

God's Word is the Final Word

By Bobby Schuller

I just want to begin today by saying one thing and if you don't hear anything, hear at least this one thing. In our world people will say things to you and say things over you, but no matter how disheartening those things are, God is also saying something to you and something over you. And his word is the last word and it is good. No matter how bad the news is that you've just gotten, God has good news and you deserve good news. And your good news is coming. Don't throw it away.

In our anxious world, one of the things that make us feel anxious in the world we're living in is that we hear these things all the time. We hear words on the news, we read it in the newspaper, and we hear it from friends. And then sometimes that crosses over. And, when it crosses over into our lives, when people say, for example, "You've lost your job," or "You're sick," or "Something has happened to one of your kids," or whatever, it's so easy to own that, to take it at face value, and to say, "This is true."

But what Christ teaches us is that we must build our lives not on the word of the world, but on the word of God. And the word of God is the final word. It is the last word, it is a word for you, and it is good. So no matter what words you're hearing during the week, no matter what

words you've heard recently, whether they're from the enemy or from the world, God has a word for you and it is good. You have good news coming. Release your faith and trust in a good God of good news. That's, in fact, what the gospel means. The gospel means good news, and that's true. He really does have good news for you and a good word for you.

When I was called as the lead pastor of this church, I remember I was blown away. I'd been volunteering as an interim pastor/speaker for about a year and a half when the church called a vote. So, the consistory, the board, sent a vote to the congregation. The congregation gathered. There were 300-some members of the church that were there, and they voted on whether or not I should become the pastor of this church. I was honestly a little nervous because as churches go, you hear things, bad things all the time, about the things people will say about you, or you just don't know. And I was especially concerned because of my age. At the time, I think I was 32. I'm 34 today. And most of the congregation was older, a lot of professors, business owners, CEOs in our church. I just didn't know if I would be enough for this church.

When the church gathered and they voted, it was unanimous that they wanted me to step into the role of the senior pastor. And when I got that news, I mean I believed that the church would vote me in, but I

didn't think it would be unanimous. There wasn't one person that said no, and I was deeply touched by that.

When I was called as the lead pastor, three things happened as a result, and I believe it was a spiritual attack. The first thing was I got news that my grandma Schuller had died. Grandma Arvella. She was such an important part of the life of this church. If you've been here awhile, you know she essentially did all of the work to build the early part of the TV ministry that we have here. She was the producer; she was a lot of the brains behind the ministry of my grandfather. And when she died, it was a big surprise.

The second thing that happened, Hannah had had a sickness that she's had for four or five years and it had gotten so bad that her dad, who does well in business, paid to have her go to the Mayo Clinic, which is the best clinic in the world just to find out what was wrong, what was going on. And when we went to the Mayo Clinic, we'd been going for months, after about six or seven visits to Phoenix, they finally brought her in and they said, "I'm sorry, we can't help you. You're going to be sick the rest of your life," to my 28- or 29-year-old wife. So that happened. That was the same week. That was the day after my grandma died.

Then the third thing, and the biggest thing that has impacted our lives, was when our son had a massive grand mal tonic-clonic seizure, and had multiple ones in the hospital. We were taken to the hospital, and when they did the CT scan, they saw that he had what they thought was bruising on his brain, so they brought in child protective services because they thought that it was possible that Hannah and I, or a babysitter, or someone had hit Cohen with a baseball bat or something crazy. So we're there and they're essentially accusing us of child abuse. We have now lost any ability to say what they're going to do with our son, so they put him through a full body x-ray to make sure there were no bruises or broken bones anywhere. And we were helpless. We couldn't protest against putting our son under all this radiation.

And finally, when they did the MRI, they said it wasn't bruising, it was that his brain was essentially thick in that one area. So it wasn't bruising. They apologized. Child protective services left, but that was after two days. And we were sleeping in the hospital as he keeps having these seizures, and we almost missed my grandma's funeral because of Cohen's thing.

So in other words, in this order, they called me to be lead pastor and we heard three things: your grandma is dead, your wife will never be well, and your son is an epileptic.

