

Speaking Like No Other

by Tim Conway

This sermon delves into Ephesians chapter 4, emphasizing the power and significance of our words. It highlights the miraculous nature of speech, the distinction between corrupt and grace-giving words, and the need to use our voices to build up and impart grace to others. The sermon underscores the importance of aligning our thoughts with wholesome words and the capacity Christians have to impact others through their speech, urging listeners to put off corrupt communication and put on the new man. It stresses the critical role of our tongues in either corrupting or edifying those who hear us, emphasizing the need to speak words that meet the occasion and minister grace effectively.

Scripture: Proverbs 25:11, Hebrews 10:24, Colossians 3:16, James 3:5, Ephesians 4:29

Topics: "The Power of Words", "Building Up Others"

Description

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Transcript

Ephesians chapter 4 in our ongoing study. Paul's epistle to the Ephesian church. Ephesians chapter 4, and we are going to, Lord willing, concern ourselves with the next passage that we come to.

Verse 29, "...Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths." Now, the ESV basically has a verb participle, and that is not what it is in the original. It is an adjective. There should be no "-ing on the end of that.

The talk there is literally word. It's the Logos word group. "...Let no corrupt word come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up." The ESV inserts here, "...as fits the occasion." We're going to look more at that in a little bit.

There's a word in the Greek that that expression right there basically captures. "...As fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear. Let no corrupt word come out of your mouths, but only such as is

good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear." Now, we can read this just like I did.

You read this, but you know the more I read it and as I thought about it, the most basic of all thoughts hit me. I mean, the very premise from which Paul is coming from is definitely worth stopping and just reflecting about. He uses words here like talk, words, mouth.

Do you think about it? We can talk. You don't think about it. You got up today, you didn't think about it.

You just said the first words. I'm talking right now. It didn't strike any of you as peculiar or miraculous.

But if you really think about what's going on, think about this. I am thinking a thought. I'm thinking thoughts actually in language.

I wonder, people that are entirely deaf, how do they think? They have to develop some homemade language to think in. You think in thoughts that are comprised of words. You dream that way.

You think that way. And then think about what happens. Somehow your brain initiates air passing over your vocal cords, your lips, your tongue.

They move around different ways and out come words. I mean, we can look at that and think, well, yeah, there's nothing special about that. The reality is there's a lot that's special about that.

It's miraculous. God designed us to talk. The thing about it is we have a dog at home.

He doesn't talk. And you know your animals might look like sometimes they want to talk, but they don't talk. The reality is if you're looking for something that is very distinguishing or differentiating between us and the animals, this is one of the big things.

I mean, you're not going to find a group of dogs in your backyard with one of them at a pulpit and the rest are sitting out there listening to the thing. That doesn't happen. We do this.

And sometimes, Paul talks about the foolishness of preaching. That's from a world's perspective. But sometimes it grabs me as being a preacher that I actually stand in a pulpit and a bunch of people sit in seats and listen to me.

It seems crazy. But that's what happens. And God has designed it to happen that way.

The thing is, we don't just chirp or bark or bellow. It's a miracle. There's language.

There's speech. We actually have the ability to express ourselves. What we're thinking in here, what we feel inside, we are actually able to get vent to in a language that the person on the other end is able to receive and understand.

We can express out of our mouths. I mean, how amazing is that? This is certainly one of the ways in which we are made in the image of God. We can talk and express ourselves to one another and to God Himself by voices, lips, tongues that articulate sounds, that make words, that make sentences, that express what we desire to express.

You think what comes out? Nouns and verbs and adjectives and conjunctions. We can whisper. We can shout.

We can sing. You know, we talk about the facts that birds sing. But all birds do is make the sound.

I mean, one of the things when we think about when we're picking songs is not just that they sound good. I have mockingbirds in my yard. They sound good.

But you know one of the things that we give primary emphasis to in the songs that we sing is not just music is good. The words have to be good. We're the ones God has created.

Those birds don't have lyrics. They just have the music. We're the only ones in this world that God has created that actually we sing words.

Man is the great singer. And God has done that. God has done that by design.

