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## The Word of Life

*"Holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."*

Philippians 2:16 AKJV

We cannot possibly comprehend the sadness felt by people who are mute. They cannot put their thoughts and feelings into words. They didn't receive the blessing of speech from God; thus, they cannot speak - they are mute. They can truly and completely grasp just how meaningful the blessing of the capacity to speak is.

Sometime, people listening to everyday human speech are shocked by how we exchange that valuable currency from God into worthless loose change. Humans talk to mislead, to misrepresent lies as truth, to curse, to cause hurt, to wound, to kill, to shout, to squabble, and they use the same "instrument of voice" to laugh and cry. We have managed to turn this "instrument of voice" into something like a crushed violin from which the soul has fallen out. Personal ambition to get ahead in this world has become a frightening mask that hides our true identity, and misleads our fellow human beings. Our combine harvester of words keeps on threshing, and even though we didn't sow anything, we hope for a harvest. God gifted to us this ability to enrich our lives, and we often impoverish our lives with it.

We smile and nod in agreement with the commonly used, wise Greek adage: "I have often regretted having spoken; I never regretted having kept silent." Such could be the slogan of people who are held responsible for their words.

If such was be the true meaning and measure of our speech, we would concur with the Hungarian writer who expressed his view the following way: "I wonder why God didn't restrict our speech to a few thousand words, so, those who would waste those words would run out of them, and became mute. I'm certain all of us would think twice before starting to speak."

I agree that we ought to exercise that kind of care. We ought to be careful about what we say, how we say it, when we say it, and to whom we say it. Speaking on our mother tongue preserved - - on a rich and personal scale - our struggles with our external and inner worlds, all the colors and hues of feelings, and the effort to express all of our thoughts and feelings. We became the human beings we are today, in part, through our speech.. We ought to respect our ability to speak, and, thus, avoid becoming inhumane through our words. In people who are unable to express their thoughts in their mother tongue, the words are dead or dying on their lips, as well in their souls. The *word of life* is dead or dying inside of them.

The *word of life* belongs to the living, to those who are alive. It is made audible and perceptible not only by words, but also by love, respect, benevolence, forgiveness, understanding, truthfulness, loyalty, and many other virtuous aspects of religious ethics. Thus, the word of life becomes perceptible when there is a complete person at its source, a person whose life history and deeds live up both to the casual and the celebratory words spoken by that person. It is futile to record a speech to a tape or to a vinyl record, as speech by itself will slowly decay. If the saying by Suto Andras is true that a language dies one word at a time, then it would also have to be true that people become older one word at a time, as they become mute after their final word. All the words used to express thoughts and feelings during an entire lifetime will die with that person if that person only spoke but didn't say anything. From that we can learn a characteristic, determining feature of the word of life. Speech that goes no further than mundane, everyday topics is not enduring. Such speech will disappear into thin air when those mundane topics are gone, or when the person speaking the mundane words is gone. Apart from its momentary effect it has no impact, because it doesn't have anything enduring to say. It is the "obituary" of our existence. That is the kind of speech that allows us to conclude that *I did run in vain, I did labor in vain*; I spoke, but I didn't say anything.

The content of speech is another determining factor that qualifies speech as word of life: it is not full of contradiction, it is not untruthful, it has an unchanging and enduring meaning to it; it is eternal truth that can be understood in any language. The consequence of the impartiality of the word of life is that no single interest group or community can monopolize it. We ought to measure ourselves to this living benchmark, and acquiesce to its truth. Instead of expecting praise when we can speak several languages, we ought to expect praise when we can understand the universal language of the eternal word of life. Those who speak the word of life ensure that it can be understood; they endow it with clever meaning and with a wide spectrum of emotions, so we can make sense of it and comprehend it. That way it can be a seed planted in our souls to direct our actions in accordance with the word of life. That someone, the one who speaks the word of life, the one who exists inside and outside ourselves, is God. His speech, His words, and His message encompass everything, and are directed at everyone. Human nature embraces His words without secondary or college education; the universe, without a single lesson, hears those words of life. The speech is words themselves; the words are our personal Spirit. It is the connection between all aspects of the world; the cause, the reason, the love, the benevolence, the justice, the divine nature of our humanity; all beginnings and all the endings are in it. Its language is universal. Only human beings are endowed with the capacity to hear and to speak the "word of life". Those words are not expressed as crossword puzzles, or riddles, or wordplays, but, rather, in those eternal truths that rise above the mundane. Beethoven composed some of his music while he was deaf. Szanto Gyorgy was blind when he wrote his novels that emanate the "word of life". The perception of the "word of life" doesn't depend on our sensory organs; a wholesome mind and soul are the needed eyes and ears, and a life of action is the proof of understanding its meaning. Those words shape our instincts, and our entire life. The word of life from God becomes our life. To a deaf mind and soul those words are inaudible. Those people whose lives show the effect of the word of life earned respect and deserve praise; they have reached the summit of the mountain of universality. They can say that "We have not run in vain, and not labored in vain".

The hermit way of life is gone. It is not sufficient that I comprehend and live by every sentence of the word of life. It is not sufficient that I, like others who withdrew from a hurtful world, only listen to the word of life by myself, like we listen to a radio or a tape player through headphones. It is not sufficient only to comprehend and perceive God, because that is an imperfect hearing of the word of life. Conducting one's action throughout life speaks volumes about whether someone does or doesn't understand those "clear words", and speaks volumes to both people and to God alike.

Jesus was the one who understood best the word of life by God. Jesus demonstrated that both through his words and through his life. Those who listened to him learned the purpose and will of God. They listened to God through Jesus, and they learned those words are about life, for the living, and for everybody. Those words are about improving the circumstances of mankind, and making it more true. Similarly, apostle Paul wanted to bring about a better and a truer life. He believed in that life and spoke out on its behalf. He brought that message to all the congregations; he ran and labored for that goal; he lived for that and only for that. From the distance of two thousand years we can conclude that he didn't do it in vain. His life, his words, his travels and his adversities weren't about making a celebratory statement, but, rather, about the unceasing revelation of the word of life. They were about being a disciple. They were about confession of faith. He wasn't embarrassed by the message of Jesus. He wasn't embarrassed by his life.

We, on the other hand, ought to feel embarrassed often – even if we admit this only to ourselves - because of our words, our statements, and our actions. The reason for that is that we shape our thoughts, feelings and our willpower according to mundane, temporary standards. The mundane world always changes. Often we have to renounce and feel embarrassed by our words and actions in the past. Often we have a chance to admit - before we speak our last words - that we did run in vain and labor in vain, that we didn't earn to be praised, and that we cannot gloat about our lives. We feel cheated by the disappointing aspects of our view of life, our hearing, our intellect, our willpower. *It's just human* we say, and we keep on living as before. That is a cycle of insanity. That is the testament to a life with a deaf and mute world view.

If anyone would be so rude as to call your deaf, you might declare that person your lifelong enemy. Mankind, declare me your enemy! You are deaf! You don't hear the word of life by God, the words from your soul. I see that, I hear that from the conduct of mankind. God talks about peace; mankind hears it as war. God talks about love; mankind interprets it as anger and hate. God calls for truth, but mankind's life is full of unabashed lies. When God says we, mankind says I. God says give, mankind says take away. The entire world becomes lifeless upon such speech by mankind, and the speech becomes a funeral sermon.

May all of you, and the people of your household hear the word of life from God, and serve Him so you can serve your fellow human beings, make your life the true life, converse in the *word of life* with God and with your fellow human beings. Amen.