So the first thing, one word comes from the Lord: Bobby, “Lead my church.” “Yes, Lord, we will.” To me and Hannah, actually. This calling was for Hannah and me. That’s another story altogether. It’s not just for me. But the Lord said to us, “Lead our church,” and we said, “Yes, Lord.” And the enemy said, “Your grandma is dead, your wife will never be well, your son is an epileptic.” These are the words that were spoken over us.

Let me just testify to you for a moment to say that it was very taxing, very distracting, and there was a moment where I thought, “How can I lead and care for my wife and my son?” I believed for a moment, briefly, that this was the final word. That this was the last word. And I’m here to testify to you that, number one, my grandma is not dead. That she’s more alive and awake than she’s ever been. I know that. And I even believe that she’s praying for us and praying for this church and blessing us. It’s what the scriptures call the “great cloud of witnesses.”

But second, even more importantly, Hannah is completely well. So it was a long journey but other than these little things, we beat it just by doing our own research and by trying this and that, she’s better.

And Cohen, the Lord has put a word on my heart and on Hannah’s heart that he’s going to be a miracle story. But let me tell you there were

about four months after that that he was having six to ten full-blown grand mal tonic-clonic seizures that were lasting four to six minutes each. We'd be on the road and he'd start having a grand mal. It was torture. And he's having maybe one a year now. He's developing normally. He's going to school. He's a little behind, but we believe that the Lord has put this in our heart that this is going to be a testimony.

The reason I start with that is that the enemy said, "Your grandma is dead," but God said, "No your grandma's alive, and she's blessing you, and she is blessed." And the enemy said, "Your wife will never be well," and the Lord said, "No, she's well today," and she is. And the enemy said, "Your son is an epileptic," but the Lord said, "No, he's going to be a testimony," and he already is.

I begin with these stories because all of us have testimonies. The scriptures say that they'll overcome the enemy by the word of their testimony, by their stories. And we must never forget the stories and the ways in which God has saved us and redeemed us because the battle between good and evil is always, first, a battle of words. And you're going to have to decide where you're going to put your faith.

Are you going to put your faith in the word of circumstance, or are you going to put your faith in the word of God? And I want to encourage

you put your faith and trust in the promises and the word that God has for you because God has good news. God delights in taking the worst news and making it the best news. He delights in taking bad news and making it good news. The worse the news is in your life, the better the news is that God has for you.

Have faith, trust in that, and believe in it. God's word for you is the last word, and it is good. It doesn't always happen the way we want and, yes, some of us will die, but let me tell you, even death for the believer is good news. As Paul said, "To live is Christ but to die is gain." All these testimonies you hear about people who went to heaven, they're like, "No! Don't send me back! I love it here." Even death to the believer is more like waking up than falling asleep.

I want to say over you, even if you've been told you're going to die, don't count on it yet. Go to God first. Let God tell you if your journey is over. Let him speak to your heart and if he says, "No," believe in it. Trust it and live it out. The doctor may have given you one year, but God may have ten or twenty years for you. Just release your faith and trust in him. There is no period unless it was placed there by God to whatever sentence it is in your life. God's word is the last word and it is good.

So, we are studying how do we live in an anxious world that is always making us worried with words? How do we live in that world and live in a way that is relaxed, rested, joy filled, trusting, and even successful? And the way we do that is by trusting in the word of God above all else. In Daniel chapter two, the prophet Daniel was then a young man that was taken from Israel by the Babylonians. And as he was in Babylonia, he was enrolled to be a part of the king's retinue. That means to serve the king as one of his magicians, satraps, and wise men.

One night, this young king, Nebuchadnezzar, has a terrible dream and he can't sleep all night. And apparently he keeps having this dream. And so he decides, "I need to find out what this dream is." And so he gathers these satraps and magicians in his court, he gives them an option, and it's a terrible one. He says, "I had a dream and I can't get this dream out of my head. I need you to interpret this dream, but the only way I'm really going to know whether this dream is interpreted correctly or not is if you tell me what I dreamt. Tell me what I dreamt, and then interpret it, and I'll know it's for real. And they're like, "Oh, well, tell us the dream and we'll interpret it for you." And he says, "No, no, no, no. Let me put it to you this way: if you can tell me the dream I had and interpret it, I will give you promotion and riches and glory. But if you cannot tell me the dream I had, and you cannot interpret the dream, I will cut you to pieces, and I will turn your house into rubble." That is the

word from the story. These are Babylonian kings. They just do not care about anybody except themselves.