But what happens? Sin came in. And it wrecked our voices. Just like it wrecked everything else about man.

No, it didn't take away our ability to speak. I mean, in some, yes, they may get cancer of the larynx or something, but for most of us, it didn't take away our ability to speak. What it did was it took away our ability to speak well.

And you remember Jesus rhetorically posed that question. How can you speak good when you are evil? Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Man is evil by nature, and so his voice reflects that very reality.

Now, Christian, one of the things is I was really contemplating this passage before us. Not to let corrupt communication come out of your mouth, but only such is good for building up that fits the occasion. It bestows grace.

You know, the thought that I had was not just the miracle that we can speak, but there's even a greater miracle in this very passage that we're looking at. Christian, I want you to realize something. You know this, but think about it again.

Jesus said, broad way, narrow way, wide gate, straight gate, few there be that find. Many are called. Few are chosen.

The vast majority of mankind is exactly what we have back at the beginning of chapter 2 in this very epistle. They are dead in their trespasses and sins and they're following the course of this world, following the Prince of the Power of the Air. That describes them.

They're children of wrath. Children of disobedience. That describes the vast majority of mankind.

Dead in their sins. And you'll remember, you get another description of mankind over in Romans 3. And you well know these words. Paul says that these people, there's none righteous, no not one, no one does good, not even one.

And you know what happens as he keeps going down through that list? He gets to the voice. And see, this is the thing that we have to recognize too. No matter how good the lost world might sound, no matter how beautiful their voice might sing, no matter how at times their voices might seem religious or moral, the fact is that he says this about everybody who is not a Christian.

Their throat is an open grave. Think of the word in Ephesians 4.29, corrupt. You want to talk about corruption? What do you think Paul has in mind when he's talking about an open grave? Imagine an open grave.

And I'm not talking with one in the casket in the bottom. He's talking about an open grave with a rotting body in the bottom. That's what the throat... And what we have to recognize is there's no not one exception to that if a person is lost.

Again, they can sing beautifully on the radio, but this is the reality. They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips.

Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Open grave. Corruption.

Christian, I want you to feel the weight of what Ephesians 4.29 is saying. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths. Listen to this, but only such as is good.

Wow! That it may give grace. Here's the thing, out of all the hordes of humanity that have ever lived on the face of this earth and are alive right now, only Christ's little flock of believers even possess the capacity to use their voices for good. Now let that sink in.

And I'm emphasizing capacity. Why? You know, there's a difference between the word capacity and certainty. Is there not? Somebody with the capacity might or might not use what they're capable of.

And that's what Paul's dealing with here. Capacity means I might, I might not. The Apostle makes it crystal clear in this verse that you and I as Christians need to seize hold of that capacity.

We are new men. We are no longer the old men. We need to put off the old mannish ways.

You have the capacity to live as a new man. And he says put off that old. Put on the new.

We've got to do that. Because if we don't, we are just as capable of producing the open grave corruption from our throats as any lost person. That's why he's telling them.

Don't do it. Don't do this. Put this off.

Stop doing this. You have the capacity to use that gift God has given you to speak. You can use it to impart grace.

That is God's power flowing through you by your voice and you can do indescribable good. That's the word. Good.

You have that capacity. Using the voice to accomplish good and bestow grace, that does not come by accident. It doesn't come by passivity or neglect.

It doesn't come by indifference. It doesn't come by laziness or stupor, apathy, carelessness. It comes by you making a concerted effort to do what Paul's saying to do here.

Christian, hear me. When God gave you life, I'm not talking physical life. I'm talking spiritual life.

When He raised you from the dead spiritually, He bestowed this capacity on you. What a gift is this! This is like a man, I was thinking, this is like a man who is instantaneously and miraculously and wonderfully

bestowed just like that with a gift to play the piano better than Mozart and Beethoven put together. Just supernaturally, bang! You're given that.

Imagine a man who has such a gift given to him how he basically stays in bed all day and he never touches a piano. Or even worse, he just goes over and he just bangs on the keys. Bam! Bam! Bam! Brethren, what would we think? Do you realize being born again, you were instantaneously given the capacity to play the strings of your vocal cord in a way that's far more beautiful than Mozart or Beethoven could ever play.

