

Homolegeo (Confess)

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[0:00] So, tonight we are starting a new series that we're going to run through five evening services. And the series title is Five Cool Greek Words.

Five Cool Greek Words. And we're going to think about these as we go through the coming weeks together. I'm just going to check that my screen is working okay.

Did I do that right? Hold on. There we go. Is it working now? There we go. Excellent. So, as you may know, the New Testament was written in Greek.

Old Testament was written in Hebrew, but the New Testament was written in Greek. Our English Bibles are translations of these inspired original languages. And as part of the training for ministry in the free church, you have to study Greek and Hebrew so that you can go to the original languages as you prepare sermons.

Now, I'm not fluent in either Greek or Hebrew, but my Greek is a lot better than my Hebrew. And I can definitely say that what I've learned of both of these languages has been incredibly helpful for me.

[1:04] Now, when you're also training for ministry, they say to you, you have to learn Greek or Hebrew. And then they say to you, never ever ever talk about Greek and Hebrew in the pulpit. You leave it in your study. You don't take it into the pulpit.

Don't talk about complicated things like Greek vocabulary in your sermons. Well, I'm going to completely ignore all of that for our five evening services that I'll be teaching.

I'll be away next week, but we'll be running through the ones that I'm doing over the coming weeks. We are going to learn five very cool Greek words. And the words that I've chosen are particularly interesting and helpful, because what I hope we'll see is that learning these words themselves are going to give us a deeper understanding of the concept that's being spoken about.

And so we're going to be learning things that the English word just doesn't quite capture, or that maybe we wouldn't see so clearly. And what I hope is that that will then mean that we can apply these things in a much more meaningful way to our lives.

So we're going to learn five cool Greek words. I should say at the start that there's actually hundreds of cool Greek words in the New Testament. So the five I've picked are just scratching the surface. But here they are. And I put them in Greek in Greek script so that you can see it.

[2:19] First one's homologheto, second one is affiemi, third is logizomai, fourth is patria, and the fifth one is macrothumia. You might be thinking, hey, what on earth is that?

And what are all these weird letters? Well, over the next five weeks, we're going to learn them. And I hope very much that you're going to love these five words.

So the first word that we have is this word homologheto. And so just to explain a couple of things, that little back to front apostrophe that you have over the O at the start is what gives it the h sound. So when you see that kind of backwards apostrophe, it means you put a h at the start of it. So that's why it's homologheto. So O is the same. The U with a, what looks like a U with a tail, this letter here is actually the Greek word for M.

So we've got it there. So we've got homo, and then that's lambda. If you did physics in school, you'll know that homolo. That's gamma.

[3:21] Again, physics will have told you that. And then the last letter is omega. So it's homolo, get O. And so there you go. You can read Greek now. And we find it here in 1 John 1 9.

Which word is it? It's that one. It's the word confess. And a derivative word is found in the second reading that we had. Hebrews 23, the word confession.

That's the word homologia. So it's the same word family. And so we've got English translations confess and confession.

And in 1 John 9, it's a verb. In John, in Hebrews 10 23, it's a noun, but same word. What makes homo, like it was such a cool word is that we can actually break it down to get a clear picture of what it means.

So it's actually what we would call a compound word. So it's two parts that are joined together. And so I've translated it into English homo, homo and log get O.

[4 : 26] Now, homo is the Greek preposition that means the same. And then log get O is from the word that means like words or speech or speaking.

So words, speech, speaking, that kind of thing. And when you put these two parts together, you see that the word homo log get O basically means to say the same thing.

To say the same thing. Confessing means to say the same thing. And that's extremely important for us to think about.

And the New Testament applies that concept to two crucial areas. It applies it to confessing our sin and to confessing our faith. And I want us to look through these two together tonight.

So first of all, in terms of confessing our sin, we read about that in 1 John. Confessing your sin is something that a lot of people struggle with. And that struggle can take two forms.

[5 : 35] And I think in general terms, we can say that one of those, one example of that struggle affects people outside the church. And the other area of struggle affects people inside the church.

So two areas of struggle, one tends to affect people outside the church. One affects people inside the church. So thinking about the first one, often people, particularly those who are outside the church, struggle to confess our sinfulness.

