

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gospel Informed Speech

Ephesians 4:29-30

PowerPoint Presentation: None

Keywords: Holy Spirit, Speech, Edification, Redemption, Sealing of the Spirit

SermonAudio blurb:

I. Introduction.

- A. We started carefully looking at how Paul is describing the unique way a Christian is to comport, behave himself in this age of sin and death.
 - 1. We are not to walk and live like a non-Christian who does not know the mind and heart of God.
 - 2. We are not to be ignorant of the commands of our Lord.
 - 3. We are to be a people who faithfully live a different, God-focused life that rejects the lies that this age utters.
- B. Paul describes this like the stripping off of old, filthy clothes and putting on new clothes that are fitting and proper.
 - 1. Therefore in vs 25 we are to be a people who, having rejected the lies of this age, put on a life of truth speaking to one another.
 - 2. In vs 26 we are commanded to be angry, but only when it is appropriate and never allow that anger to define us. We are to resolve the issue that brought about that anger so that we do not let Satan gain any foothold in our heart, our homes, and our church.
 - 3. In vs 28 we are to be a people who do not steal in any sense of that word but rather we are to be hard workers who labor for the purpose of giving to those who are in genuine need.
 - 4. As you can see these are large areas of concern and are being painted with a very large brush.
- C. Today we will consider the tongue, speech and the purpose of speech—and this can be quite challenging for us.
 - 1. Very seldom does any problem arise without there first being words.
 - 2. How many times has a parent come into a room where a fight is occurring and the first thing heard is , “But he said”

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3. Even when we don't speak out loud our words get us into great trouble. In Psalm 53:1 it is written, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"
 4. On the opposite side is those who speak the right words but do not practice them. On the judgment day words will condemn many for they prove nothing but hypocrisy. Luke 6:46, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"
- D. Paul gives us a very bold command which is given in both the negative and the positive, then he gives the purpose of this command followed by the reason. Read with me 4:29-30.

Propositional Statement

Paul makes it clear that our speech is to be such that it strengthens the Body of Jesus Christ by giving words that are grace-filled to those who are lacking and in doing so we preserve the unity brought on by the Holy Spirit, being pleasing to Him.

II. We are to speak so as to build up (29-30).

- A. The key commands—don't speak in a worthless manner; rather speak in a helpful one that builds up people.
1. The key question that most people seem to wrestle with is what exactly is "worthless" or "corrupting" speech?
 - a. The problem is that too often it is because either someone is charging that they are guilty of it, or they are trying to make sure they are not guilty of it themselves.
 - b. What stands out though is that Paul doesn't really define it at all.
 - (1) Both the translations I mentioned are solid.
 - (2) The term is applied to anything that has gone bad. Withered flowers, rotten wood or rancid fish.
 - c. The point is that whatever it is speaking about that thing has gone bad. Or, more importantly, that thing no longer serves its true purpose.
 - (1) James writes in 1:29 that "if anyone things himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless."
 - (a) Our tongue is to adorn our profession of what we love and believe.

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- (b) A Christian should be marked out as one who restrains and controls his mouth rather than let's it run as it wishes.
- (c) To claim Christ but to refuse to bring our mouth under the control of the Holy Spirit is futility. We cannot claim Christ and speak folly and evil.
- (2) An enlarged example of this is found in James 3-4 (explain).
 - (a) Go through vs 12 to see the purpose of the tongue. Worthless speech is contrary to that.
 - (b) vss 11ff then develops this idea of wise, godly speech and takes it into the unseen realm that Paul talks about in Ephesians. Vs16-17 are impossible without dealing with our tongue.
 - (c) Notice then how this flows into fights and dissension in chapter 4.
 - i) Vs 4 describes people who are conformed to this age and therefore their tongues show it.
 - ii) Notice how vs 5 speaks of the Holy Spirit much like Paul does in Ephesians 4:30?
 - iii) Now notice how speech is brought into view again in vss 9, 11, 13, 15, 16.
- d. This is helpful for me because it gives me the sense that words are not neutral, they are tools either for the powers of this fallen age or they are a tool of God.
- e. They, like everything else in our lives, are to be redeemed and brought under the control and Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- 2. This helps us draw some principles on what evil, corrupting speech is.
 - a. It is speech that does not help bring about its intended results. Perhaps you try to calm a situation down but only create more outrage because your words were unwise.
 - b. It is speech that is hateful or derogatory toward your fellow human, who is an image bearer.
 - c. It is speech that creates unnecessary strife.