You can do something with your voice. You can sing. And I'm not talking literally about singing.

I'm just talking you can bring things out of that voice that are pleasing to God, that are beautiful. And the thing is, only Christians are capable in all the wide world. You think about this when you go out of here.

All these people you pass, you know as well as I do that when you're going home today, it would be an odd thing for you to pass a Christian. That's not the norm. And the vast majority of people, if you go to the store or you go to the gas station or as you're driving home, they do not have the capacity to use their voice like you have the capacity.

And I would say this, don't waste that gift. Don't just bang on the keys of the piano. You have that capacity.

And I'm not overemphasizing this. Put off that old man and his corrupt speech and put on that voice of beauty. And you need to realize this about yourself.

Now, look at the verse 429. I want you to notice the very last words. In most of your Bibles, it's the last two words or the last three words.

"...That no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." Or your translation may say, the hearers. Now here's the thing, when we talk, Paul assumes the obvious. Someone's listening.

Now look, don't despise that reality because Paul's not. That's at the root of what he's saying here. This is essential to the whole subject.

Think with me here. Paul might have said this. He might have said, don't let corrupt words come out of your mouth.

Instead, what's the opposite? Let pure words come out of your mouth. Do you know what the problem with that is? It totally misses what Paul is doing here when he tells us to put the new man on. You know what happens if you talk to people like that? You know what you never got their eyes off of? Themselves.

You know what Paul does here? Paul sets forth an altogether new way of thinking about language. And if you haven't noticed yet, this is the way he's been thinking all the way through here. He is setting forth these new man injunctions one after another.

V. 25, V. 26. We've looked at these. Listen, in V. 25, why should we put off falsehood? Well, it's for the sake of speaking truth to who? My neighbor.

Okay, did you think about when we were dealing with anger? Don't let the sun go down on your anger. You know what he's saying there? Don't go to sleep harboring anger against your neighbor. Or you go to

V. 28.

We looked at this last week. "...Let the thief no longer steal, but labor that he may have something to share with anyone." There's your neighbor again. And you know what happens in V. 29? Exactly the same thing when it comes to our words and our speech.

The reason you don't want corrupt words to come out of your mouth is because corrupt words corrupt others. What he's doing in every single one of these is he's stressing that to live the new man, you're actually concerned about other people. That's the emphasis here.

What happens when you utter words that build up? He's not altogether concerned that they build you up. His real concern is that they build other people up. He's not against you being built up, but his emphasis is how this affects others or when it gives grace.

Grace-giving words impart grace to others. And if you haven't figured this out yet, the one massive old man characteristic that obviously seems to underlie the old man is selfishness. That's what he's turning us away from over and over and over.

Pride. That's what pride is. It's being absorbed with self.

You know what the fruit of the Spirit is? It's love. Basically, he wants us concerned with others. He wants us to care.

Jesus told His disciples, you know these words, if anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself. You see, that's the issue. All of the new man is about thinking about, okay, when it comes to honesty or falsehood, when it comes to anger, when it comes to stealing or giving, when it comes to My words, what he's constantly wanting us to do is reflect on how does this impact others.

It's like the old man is so self-absorbed, what he's doing in every one of these, what he wants us to really put off is self-absorption and put on a care for other people. That's what this is all about. I mean, just imagine, I was thinking how best to... I don't even know if this is best, but imagine coming out of my mouth just a bundle of fiber-optical cables.

And one goes to each one of you. And you all have that too. That same bundle comes out of your mouth to everybody else.

So every one of us has this bundle and we've got these connections, fiber-optic cables. And every time I speak and you hear, the light goes on. If I'm not speaking, the light isn't on.

Or if I'm speaking and you're not listening, the light isn't on. But every time I speak and you listen, the light goes on through that cable. Now you know what all those cables would look like right now.

It would just poof as I speak. But when we've got fellowship and we're all broken up, you're speaking and poof, poof, poof. There's a connection.

