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The Unashamed Word of God

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, I do again, I thank you for the gifts that you bring to us over and over again, we just thank you for the gifts of moms and what an incredible blessing they are in our lives. We're just thankful for them. We're thankful for your son, we're thankful for the word that you've given us, I'm thankful for this conference that I'm giving another report on and just the blessings that you have poured out. And Father, I just pray this morning as we address these issues that have been raised at the conference again that you would by the power of your Holy Spirit give us the ability to take in the information, the ability to again make it of permanent value in our lives. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, this is my third, this is really my final report on the Together for the Gospel conference, and I give you these reports because you really, you've sent us as a church down to Kentucky and I feel it's important for us to try to impart to you as much of the blessing that we received so that you could have some of that

blessing as well. And as I'd mentioned a number of times, the conference centered around one word that applies very much to how we present the gospel, and that word is "unashamed." And so far we've heard Mark Dever describe how the culture has turned against Christians in this country, and that religious liberty and every reason itself seems to be under attack. He gave us a message that took us back to the Assyrian attack on ancient Israel, and in that message we saw the fact that sometimes God takes away our hope in order to drive us deeper through prayer into his kingdom.

And next we saw through David Platt the role that desperate prayer has in God's providence. Last week we looked at how the Old Testament laws against defilement pointed directly to Christ as the one who absorbed the defilement of sin in our behalf. We saw the gospel in the Old Testament book of Numbers through Ligon Duncan, and this week I want to finish up my report on the conference by touching on a number of messages. I didn't get to every single one of them but there's a number I'm going to touch on today, and all of them point to the unashamed gospel and to the command to spread that gospel. The conference spoke to the need to give full and absolute attention to the word of God, to the God of the word, and to the role that we have in getting that word out.

And first to the word of God, it was Kevin DeYoung who spoke to the

absolute trustworthiness of the inerrant, infallible word of God by taking us directly to its source, that is, he took us to Jesus Christ. He took us to the author of the scriptures themselves and to his statements about the word of God. The Gospel of John contains one very pertinent statement that DeYoung spoke about, it's a statement that Jesus makes in *John 10:31-36*. It says this, it says: *The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came -- and Scripture cannot be broken -- do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the son of God'?*

This is a very intriguing passage of scripture. And what we see here at the very beginning is Jesus in this passage is demonstrating first of all his superior knowledge of the scriptures, and again as DeYoung pointed out, he's also puncturing the pretensions of the Pharisees. He points out that Jesus in response to their accusations that he actually claimed to be God quotes an obscure line from an obscure Psalm -- that's Psalm 82 --

to make his case. Let me just read to you Psalm 82. It's this: A Psalm of Asaph. God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment: "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?" Selah. Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. I said, "You are gods, sons of the most high, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince." Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

See, Jesus is using the scripture and in his defense he raises the question of the use of the word "gods" with a little "G," and he raises that by pointing out that even earthly rulers -- for that matter, wicked earthly rulers have been referred to by the author of the scriptures as "gods," again little "G." So what Jesus is doing, he's saying in effect if God himself calls these wicked rulers gods, well then why are you giving me a hard time because I who have been consecrated and sent by the very same God referred to myself as a son of God. What matters here is not really the main argument that Jesus makes according to DeYoung but rather a tiny little five-word parenthetical phrase that Jesus utters in the

middle of that argument that the Pharisees and all of those around them would have taken for granted which for some they still have a very difficult time, and the phrase is in verse 35. He says: *If he called them gods to whom the word of God came -- and Scripture cannot be broken -- do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming' because I said, 'I am the son of God?' "And Scripture cannot be broken."* You see, it's that little phrase that says it all. Even the Pharisees understood that the final authority in everything was the scripture. So Jesus refers to an obscure passage in an obscure Psalm as being part of the scripture and essentially he ends the argument there. And what he's saying is if Jesus treats the scripture as the ultimate in divine authority, do we have any reason not to? DeYoung points out that dozens of times Jesus appeals to a word in the scripture by saying, "have you not heard," understanding that hearing God's word that way literally settles the matter. Six times he chides the Pharisees by saying, "Have you not read," stating that by virtue of something being in the scripture, it settles the argument. In *Matthew 5:17*, Jesus states the case directly, he says this, he says: *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished."* You know, not an iota, not a

