It’s like one of those YouTube videos that say *“Number five will shock you!”* I know many of us were not expecting to start here and are wondering “what does the sovereignty of God have to do with our speech?”

As shocking as it may sound, that indeed is the reality of the matter. You see, in the previous classes we saw that our word problems are heart problems; and our heart problems arise from the fact that we desire control over people and circumstances in ways that favor our self interests. Words become tools for our unbelieving and unsanctified hearts to get what they want without the help of God. Our words often reveal our attempt to control things for our own perceived sense of what is good… If our words will not flow out of a heart that rests in God’s control, they will certainly flow from one that seeks control.

Some examples to help us see this: It is easier for a parent to use threats to draw out respect for themselves from a child rather than trust God to transform their hearts to respect Him more than themselves. It is easier for a wife to manipulate her husband into doing what she wants rather than trust God and lovingly submit to the leadership of her husband. It is easier for a young man desiring marriage to lie to win a lady’s heart rather than trust God and make an honest noble pursuit. It is easier to speak words of flattery to a friend rather than correct them in love, trusting God to maintain your friendship… All these scenarios and many more show a lack of rest and trust in the rule and reign of God over all things.

It is only when we submit to the rule of God, who has a perfect plan and is in complete control, that we begin to live and speak as God designed. Only here will the idolatry of our hearts that leads to idol words be broken. Only here will our words be freed from being tools for our selfish agenda. We will no longer speak for our own control and glory, we will rather speak for His purposes and glory.

Understanding the sovereignty of God is also a valuable tool against the universal temptation of fantasy. When we fantasize, we go into a world of our own making where we rule as absolute sovereigns. Everyone does our bidding. Every situation unfolds according to our wills. In this world we are always right. In our minds we function unchallenged as God. This world exists for our pleasure and operates exactly as we desire. Fantasy can be one way we fulfill a heart’s desire to be Lord over our circumstances and relationships. Therefore, we need a firm understanding of God's rule now more than ever to aid us in fighting this corrupt tendency in us and instead take delight and rest in His rulership.

And so, what does the Bible say about the sovereignty of God? We will consider 7 meanings listed in the handouts.

1. Firstly, when the Bible talks about God’s sovereignty it means that He rules unchallenged over all the universe:
   1. This means that God truly is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. He has no peer; no equal. It means that the entire universe operates according to his good pleasure. No one can stand in the way of His will. No one can advise Him. No one can question Him. He alone sits on the throne of the universe and he alone rules over all things seen and unseen, living and non-living, and all things in heaven and on earth. Consider the text *Dan 4:34-35* [Someone to read]

*[34] At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever,*

*for his dominion is an everlasting dominion,*

*and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;*

*[35] all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,*

*and he does according to his will among the host of heaven*

*and among the inhabitants of the earth;*

*and none can stay his hand*

*or say to him, “What have you done?”*

* 1. Now, what does knowing this mean for our communication? For one thing, it means that I will never be in a situation, location or relationship in which God is not presently and actively ruling. All moments of life are His moments, not our moments. Therefore every word I speak should acknowledge His control. I can be free from the temptation to give into panic and speak in a way that serves to gain my own control on things. I can be free to speak in a way that brings God glory.

1. Secondly, when the Bible talks about God’s sovereignty it means that he rules over all things for the Church. God's rule has a direction and purpose to it. Not only does God rule over the entire universe. He rules it positively for the benefit of His people. Wow! What a thought! The God who made the universe rules it for the benefit of His people. This is what the Scriptures testify about: He breathed life into dust to make man in His image; He raised up rulers and nations and has cast them down; He has harnessed the forces of nature; He has raised up prophets, judges, Kings and apostle; ultimately He sent His Son to live on earth and die a criminal’s death. Why? To raise up a people for His own possession (1 Pet 2:9).

This does not however mean that He rules so that we get what we want. God is not a genie in a bottle for the believer. Rather, His rule is for our *Redemptive* benefit. That is; He rules the universe so that His redemptive purposes for us and His redemptive promises to us might be fulfilled. He rules so that the justification, sanctification and glorification he promises are fulfilled. Consider Ephesians 1:20-22 [Someone Read]

*[20] that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, [21] far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. [22] And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, (ESV)*

This means that our lives can be free of the much complaining we do about the situations we find ourselves in: our bills, tough neighbours, difficult job, rebellious children, distant husband, unappreciative wife, ineffective church leaders, broken-down car, heavy taxes, inability to afford a “good”vacation etc… Instead we will be confident and praise God that through all these seemingly negative ways, His is positively ruling over them for our redemptive benefit. It is very easy to praise God for what we think and have determined that is good; a physical healing, a financial blessing, restored relationship etc. This however forgets that God is active in every moment of our lives for our redemptive good. We are exactly where God wants us to be for His promises to us may come to pass. When we recognize this, we speak with humility and worship rather than pridefully complaining.