And so often you'll find that people struggle to accept the idea that they're sinners. And that's part of what makes the gospel offensive to the culture around us.

And that's particularly acute. It's become more acute in the last couple of centuries. One of the big influences of the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment was the big kind of intellectual movement in the kind of 1600s, 1700s.

One of the big effects of that Enlightenment was that it instilled a mindset in modern thinking that basically humans are good.

[6 : 37] And all of our problems are actually from outside of us. Some of you might have heard of a philosopher called Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He was from Geneva.

He lived 1712 to 1778. And he was a very, very influential figure because he basically said, he said that basically humans are good on the inside. And everything that goes wrong comes from stuff outside us.

So there are bad influences, bad connections, bad experiences, and the stuff outside us spoils us.

And that thinking has had a massive influence on Western society because today you will find everywhere that people will say that the place you need to go to find truth and meaning and purpose and to find your best self is when you look within and you follow your heart and you're true to yourself.

And at the very same time, you know, our failings and our weaknesses and our flaws are because of other stuff. It's other people or other circumstances fault.

And that mindset has become very, very dominant. And that's left the society around us really struggling to accept biblical statements like Psalm 51.5.

[7 : 54] I was brought forth in iniquity, in sin did my mother conceive me. And Jeremiah 79, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick.

Who can understand it? Those kind of statements are just people do not want to accept those kind of things. And so people are resistant to the idea that we are sinners.

And the consequences of that is that what we are saying is at odds with what God is saying. In other words, when it comes to the question of our sinfulness, God and humanity are not saying the same thing.

And you see that set before us very clearly in the passage that we read. And if we say that we've no sin, we deceive ourselves. The truth is not in us.

And so denying our sinfulness is really an act of self deception. We're blocking out the truth. The truth is not in us. And then even more than that, we're making God out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

[9 : 00] And in many ways, there's a kind of real irony here because in the book that God has written in the Bible, it's telling us that we're sinners. And yet we don't like what God's book is saying.

We don't like what God has written about us. But yet all God needs to do to prove that he's right is to pick up something we've written. So if he picks up a newspaper, picks up a history book, picks up someone's personal diary about the heartbreak that they're trying to get.

The heartbreak that they've experienced, all the evidence is there that we are sinners, that we're not the way we should be.

But alongside that great irony, there's great tragedy because in diagnosing our sinfulness, God is always offering us the healing that we need, the healing that he's provided through his son.

And yet we are pushing it away when we refuse to acknowledge our sinfulness, when we refuse to accept the Bible's claims. And when we do that, we are refusing to say the same thing as God.

[10:09] And all around us, there are people for whom that's just a stumbling block they can't get over. But the second issue in regard to this whole subject is that it's one that actually affects us much more closely in the church.

Because in the church, I would say on the whole, we do not struggle to confess our sinfulness. And I don't think anybody in here would struggle to say, I know I'm a sinner.

And I've heard hundreds of prayers over the years where the person praying has rightly acknowledged that we're sinners, we're guilty before God, we're helpless, and we need mercy and grace from God in Jesus.

Christians don't find it hard to confess our sinfulness. But many of us find it incredibly hard to confess our specific sins.

But if you look, that's what John 1-9 is referring to. It's not just talking about our sinfulness in general. It's our sins that we need to confess. I've circled the wrong one there, but it's the same. It's referring to the same thing.

[11:19] We need to confess our specific sins. In fact, James goes even further when it says, Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another.

And that's hard. Over the years, I have heard so many people pray in public, Lord, we confess that we're sinners, we pray for your forgiveness.

I've never heard anyone pray. Lord, I'm sorry that I got annoyed at work today. I'm sorry that I shouted at my children.

I'm sorry that I was jealous of my friend who got better grades than me. I'm sorry for judging and criticizing other Christians who I don't always agree with or who I struggle to like.

So we'll confess our sin in general, but we're very reluctant to confess our specific sins. Which one does the New Testament expect?

[12:23] This one. Confessing our sins. And this is captured wonderfully in the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Westminster Confession of Faith is a beautiful summary of what we would say, what we believe the Bible says.

And it has a chapter on repentance. And in that chapter, it says, Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance. But it is every man's duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins, particularly.