jot. We say "not a jot or a tittle of the law," it's tiniest little part of the grammars of the law, not any tiny part of the law meant everything that Jesus referred to in the Sermon on the Mount and then everything that the scripture lays out from our intentions to our actions. When Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in *Matthew 5:27*, he said, "*You have heard that it was said 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart,*" he was expanding what the word of God had already laid down to include not just the actions but the intent of the heart, and he was tying it directly to what had been written in the scripture. He says, "You have heard." Well, it was heard because it was first spoken by God to Moses, then it was written down in God's word and because it was written in God's word it had the ultimate authority. It's an authority that Jesus stated would not pass away until all would be completely fulfilled in him.

You know, Jesus also treated biblical history as fact. In *Matthew 12:38* it says this: *Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days*

and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here."

You know, as DeYoung puts it, Jesus is stating biblical history as historical fact. And so either a great fish and the men of Nineveh and Jonah the prophet swallowed by that fish and the Queen of Sheba and Solomon himself existed and Jesus was historically accurate or none of them existed and much of modern scholarship is accurate. The point is you have to choose. It is either Jesus or it is contemporary scholarship. And he accepted that the history of scripture was accurate because Jesus knew that the God of history was its author. In *Matthew 19:3* it says this, it says: *And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.'"* You see, Jesus couldn't have said that unless he believed the creator of the universe was the very same one who wrote in

Genesis 2:24 the very same words. Jesus understood that the quote from a verse from Scripture was the very same as quoting from God himself. The Scripture itself speaks with the very same authority.

Galatians 3:8: And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham. Mark 12:36: David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared. Hebrews 3:7-8: Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says. Romans 9:17: For the scripture says to Pharaoh. See, the Scripture itself speaks with its own authority. Again, DeYoung points out when Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert, as he said, he didn't shoot him down with super powered lightening bolts from his eyes. In Matthew 4, he simply said, "It is written," "It is written, "It is written." And he said that because he knew the ultimate authority was the written word of God. It is that authority which is under assault today. I mean, there are some today who now accuse evangelicals of the sin of bibliolatry. I don't know if you've ever heard that before, bibliolatry, that's the sin of worshiping the Bible itself as if it was an idol. That's what we're accused of. They say we have to look at the Bible through the imagined eyes of Jesus as if Jesus is standing above Scripture critiquing it. So instead of wrestling with difficult passages, they now dismiss them by saying, "Oh, Jesus would not have approved of that." So they use the author of scripture to dismiss

scripture.

Well, the bottom line question when it comes to scripture is who has the final authority in your life? Does the Scripture answer to our understanding of time and space, history and grammar, or do we answer to the Scripture's final authority? This is how DeYoung puts it. He says: "We must not seek to know the word who is divine apart from the divine words of the Bible. And we ought not to read the words of the Bible without an eye to the word incarnate. When it comes to seeing God and his truth in Christ and in the holy scripture, one is not more reliable or more trustworthy or more relevant than the other. Scripture, because it is the breathed out word of God possesses the same authority as the God man Jesus Christ. Submission to the scriptures is submission to God. Rebellion against the scriptures is rebellion against God."

Well, shifting gears from the word of God to the God of the word was the task of John Piper. And John Piper spoke about an area of scripture that people seldom, if ever, venture anywhere near. He spoke about Romans 9. His message was entitled "Persuading, Pleading, and Predestination; human means in the miracle of conversion." And he just opened up by addressing the question: Why in the world did God put Romans 9 in the scripture and why did he put it right there in the middle of Romans? He pointed out that

Romans 8 is the high point of Romans, and Romans really is the high point of scripture. You see, in Romans 8 we learn over and over and over again the incredible privileges that belong to us because we are heirs with Christ. *Romans 8:16: The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.* Glory is going to be revealed to us. *Romans 8:18: For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* We've been predestined, called, justified, and glorified. *Romans 8:30: And those whom he predestined he also called, those whom he called he also justified, those whom he justified he also glorified.* And God who didn't spare his son will give us all things. *Romans 8:31: What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