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- d. It is speech that exhibits little to no dependence upon the Lord's grace and will. It is boasting in our abilities rather than words that reflect thanksgiving.
 - e. It is speech that promotes this age and its values.
 - f. It is speech that is not built upon truth, especially doctrinal truth.
 - g. It is speech that expresses envy or jealousy, or promotes it in others by showing them what they lack.
 - h. This list could go on but it should serve enough to give us all cause to think and consider.
- B. Speech is designed to strengthen others.
- 1. Notice in vs 29 how it is "only" words that build up or edify.
 - a. This is again where struggle comes in for many. The reason is that we live in a culture that glorifies feelings over truth. And the final determination of what is good is how it makes you feel.
 - (1) And when that happens it actually ends up destroying this positive command by Paul to speak only what is good to edify/build up.
 - (2) We need to develop a sound theology of speech in our minds so that we are able to judge our words and others with care and wisdom. If we only base it upon how a person felt then we will likely fail more than succeed in this area.
 - b. Words of praise and gentle, encouraging words are easy to understand in this context.
 - (1) To tell your son you are proud of them or to speak a word of encouragement to one who is discouraged will usually be received well.
 - (2) Words that reflect patience and words that exhibit a genuine concern for the well-being of another will be usually seen as words that build up.
 - (3) I cannot think of many times I would consider the phrase, "good job!" as being unwholesome. Surely praise for a job well done is good and proper.

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- (4) So I don't want to focus our limited time on what is already patently obvious but instead consider some ways speech can be sound, wholesome and edifying and yet possibly painful.
- c. One common area is whether it is right to rebuke?
 - (1) Yes. Often the bible speaks of this and it is seldom something that feels good.
 - (a) Better is open rebuke Than love that is concealed. (Proverbs 27:5)
 - (b) Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy. (Proverbs 27:6)
 - (2) Rebukes are usually stopping foolish, sinful speech.
 - (a) Consider Luke 9 where James and John thought God should destroy a Samaritan village that refused to receive Jesus. He rebukes them saying, "the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."
 - (b) Or in Mark 8 where Peter wrongly tried to rebuke Jesus about the fact that Jesus was to die. In vs 33 Jesus in turn rebukes Peter, "Get behind me Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."
 - (c) That account was done in public. And in case you may still think we should always praise in public and rebuke in private consider Paul's command to rebuke any elder who continues in a sin and to do it in the presence of the entire church.
 - (3) How often it is seen that a person refuses to speak truthfully and forthrightly into a situation that is destructive, untrue or blasphemous?
 - (a) Is it not evil to watch one stumbling toward destruction and hell and say nothing?
 - (b) Is not the essence of evangelizing one where there is great potential to offend?