Now that doesn't mean that in every prayer meeting we are to come together and just share every detail of every sin that we've ever done. I've just realized in the morning I was telling everyone to come to the prayer meeting and now you're probably saying, Well, I'm definitely not coming now.

I'm not saying that you need to, you know, some things are just kept between you and the Lord. And we're not, this is not saying that everything is laid bare for everyone to hear.

That's not what it's saying. But what it is saying is that our confession of sin needs to be more than something just general. It should be specific.

[13:31] And the crucial thing that we have to recognize is that if we confess our particular sins before God, we are acknowledging before him what he already knows.

In other words, we're saying the same thing. Because God knows if you lost a rag at work. God knows if you're idolizing success in your career.

God knows if you're reluctant to share your money. God knows if you're obsessed with what your friends think of you. God knows if you're struggling with alcohol or pornography or gambling. God knows if you're constantly judging others.

God knows all that. And he still loves you. You're still his child. You're still his forever. But he does not want you living this double life whereby you're trying to kind of make out that you're sort of something before him.

But then actually you're something else in the rest of your life. He wants you to confess what he already knows. He wants you and him to say the same thing.

[14:34] And doing this can make such a massive difference. Because you will know that saying different things can bring tension in any relationship.

So if one person is saying one thing, one person is saying another. Or maybe if the other person is not saying anything at all, then that creates tensions and kind of foster negativity.

And it can make a relationship awkward. But when you are saying the same thing, it brings peace. It brings beautiful peace. I can illustrate this from the days when Yuna and I were going out.

So we were going out. And nobody would know this by looking at us. But Yuna is actually a couple of years older than me. And so there was, she's not aged at all.

I looked terrible then, even worse now. But there was a wastage when I was in my late teens and she was in her very early 20s. And she was a wee bit, not herself.

[15:43] And I could tell something was wrong. And so she asked me and said, you know, we've been going out for a week while. Are you just thinking that this is just like kind of a temporary relationship?

Or are you thinking more long term? And I said, I'd flip and marry you tomorrow. And in that moment, we realized we were saying the same thing.

And wanting the same thing. And it was, well, that was one of many amazing blessings I've had since I met Yuna.

With God, it's like that, but even better. Because in our relationship with him, everything he says is true. Everything he says is good. Everything is kind. Everything is motivated by his never ending love for you.

And that's why every time we confess our sins before him, we are saying the same things that he is saying. And our hearts are filled with peace.

[16:52] And this is what you've got to recognize that confessing your particular sins before God, even the things that you're really ashamed of and embarrassed about. It's never ever like going to a scary head teacher who is going to lose the rag the minute they find out what you've done.

Confessing your particular sins before God is like the prodigal son coming home to the father who's never stopped waiting, who's never stopped looking for you, and who's never stopped loving you.

And in the opposite direction, unconfessed sin can have such a depressing and damaging effect on us. We can easily harbor resentment and bitterness and frustration. Sometimes we can look to something that's sinful to try and satisfy us, even though we know deep down that it's hurting us.

And all the time God is calling us to come to him and to say the same thing that he is saying. And every time we do that, the burden comes off our shoulders.

The tension releases from our neck and the hardness that's forming in our hearts gets softened again. When it comes to your sins and mistakes and regrets, never ever be afraid to confess it to God and to say the same thing that he is saying.

[18:16] He is not waiting to punish you. He's not simmering and about to explode. He's not going to be surprised and he's not going to roll his eyes.

He's going to take you in his arms and say, I am so glad you have told me. I have been saying the same thing all along, and I will help you overcome this sin so that it doesn't hurt you anymore.

So a couple of questions to think about. Do you find it hard to confess your sinfulness in general? Maybe you do, but I actually doubt it. I don't think you probably do.

But do you find it hard to confess your specific sins to God? If you are like me, then you will find that hard, because I find it hard. Yet it's such a helpful and healthy thing to do, because this week we are all going to stuff up in different ways in our thoughts, our words and our actions.

And trying to hide that sin before God or pretend it's not there, it's just going to bring an awkwardness and a distance into our relationship with our Father. But confessing it before Him brings you close to Him again.

[19:31] And it all makes perfect sense, because the moment you do confess, you're on the very same page as Him. You and God are saying the same thing.