Piper said think about this for a second, understand the entire universe has been created as a playground for us, a playground that we will be exploring with him for all of eternity. Finally Romans 8 tells us that God himself is on our side. *Romans 8:33: Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died --*

more than that, who was raised -- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? See, what Piper is saying is that Romans 8 is building an edifice, a structure that goes all the way up into eternity, and he says it needs footings that go down into forever. Romans chapter 9 is the footings, and they are rooted in the doctrine of unconditional election. You see, Paul is grappling in Romans 9 with the fact that of all the privileges and insights that were given to the Jewish people, they have by and large completely rejected the gospel and it has broken Paul's heart to see the hardness of his fellow countrymen and he's determined to explain why in spite of overwhelming rejection, the gospel itself has not failed, and his reason is rooted in God's sovereign choice, the fact that God chooses whom he chooses on the basis of his sovereign choice alone. *Romans 9:18: So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.* And we're not given the reasons why God chooses whom he chooses. Simply the clear stated fact over and over and over again that his choice is not based on anything that we do, and to do that, Piper took us to the verses that nobody ever wants to go to in Romans 9. It's *Romans 9:6-13. It says but it is not as though the word of God has failed.* That was Paul's concern. *For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of*

Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. What Piper is pointing out right from the start is that there's a difference between Israel and true Israel. One is simply the nation of Israel, the other is those who are chosen by God out of that nation. One is the children of flesh represented by Esau, the other is the children of promise represented by Jacob. He spoke of the only other dividing line that could have occurred between these two people groups was the line that had historically separated Isaac and Ishmael who were Abraham's two sons. God's unconditional election was not between Isaac and Ishmael and there's a reason why. It's because they were very, very different. You see, Isaac was the child of promise that God told Abraham he would miraculously provide. Ishmael was a child of the flesh that Abraham created by impregnating his handmaiden Hagar. And so if God were to make two separate people groups out of these people, then we would be able to point to the inherent differences between Ishmael and Isaac and glean some kind of conditions that we might say that God caused to favor Isaac over Ishmael. And Piper pointed out, I mean, after all, Ishmael had a gentile mother. Ishmael's mother was Abraham's handmaiden Hagar, and Isaac's mother was Sarah, Abraham's wife. Ishmael was 13 years older than Isaac and he had 13 years to do less than perfect

things. 13 years to do bad things. One could look at Ishmael and say, well, Isaac was chosen as a new and improved version of Ishmael, that he was chosen on the condition that he was really a better candidate than Ishmael. No, God couldn't break into two separate people groups two individuals that were that different. But you can't say that about Jacob and Esau. You see, God chose the twin sons of Isaac's wife Rebecca because they were identical in every respect. God said in *Romans 9:10*: *And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad -- in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls -- she was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, and Esau I hated."*

Those are hard words. What they say is very simple, God chose only Jacob and not Esau, and he was chosen unconditionally. Jacob did nothing to deserve being chosen. Piper points out the way God sets up this passage is to be overwhelmingly certain that both parties were absolutely exactly equal. Jacob and Esau were twins. They had the same mother, the same father, the same time frame, the same womb, and because they were chosen before birth at the exact time when neither of them had any time to do anything good or bad, there were no conditions whatsoever favoring one over the other. So God

is creating in Jacob and Esau an absolute equality between the two parties in order to emphasize and to point out the absolute lack of conditions that would cause him to choose one over the other. Because it was the same parents, the same time frame, the same inability to sin and the very same womb itself, God reduces the only reason for his choice to what he says in *Romans 9:11*. And this is what he says: *Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad -- in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls -- she was told, "The older will serve the younger."* As it is written, *"Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."* God is just stating it. God chooses with no conditions whatsoever.

So we ask, well, what affect does this have on Paul? Is Paul proud, is he arrogant, is he contemptuous? Well he's anything but. In fact, he is weeping. *Romans 9:1: I am speaking the truth in Christ -- I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit -- that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* Paul is not contemptuous. He is weeping and he's laboring with them, pleading with them. *Romans 9:11-14: In order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.* He's desperately praying for them. *Romans 10:1: Brothers, my*

heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. Paul is reeling under the absolute certainty of Jesus' statement in *John 6:65*: *And he said, "This is why I told you, no one -- no one -- can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."* As Piper puts it, Paul sees a sea of unbelief and he remembers that he was plucked out of that sea gasping for one reason and one reason only: *It's Ephesians 3:7*, he says: *Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

And you know in this respect you and I are absolutely in the same boat as Paul. You see, we, too, are surrounded by a sea of unbelief and we, too, have been plucked gasping and sputtering from that very same sea for no reason for no condition whatsoever other than what God says in *Romans 9:11*: *In order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls.* So do we have any reason to be prideful? Do we have any reason to be arrogant or contemptuous? Is there any condition whatsoever that God saw in us that caused him to choose us?