And so now they're sweating and they say, "My lord! No one can do this in all your kingdom. No one can do this." And with that, he was furious and he had them all rounded up. He was about to execute them and literally cut them into actual pieces. One of the guys in this retinue who didn't know about this was Daniel, one of the young men, the leader of the king's guard comes to arrest Daniel, and Daniel's arrested and cut to pieces? Hold on, hold on. What's going on here? And he says, "Well, the king had this dream and none of you guys can tell him what the dream was, nor can you interpret it, so we're going to go ahead and cut you to pieces.

And so Daniel - and this is what I love - throughout the whole book of Daniel you see that he is never depending on the word of the king. And in this story, the king is the most powerful human being on earth. Daniel is constantly put in a position where he has to either impress or listen to the final word of the most powerful person in the world, or God. In this story, Daniel says, "Let me talk to the king." He talks to the king and he says, "Let me go pray to God and see if God will reveal this dream to me."

When he goes and prays, God not only tells Daniel the dream, he reveals the dream to Daniel, and Daniel goes back to the king. At a later time, we might talk about this dream; we don't have time today. If you want to read it, it's in Daniel chapter two. But he tells the king this dream and the king is so moved by the dream, which is actually bad news for the king, and he promotes Daniel and he makes Daniel the head of all of the wise men. And what I love about this story, what stands out most is when Daniel's told he's going to be cut to pieces there is this defiance that's like, "No, no, no. No, no, no, no. God is the king of Nebuchadnezzar and I'm going to talk to God first." And he very confidently has trained himself to go into prayer and hear from God. And if God says, "Yes, my servant Daniel, I'm sorry this is going to happen," it's almost like Daniel's fine with that, but it has to come from God, not from Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel's whole being and life trusts and relies on the word of God. To Daniel, God's word is the only thing that matters. It is the final word, and in this case, and for you, too. It is good.

See, God takes the bad news, "Daniel you're going to be cut to pieces," and turns it into good news, "Daniel you're going to be head of all the wise men, and you're going to be rich." That's pretty good news, isn't it. And Nebuchadnezzar is going to know me. So, God takes Daniel's bad news and turns it to good news. See, if Daniel had just taken it, freaked out, and said, "This is unfair, you can't do this," he would have

been in big trouble, right? He would have been like all the other guys that were screaming and said, “No.” No, he just said, “No, no, no. We’re going to talk to God,” and God gave him what he needed.

And the reason this is so important for today is that we have to understand that all Daniel needed was one word from God, and that is all you need. If God has given you his word, you can trust it, and you should. The thing with God’s word is that Jesus teaches us that the word of God is like a seed. And when it falls on your heart, and your heart has good soil, it takes time for that seed to be nourished and to grow. We have to become the kinds of people who don’t expect God to respond to our timing. Faith is all about timing. Faith is not about leaps and one-moment type things. Rather, it’s the day-to-day trusting that God’s word is the final word and that what he says is true. And in that way the word of God as a seed in your heart doesn’t get plucked from the ground. And what’s amazing is, as you nourish the word of God in your heart as the last word, as the most important word, and as a good word, you’ll start to see a green shoot come out. You’ll start to see things developing and things training, and that will build your faith. And, you’ll continue to pray and trust over that word until it grows in your life and bears tremendous fruit, and it will.

So don't give up your miracle. It's coming. Things always get the worst right before they're about to get better. I mentioned this weeks ago, but like in a run, like if you're running ten miles, mile ten is the hardest. So don't give up. You're almost there. And impatience is going to be the thing that ruins the word of God. The only thing that can ruin God's promise in your life is you, and most of the time even you can't ruin it. So don't give up. Trust in it. And you will, as you always have, you'll continue to trust in the word of God for you. I know you will. You know he is faithful and you continue to build your life on him. God turns Daniel's bad news into good news. He's going to turn your bad news into good news, too, I promise you. Have faith. It'll be okay.