1. Thirdly, when the Bible talks about God’s sovereignty it means that He rules over the specific details of our lives. God’s rule is not just global or universal. It is individual. It is hard to imagine how God rules over the individual lives of billions of people when we can hardly organize our own lives successfully. As grand as this is, it is true. Consider Paul’s speech in Athens (Acts 17:26):

*[26] And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, (ESV)*

God determines the habitations of all people. This should be a comfort. Sometimes our communication problems are over things we think are problems that are actually not. The family you were born into is not a mistake. The children in your household are not a mistake.

1. Fourthly, when the Bible talks about God’s sovereignty it means that He rules over every aspect of our salvation. This aspect of God’s sovereignty has been the most controversial in the church, yet it is clearly portrayed in scripture as the basis of the security of every believer. The Bible shows us beyond doubt that our salvation exists on the rock of God’s will — even the first breath of our faith has been determined by him before the foundation of the world. Consider Ephesians 1:4-6

*[4] even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love [5] he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (ESV)*

So what is God’s purpose in his sovereignty over our salvation? It is twofold: (1) His sovereign grace undermines all human pride and thoughts of self-sufficiency as we recognize our complete dependence on him. If there is any spiritual life, faith, love, goodness, grace, character, wisdom, etc… It is solely because of God’s grace and not our own strength. (2) The pride we would otherwise have in ourselves we would redirect it and have it in the Lord as Paul would say in 1 Corinthians 1:31, *“Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”* In the whole chapter of Ephesians 1 the repeated phrase, *“To the praise of His glory”* runs through it indicating to us what God has in mind: that His rule over every aspect of our salvation would result in an eternal chorus of praise to Him.

This therefore is the foundation of biblical communication. Our words ought to reflect an attitude of worship that recognizes our utter dependency on God for salvation. A failure to recognize this will infuse our words with pride in ourselves and contempt for others. It is not hard to imagine how one can be unkind in their speech towards a brother or sister, or even their children, who may be struggling with sin. It is not hard to imagine how one can express words of impatience and contempt to a waiter is not doing a good job… When we think we are good by our own efforts, our words lack compassion.

1. Fifthly, when the Bible talks about God’s sovereignty it means that He rules over circumstances for our sanctification. Consider Romans 8:28-29

*Romans 8:28–30*

*[28] And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [29] For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (ESV)*

This says that God is at work in all things to the end of conforming us to the image of His Son. In James 1:2-4, James is essentially saying that trials are God’s tools towards his sanctification in us. Therefore, grumbling about them is to grumble against being chosen by God in Christ to be holy as He is holy.

Praise that comes from a heart of worship is the only legitimate response to these circumstances. When things do not go according to how we plan, or when unexpected difficulties show up on our doorstep, our tendency is to forget that God is more interested in shaping our holiness from the situation than He is in us actually overcoming the situation. If you are a schedule-oriented person and your day is irreversibly disrupted in the morning on your way to work, say by a car breakdown; consider how God is using that circumstance to mature your faith in Him. A failure to recognize this will cause our words to be bitter and foul to everyone, even our spouses and children, who had nothing to with the breakdown.

1. Sixthly, when the Bible talks about God’s sovereignty it means that He rules over relationships for our sanctification. This point is related closely to the fifth point. The major difference is that instead of circumstances it is people. God has ordained relationships in our lives that we may be conformed to the image of Christ through them. Therefore the people in your life are not a mistake, they are God’s instrument for your sanctification as well you are to them. In the church, we do not decide who gets to be our brothers and sisters. This is a prerogative of God alone, who for the sake of his glory, brings different kinds of people to salvation. Consider Ephesians 2:14-16

*Ephesians 2:14–16*

*[14] For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility [15] by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, [16] and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (ESV)*

The body of Christ is a body of former enemies reconciled to God and each other through Christ. And since God is still actively sanctifying His bride, elements of our former status as enemies are still present. And guess what? God has ordained it to be so: that through the rough edges of the individual members of the body of Christ, our character will be smoothened out.

Knowing this will have us respond differently to offenses that come to us from others, especially those to whom we are in Christ together. Our attitude also to those who are bold and loving enough to correct us will be one of humility. We won’t bemoan and speak ill concerning those whom God has placed in our lives

1. Lastly, when the Bible talks about God’s sovereignty it means that He rules over all things for His glory. Consider *Eph 1:5-6, 12, 14*

*Ephesians 1:5–6, 12, 14*

*[5] he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*

*[12] so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.*

*[14] who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (ESV)*

The glory of God is the ultimate end to which all things exist. Therefore our words should take into consideration this fact. We do not live for ourselves and therefore we should not think that our words are centered around what we want or feel at a moment. Our words should reflect the character and the glory of God.

# Conclusion

And so this is where the War of Words begins: it begins by grasping firmly God’s sovereign rule over all things.

**Getting Personal: The Battle for Control**

1. How does your communication reveal your frustration with people and circumstances?
2. In what way is your communication an attempt to take control?
3. How do you typically respond when your plans are thwarted?
4. How do you respond when God sends suffering or disappointment your way?
5. Do you encourage those around you to rest in God’s sovereign care? Do you point to the evidences of His loving hand? How?
6. Do you seek to speak in a way that encourages the work God is doing in others?
7. Do your words reveal that you are resting in God’s control or wrestling with it?