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- (c) What kind of a friend watches another destroy himself and say nothing because they did not want to hurt feelings?
 - (d) Or, on the opposite side, what kind of a friend says something to hurt the person's feelings rather than to stand for truth and goodness?
- d. Strong words can be good words.
- (1) Jesus rightly calls the Pharisees "white-washed graves." Nothing horrible for us but incredibly horrid to them. In addition he calls them fools, hypocrites, snakes and blind guides.
 - (2) Paul calls those bringing a false gospel "dogs" (Philippians 3:2).
 - (3) Amos calls the women of Israel "cows" (4:1).
 - (4) Ezekiel did just about anything and everything shocking to portray to Judah and Israel their sins against God. He speaks of their "whorings" and of things that make most people blush.
2. My point in this little exercise is to challenge the common misperception that anything hard, strongly said, or hurtful is wrong.
3. Notice back in our passage that the result of good speech is to give grace to those who need it.
- a. That phrase, "according to the 'need'" is helpful. It is the same word as used in vs 28. It speaks not to perceived need but actual need. To fill up something that is lacking.
 - b. In vs 29 our speech is to fill a need that another has. And filling that need is a work and word of grace.
 - (1) It is a gracious word that gently speaks to one who is broken and contrite. It is an ungracious word that praises foolish, sinful decisions.
 - (2) It is a gracious word that brings the gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ. It is an ungracious word that willfully withholds the gospel from those who need it.

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- (3) It is a gracious word that corrects bad doctrine. It is ungracious words that encourages and praise bad doctrine, or teaches such.
 - (4) There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Proverbs 12:18)
 - (5) A perverse man spreads strife, And a slanderer separates intimate friends. (Proverbs 16:28)
 - (a) Speak briefly about the challenge of gossip or slander vs necessary information.
 - (b) Simple question, why do I need to hear what you want to tell me? How is this helpful for the one who is its subject?
 - (6) A lying tongue hates those it crushes, And a flattering mouth works ruin. (Proverbs 26:28)
 - c. So we are to be a people who seek to speak truth and good to one another. We need to seek to discern what is lacking in another and fill it with wise words.
- C. Finally, our words either causes joy to the Spirit or grieves Him (30).
1. There are some who think this is a separate command but it isn't. Sadly the NASB updated version deleted the "and" that begins it.
 2. What is going on here is that Paul is making the point that corrupt speech grieves the Holy Spirit whereas speech that gives grace to those in need bring joy to Him.
 3. This hearkens us all the way back to the beginning of chapter 4 where we are commanded to preserve the unity of the Spirit all the while we learn to come to a unity of doctrine.
 4. A couple of points can be made of this passage that are not necessarily directly involved with the central point:
 - a. First, it speaks to the personhood of the Spirit. A power or energy cannot be grieved.
 - b. Second, He is who keeps us safe until the final day, a day that shall be our redemption.
 5. The key point to be made here though is that our speech affects not only the health of the church but the person of God.

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- a. He is not distant and uncaring about the state of the Church.
- b. It is in the Spirit that every Christian is brought into the Church.
- c. It is He who seals us all until the day of redemption.
- d. And our speech day to day affects Him. It becomes something for our good or is unprofitable for us.
- e. I always think of poor Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2 in this light. Paul thought it so important for the well-being both of the women and the church in Philippi to publically call out their sin and urge the church to help them.
- f. How often do you consider how your speech is bringing about a unity of the faith while maintaining a unity of the Spirit?

III. Conclusion.

- A. Some questions to ask before you speak.
 1. Have you earned the right to speak?
 2. Have they sought you out to have you speak into their lives?
 3. Are you sufficiently equipped to speak?
 4. Is your speech grounded and motivated by the gospel?
 5. Is your speech grounded by sound theology?
 6. How will your speech create unity among believers?
 7. Does your speech detract from the gospel and your witness?
- B. Our tongues are truly an instrument of good or an instrument of harm.
 1. We cannot bless God and then turn around and curse man.
 2. We must consider the value and purpose of what we say.
- C. Our words about one another and toward one another should always aim to promote the unity of the Spirit while proclaiming and examining truth.

IV. We are to express kind-hearted forgiveness (31-32).

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Community Group Questions

- **How can the group help you in regard to your speech?**
- **When you think of corrupt speech vs what the sermon taught what stood out and why.**
- **Discuss what challenges were raised in your mind in hearing this sermon.**
- **If the group has questions feel free to write them down and send them to Pastor Matt. He will answer them either in writing or perhaps another sermon.**