There is so much power in words. So much power in words. The scriptures teach us that all of creation was made by God simply speaking it into existence. The fall also came when the serpent attacks the word of God and Adam and Eve. God says, "Do not eat of the tree," and the serpent says, "Did God really say not to eat of the tree?" And they're like, "Yes, he did." He's like, "Well, God said that because he doesn't want you to become like him. You'll become all powerful knowing good and evil.

See, that's what the enemy does. Before the enemy attacks you, he always attacks first the word of God in your heart. Don't give in. Don't trust in the word of the world, don't trust in the word of darkness, trust

in the word of God. His news is good. It's faithful. Don't let the enemy take the word of God from your heart. Let it grow. Nurture it. And I know you won't throw it away. I know you will trust in it and I know you won't throw away your miracle. You're bigger, you're stronger than that, and you're getting stronger. You're stable and you're doing good things. And you deserve good news.

I think that's a lot of it, but a lot of times, some of us don't think we really deserve good news. And can I just tell you something? You deserve good news. You do. You are loved. Maybe you don't deserve it in the sense that you earned it, but that's not how you get good news from God. You see, God is a Father before he's a judge. And he's your Father today, and he wants just to dote on you. Receive it! Receive God's good news for you. You deserve it. You deserve it.

So, all of creation began and was torn apart by words, and in fact, when Moses was supposed to enter the Promised Land, he didn't. Do you know why he didn't get to enter the Promised Land? It's because he hit the rock instead of speaking to the rock for water to come out. So, once there was a time when God says to Moses, "Hit the rock and water will come out," and it did. The second time, God says, "Speak to the rock and water will come out." And lots of people love this passage. There are a

million theories as to why this was such a big deal to God that he hit the rock instead of speaking to it. He struck it twice, too.

But many rabbis claim that God was teaching his people the importance of Torah, the importance of the word, the importance of speaking, learning, and knowledge. In other words, it was one of those classic the-pen-is-mightier-than-the-sword moments. I think, in part, that is true, that God wants to impress unto you the importance of words - the words you take into your heart and the words you speak. The words you take into your heart and the words you speak. And see, these words do things; they say things like “build it.” Somebody looked at Disneyland and said, “Build it,” and it’s there. Somebody looked at a husband or a wife and said, “I do,” and now a family has begun.

Spoken words have a major effect on the result of the material life we live so focus on the words you hear, the words you say, the words you hold in your heart. The soul is built and destroyed on words but your soul will be built and not destroyed because you will take in and let loose good words from God - the word of God, itself. Amen?

The soul is very much like a book that is being edited. Like I’m writing my book right now, and imagine a book being on an editor’s table, words are being taken out, and other words are being put in.

Entire chapters are removed. Entire chapters are added. The book is made up in substance of what words are in it. And whether the book is good or bad, whether the word is a success or a failure is based on the words in the book. We can agree on that, right? In that same way, your soul is like a book that is being edited. Spiritual formation is like editing the book of your soul. It's taking out some words and putting new words in. It's changing the way you see the story, especially the story of your past, and the story of your future. Whereas, before you thought this book may end in tragedy, this book ends in victory. Changing that will change your soul as it would change a book.

When you look at your past and you say, "I'm this," or "I made these mistakes," or "I did these horrible things," and you change that into a testimony, you're changing the nature of the soul. You're changing how you even experience life. It's like a word doc. Every time you change the words, your soul is changing, and it's either becoming better or worse. Focus on the words that are in your heart and in your life in this editing process.

What kinds of words are in your heart now? What are the deepest words in your soul? Many of us carry some of these words that, for whatever reason, we refuse to let go. Sometimes we think we're being pious, sometimes we think we're being safe, but in truth many of us

carry these words. Some of them forgotten, but we carry them in the deepest part of our souls. What kind of words do you carry? Do you carry the word ugly? Do you carry the word stupid? Do you carry the word guilty? Failure? Sinner? Lost? Clumsy? Unwanted? Unlucky? Sick? Crazy? Do you think you're a burden? Do you carry words like ignorable? Do you carry words like disappointment – I'm a disappointment? Those words are not from God. God has new words for you.