Ephesians 2:8-9 addresses it directly: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Well, here's the question for us. You see, Paul saw the grace of God in his life and he saw the sea of unbelief around him and he wept and he pleaded and he prayed for opportunities to minister God's grace to his fellow countrymen. The question is: Do those words describe your attitude? Do they describe my attitude toward the lost? *Romans 9:1: I am speaking the truth in Christ -- I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit -- that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* Now can you and I say that along with Paul?

Thabiti Anyabwile actually opened up the conference and he opened it up with a question. He said: "Can we ask ourselves if we feel unashamed when we ask ourselves about our own lives of personal evangelism?" He pointed to areas in his life where he felt he was clearly deficient. He said, number one, I don't care enough about the lost. Flat out confessed that. And number two, he said sometimes the gospel itself, particularly the hard parts of the gospel like the call to repentance, well, that part causes him to wince. Here's why. He said folks today so thoroughly identify with their sin that the idea of repenting, the idea of turning away from their sin to many seems like the idea of turning away from

their own identity. Hence those who call on others to repent as part of the gospel proclamation become the target of accusations that they are heartless, that they are intolerant, that they are bigots. And so very simply, very easily we, too, can become ashamed of this gospel.

Just this past week, I found out about a show that was supposed to be produced on Better Homes and Garden TV -- never heard of it before -- it was a show about flipping houses. The show was supposed to be called "Flip It Forward." And this is the description that the network gave on what the show was supposed to be. They say this, "After a decade of flipping houses for profit, brothers David Benham and Jason Benham now help families buy the homes they never thought they could afford. In each episode, the guys help a deserving family find a fixer-upper and transform it into their forever home with a healthy dose of sibling rivalry between the brothers along the way." Well, you see, that show's not going to be on TV, because word got out that the Benham brothers had actually participated in picketing at abortion clinics. Word got out that they had also made clear and compelling statements that identified the homosexual life-style as sinful, something that was necessary to repent of in order to receive the gospel. Well, I'm sure you can imagine what the results were when this information was leaked to the press. It didn't take long at

all, the show was immediately canceled. And we were told, don't worry, in its place is a new show that's going to be produced by Ellen DeGeneres. I was incredibly impressed by the brothers' statement. This is their public statement that they said on the entire situation. This is their words in response to what happened. They said, "The first and last thoughts on our minds as we begin and end each day is: Have we shined Christ's light today? Our faith is the fundamental calling in our lives, and the centerpiece of who we are. As Christians we are called to love our fellow man. Anyone who suggests that we hate homosexuals or people of other faiths is either misinformed or lying. Over the past decade, we've sold thousands of homes with the guiding principle of producing value and breathing life into each family that has crossed our path, and we do not, nor will we ever discriminate against people who do not share our views. We were saddened to hear HGTV's decision. With all of the grotesque things that can be seen and heard on television today, you would think there would be room for two twin brothers who are faithful to our families, committed to biblical principles, and dedicated professionals. If our faith costs us a television show, then so be it." I said God bless the Blenham brothers.

You see, in spite of what it has cost them, they remain unashamed of the gospel and its call to repentance. And you know, if there

was one main thought that we came away with from this Unashamed Gospel conference, it's that the pressure on the gospel is not going to decrease. Actually it's going to increase, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. You see, it is that kind of pressure that is going to show the church who is truly one of them and who is truly not. The half-converted are going to run for the doors. *1 John 2:18* says this, it says: *Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.* You see, it was pressure back then that exposed the false believers of that day and it is pressure today that's going to serve the very same purpose.