So it's incredibly important for us to think about that concept of homologate saying the same thing in regard to confessing our sin. It's also crucial in regard to confessing our faith.

That takes us to Hebrews 10, 23 to 25. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and

good works, not neglecting to meet together as a habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Here the word homologate or homologia is again very, very helpful to know, because it's reminding us that God has revealed a message to us, and He's called us to respond to that message in faith. And the result is as Christians, when it comes to what we believe, we are saying the same thing, and we are sticking to it. And that's immensely important for the recipients of this letter to the Hebrews, because they were beginning to face suffering for their faith, and they were tempted to go back and to abandon the Christian faith, and return to their former Jewish practices.

[20 : 49] And the whole letter is aiming to persuade them not to do that. And it outlines for them how Jesus is superior to everything that the Old Testament pointed towards. He's the fulfillment of it all.

He's superior to angels, superior to Moses, to the priesthood, to the temple sacrifices. The writer to the Hebrews is telling them, Jesus is everything that you need, and they need to hold fast to that gospel message that they confess.

And the reason they need to hold fast to their confession is because if they depart from it, and if we depart from it, then we are in serious danger of departing from the gospel.

In other words, we need to stick to what the Bible is saying, because it's deadly if we start saying something different.

And that was a constant challenge in the New Testament church. A challenge for the Hebrew that were being written to, a challenge to the congregation in Ephesus that 1 John was writing to. False teachers were constantly trying to lead people astray, and that's affected the church ever since.

[21 : 52] People add to the gospel, people take away from the gospel, people adjust it to suit the tastes of their generation. And whenever that happens, we stop saying the same thing as God.

And that's crazy, and it's deadly, because Jesus has come to us with the words of eternal life. The eternal God has revealed his perfect plan of salvation.

The spiritual instruction that humanity is desperately searching for has finally arrived. The truth that we long for is here, and we can confess those words ourselves and trust in Jesus.

Or we can say, oh no, I think something different. And in any other part of life, we would instantly recognize that to do that is bonkers.

So the whole of Britain says, drive on the left. What happens if you say something different? A doctor tells you, you need surgery to save your life. What happens if you say something different?

[22 : 57] A weather forecaster says there is an extremely dangerous storm coming. What happens if you say something different? Your parents tell you never, ever run onto the road without stopping, looking and listening.

What happens if you say something different? Jesus tells you, whoever believes in me will not perish, but have eternal life.

What happens if you say something different? This collective confession, this saying the same thing is so important in the life of the church.

That's what unites us as a church. The church is the church, because we're saying the same thing. We're believing the same truth. Now, you and I know that so many churches have split, because on certain issues they're not saying the same thing.

That's an inescapable tragedy of the fact that we're all still sinners in a fallen world. So many times the divisions in churches should not have happened.

[24 : 00] But even in the face of that, even though there are divisions, we must recognize that yes, there will be different denominations and there will be different churches, but in terms of the core claims of the gospel, we are saying the same thing.

And so in that situation, yes, there might be local divisions, but there's still one church. And that's definitely what's true in our context here. Yes, there are two churches and we wish there wasn't, but we're saying the same thing.

And we're united in the same confession. But alongside that, we need to also recognize that there might be people who will take the label Christian, but the message that they proclaim is not the gospel.

And in that situation, they are not saying the same thing. So if they're preaching legalism, which basically says you need to do certain things to get up to a certain standard before God, then they're not preaching the gospel.

If they're preaching pluralism where they say, well, actually it doesn't really matter what you believe, because there's all different paths to God, then that's not the gospel. If they're preaching universalism where they're saying, well, look, do what you like, because actually you're going to be saved in the end and everything's fine.

[25 : 07] If they're saying anything that denies that Jesus is God the Son, or if they're saying anything that denies that he rises from the dead, then they are saying a different thing. They're not preaching the gospel.

And in our denomination, in terms of what we believe, that's why we have what we call the Westminster Confession of Faith, which as I said is just a summary of what we believe are some of the core teachings of the Bible.

And I love that it's called a confession, because it's summarizing what we believe the Bible teaches. And in our church, the free church, every church, as a church denomination, every minister, every office bearer subscribes to it.