Release those words. Draw them up from your soul. Recognize them if they're there and let them go. Those are not words for you. They are crippling you and they're a burden to you. Release them to the Lord. God has new words for you like you are strong. And you are. And you're stronger than you know and you're getting stronger. Don't give up. God has words like brilliant. You are forgiven. You are victorious. You are holy. You are righteous. You are focused. You are needed. You are favored. You're blessed. You are loved. You are unafraid. You are relaxed. You are healthy. You are wise. You are indispensable and God is proud of you. Hold those words in your heart.

The words that we carry in the deepest part of our souls are the words that make us who we are and they're the words that form how we experience life. Take into the deepest part of your soul these words – that you are loved, that you are favored, that you are blessed, that you are

well, that you've been wise, and that you are strong. God speaks them over you. Receive them and let go of those other words.

Align your heart, your mind, and even your body with the word of God. So much of spiritual formation is the ongoing process of digging up these poisonous old words that we forget. Digging them up and taking the other good words and pushing them down. Taking good words and pushing them down. Taking those bad words and drawing them up. And just watch that, as you continue to do that, you will become stronger, you will become a better person, you will become a kinder, more patient person as you change the words in that word doc.

In fact, that is why every day we realign every single person in this church with a confession that "I'm not what I do, I'm not what I have, I'm not what people say about me. I'm the beloved of God." There is so much push back, especially when people hear it the first time, like when we have guests. I don't know, can I say that? And even though it's orthodox, it's the word of God, it is the gospel of grace. There is so much of us that wants to add an asterisk to that. It is what it says it is. It is the word of God.

So, change your words and you will change your reality. You are no longer going to be your biggest bully. Very often, that's who we are.

We pick on ourselves, we mock ourselves, we say we're weak, we say we're stupid, we say we can't do it, we say we're addicted, we're say we're a sinner, and you keep picking on yourself. You keep bullying yourself, but today you're done. You will no longer be your biggest bully and you will not listen to the voices of bullying people, even if it's your spouse or a family member or a friend, you will not receive the backhanded compliments and the curses and all of these things that people speak over you to try and make themselves feel better. You're no longer going to give ear to that. Today you're going to give ear to the word of God that says you're forgiven, you're loved, you're righteous, and you're strong. And you are.

From this day forward, you are going to be kinder to your soul because your soul needs kindness and compassion, and if it can't get it from you, from who is it going to get it? You're going to stop picking on yourself and you're going to be kind to yourself. And when you slip up and when you say things like, "I'm not married," or "I don't have a girlfriend" or a boyfriend, or "I don't have a job," or "I haven't finished my book," I want you to do something. I think it was my Grandpa Schuller that taught me this. I want you to add the word "yet." If you catch yourself saying it, just add "yet." "I don't have a girlfriend...yet." It's amazing how that simple discipline will change the way you view your circumstance. "I don't have a job yet." "My business hasn't succeeded

yet.” “Yet” is a great word to add to the end of sentences when you speak defeat over yourself. You change it to a victorious statement, and you do it.

And most importantly, as you receive God’s word, you’re going to continue to release good words into the world. So, in the same way that words create and destroy you, your words create and destroy the souls of others. When it comes to your kids or your grandkids and you say something terrible to them, you can’t ever take those words back. They can’t ever forget those words. They are words that can’t be unspoken.

So, be careful with your words. The soul is fragile. Be kind, even to unkind people. You encourage people, you bless people, you pray with people. You’re not angry anymore; you’re relaxed. You’re no longer entitled. You just trust the Lord and you walk with grace and patience every day of your life. And from this day forward, the word of God will be deep in your heart and you’ll stop turning away good news. You’re going to turn away bad news and you’re going to receive good news because you deserve it. You deserve it because God said so. He loves you. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. If you believe it, say amen.

Father, thank you so much for inviting us into this place and we begin by drawing out those horrible words that we carry in us and we receive the good word that you have for us. Thank you that the word of God never returns void; that you are able. Lord, we love you. In Jesus' name, amen.