And finally, John MacArthur gave a presentation in which he said the gospel really is a matter of words, and whether we're defending the word of God or appealing to the God of the word, the bottom line, it is our task and our privilege to get that word out. John MacArthur pointed out the difference between Jesus' words and his works. See, the people uniformly loved his works and they detested his words.

He took us through the familiar territory of John's gospel and the way the crowds reacted to his miracles. *John 6:2*, it says: *And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.* See, they followed because they loved these works that he was doing, the works of healing. And the same group also received the great work of this mass feeding, Jesus feeds 5,000 men, it's about 25,000 individuals. He just miraculously feeds them all. The next day some of the crowd approached Jesus and this is what he says to them, this is *John 6:26*: *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."* Then they said to him, *"What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"* Jesus answered them, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."*

So right off the bat here Jesus begins to draw a contrast between his works and his words. You see, the crowd loves the works of Jesus. But when it comes to his words, they instantly begin to balk. In verse 30: *So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?"* What they're saying is forget about the words, Jesus, just give us

the works. *"What works do you perform?"* I mean, you have to really stretch to get the gall of what they're saying. Just yesterday he's fed 25,000 people. Already they're saying it's not enough. They loved the works; they hated the words. So they say in verse 31: *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat.'* You know what they're saying? Jesus, you fed us once. Big deal. Our fathers got fed for 40 years in the desert. Can you top that? Verse 32: *Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* They said to him, *"Sir, give us this bread always."* Jesus, we're delighted to accept your works. Just you can keep the words. By the time we get to the end of the chapter, Jesus has upped the ante by telling them a word they really, really don't want to hear. This is *John 6:53*: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."* Again, give us the works, Jesus; you can keep your words. Verse 60: *When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can*

listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning those who were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, "This is why I told you no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

So Jesus gives them the secret, and he gives us the secret as why we still do the hard work of giving not just the works, but the words. "No man can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." Verse 66: After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the holy one of God."

You see, Peter alone gets it. He says, "You have the words of eternal life." And as we look at the scripture, we see this pattern repeated throughout the gospel: The world loves the works; it detests the words. Jesus' whole life in ministry was not the works, it was the word. John 8:30: As he was saying these things,

many believed in him. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:37: I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you." John 8:45: But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." John 6:63: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." John 8:51: "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." And finally John 12:48: "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day." See, the word was everything to Jesus. MacArthur said sometimes you hear this phrase, "Preach the gospel, preach the gospel, preach the gospel, and if you must, use words." He said, "I don't know who said that and I don't want to attribute it to the wrong person because it is so stupid." His words. He said, "You can't preach the gospel without words. That's an

absolute lie." He said, "Preach the gospel and always use words." He said, "Of course people will welcome you at first when you feed them, when you give them medicine, when you heal them and then he said this, "But don't be under the delusion that because you got a welcome response to the easiest kind of service, giving people exactly what they need and want to survive in this world, don't be confused that that is in any way how they will respond when you do the hard work of evangelism and call them to repentance and faith. People will not reject you for your works. They will indeed reject you (if you're preaching the gospel) for your words." MacArthur's conclusion is very simple: It's always the words, always the words, always the words. If you're going to do the work of evangelism, then you must speak the words of the gospel, and whether it's defending the word of God or appealing to the God of the word, spreading the gospel will always come down to a matter of words, and those words will always be met with the hostility of natural man.

But here's our key, here's the key that unlocks this all. God has the final word, and the final say. *John 6:65: He said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."* You see, it's the certain knowledge that we are merely God's ambassadors unleashing his grace and his power when we openly and honestly share the gospel. I've never saved a single

soul in my entire life, but God has privileged me to be part of his plan to save the lost that he has chosen by allowing me to savingly share his gospel so that he by his power can save. That's our privilege, and it's also our responsibility. God puts it this way in 2 Corinthians 5:18: *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For that you need words. Let's pray.*

Father God, I just, I thank you for the conference, I thank you for the theme of being unashamed of the gospel, and I recognize, Lord, that task is growing more and more daunting every single day. Father, we are watching a culture collapse around us, we are watching the hostility of natural man grow unfettered and far more readily available for people to access in response to hearing the true cause of the gospel. So Lord, I pray for us, I pray for the courage to be unashamed, the willingness to speak the truth, and the ability to trust you for the grace and the power to do just that, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.