So that means that in terms of our theology, we're saying the same thing. So you can go to a free church in Carlyway, or you can go to one in Renes, or one in Edinburgh, one in London, one in Prince Edward Island. We're preaching the same message.

We're saying the same thing. And that's extremely important for protecting the church. And that's why if I go against that teaching, I can be sacked.

[26 : 10] And I should be sacked, because we need to hold fast to our confession to the truth that we believe God has told us in His Word.

But at the same time, that concept of confessing our faith is also crucial for the week to week life of the church. Look at what it says in these verses. It talks about stirring one another up to love and good works.

It talks about not neglecting to meet together. It talks about encouraging one another. Why do we do all that? Why do we serve together and meet together and encourage each other?

We do it because we're saying the same thing. We come together at the start of each week because we're saying that Jesus is Lord, He is risen, and we love Him. We serve together because we've got the same mission.

We long to see people come to faith. We long to help those who are in difficulty. And we encourage each other because we're on the same team. We've got the same confession, the same goal, the same mission, and we are blasting on together because we're saying the same thing.

[27 : 17] And that's so incredibly important to remember for the occasions when we disagree on small things, because that will happen. We will disagree on small things. And one of the big tragedies in the history of the church is when people have disagreed over things that Jesus doesn't say that we need to confess.

Like what to wear at church, or what time to have a service, or what color a carpet should be, or whatever else it might be. Jesus is saying it's perfectly okay to think differently on these things. And yet these tiny things become massive, and it leaves us forgetting all the massive things that unite us. As a church, we must hold fast the confession of our hope.

We stick to the message of the gospel. Jesus has told us the words of eternal life, and together we'll follow him and we'll keep on saying the same thing.

So, homologhéo is a very cool Greek word. We confess our sins before God. We're saying the same thing as him.

[28 : 30] And we confess our faith sticking to the truth that God has revealed. Together we're saying the same thing. Just as we close, I want to say something to anyone here or watching at home who is not yet a Christian, and I want to say something to those who are not sure if they're a Christian.

All of this is another moment where you have to think really hard about the claims of the gospel. You need to think seriously about where you're going to spend eternity.

And you need to think about how you're going to respond right now. And the moment we start to feel the weight of that, it can leave us paralysed and scared.

And if that's how you feel, I want you to see that there's actually another cool word in both of these verses. There's a word that appears in John 1.9 and a word that appears in Hebrews 10.23. Can you see it?

It's that word. Faithful. As you confess your sins to God, he is absolutely faithful in his promise to forgive them.

[29 : 59] And as you step onto that journey of confessing your faith and publicly following Jesus, he is absolutely faithful to his promise to look after you.

And if you're not yet a Christian, you need to know that he is faithful to everything that he's promised. He will never go back on his word. And the only question is whether or not you'll come to him and follow him.

Last of all though, I want to say something to the not-shooters, because there are lots of not-shooters in here, watching at home. People who are just not sure where they stand before the Lord.

And if you're a not-shooter, where you're thinking, well, I don't think I'm an unbeliever, but I really struggle to say that I am a believer. If you are a not-shooter, the word homolophéo is incredibly important for you to think about, because that word is going to answer the question as to whether or not you're a Christian.

So if you're sitting here thinking, I don't know if I'm a Christian or not, this word is going to answer that question. And to see that, we need to ask some other questions. Do you know that you need Jesus?

[31 : 23] Do you know that you're a sinner and that you can't save yourself? Do you believe that Jesus died and rose again for you? Do you trust in him rather than anything else for eternity?

Do you want to follow him? Do you know that you will stuff up a lot along the way? Do you know that nothing else matters more than this?

If you answered yes to all of those questions, then you are a Christian. And the reason I can say that is because you and God are saying the same thing.

You do not need a lightning bolt moment. You do not need to become this super holy, perfect person, and you do not need to have all the answers. You just need to trust him and follow him. And tonight again, God is saying, follow me. I want you in my family.

I'll never leave you. I'll help you every step of the way. I'll deal with every mistake you've ever made or that you will make. And I will take you home to be with me in heaven forever on the day that you die.

[32 : 46] That is what God is saying. Are you saying the same thing? Amen. Let's pray.