We're connected. Our voices link us. It ties us to one another.

Something is being transmitted. When that light lights up, you know what's happening? Something negative or something positive is being transmitted to you. Do you know what you find? Paul doesn't give us neutral positions.

That idea of neutrality, Scripture never does. Never ever does Scripture take neutral positions. There's no neutrality in this world.

You say, oh, I listened to them. It sounded harmless. Well, yeah, maybe they didn't overtly lie or swear.

But you know, people can just be godless. They never talk about the Lord. People can just be trivial.

There's never neutrality. It's either corrupt or it's grace giving and not building. And it is pathetic, people who aim at neutrality.

Moral neutrality. Moral neutrality, see it for what it is, it's corrupt. Well, I didn't swear.

Well, you know what? Yeah, that's good. But it's not just about what you put off. All of this is about what you put on.

And if you don't put on, you're not living the Christian life. It's just empty. This is old man, new man language.

Christians never just stop at putting off. You've got to put on the other. And one of the things we don't want to do is underestimate the power of the tongue.

I mean, one of the worst things you can possibly do with a verse like this is underestimate the significance that your own tongue, my own tongue, has to do good or evil. And what you don't want to do is walk away thinking to yourself, well, you know, I'm not that significant. I'm not that important.

I mean, who am I? What can I possibly do? I'm insignificant. I'm just one person. I'm not really all that important in the big picture of things.

Listen, we'll let God Himself speak to that. Look at the ships. You know where this is coming from.

Look at the ships. He's talking about a big ship. There's big ships.

Big aircraft carriers. Big ships on the Great Lakes haul ore. Though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they're guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.

So also, the tongue is a small member. You may be relatively insignificant in your own mind in the big picture, and your tongue may seem even smaller, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire.

A world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. You know, James has real life in mind here.

This isn't just some out there theology. He's talking about real people with real tongues who talk real words just like you and I do. He says this, every kind of beast and bird of reptile and sea creature can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue.

It is a restless evil full of deadly poison. Now, obviously, James is dealing with the tongue from the corruption side. And this is the corruption Paul is telling us to put off.

And that the Christian is still capable of. We have a capacity to speak good, to impart grace. We also have the capacity to do the other.

The tongue is a fire. What is that? It's like you can be over there in the corner and you can be whispering, but you can say something that can light a whole forest on fire. And listen, it's not trees that get burned, it's people that get burned.

That's where this fire burns. No human can tame it. Now, God can tame it.

And obviously, God has tamed it. And that's why the new man is capable of putting on this tongue. It's because God's power is at work.

This tongue, a world of unrighteousness, James says. This shows the magnitude of damage one little tongue is capable of. People get burned.

When we talk, people are listening. Those little cables are lighting up. Sometimes you're having a conversation, you can imagine the cables.

If you could really see all those cables, there's people further away that you don't even think are in that conversation and once in a while that cable is lighting up. Your words get to their ears. People are on the opposite end.

Those who put on the new man and his tongue, his speech, think about the capacity they have. I mean, on the negative side, there is a tremendous power to burn for unrighteousness, but on the positive side, you file through the Proverbs and you just simply look for the ones that deal with the tongue, the lips, the mouth. The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life.

And when we use that word life, life is everything that's good. Life is everything that's truly desirable. Life is what we're after, what we hunger for.

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life. The tongue of the righteous is choice, silver, valuable. The lips of the righteous feed many.

The tongue of the wise brings healing. The lips of the wise spread knowledge. And you know that the author of the Proverbs, the preacher, he says life and death are in the tongue.

Oh yeah, there's guys like Nebuchadnezzar, there's kings who life and death are in their tongue in the sense that they can say whether a man lives or dies. But that's not primarily what's meant there. You have the ability to speak words that cause people to trust Christ.

You have the ability to speak words that show God to be very small. You can speak truth to encourage people on their way to glory. You can encourage people to think money is the thing to live for.

There is such power. I mean, you think about that. God Himself under inspiration, He moves to have this solemn and pen Proverbs like this.

Life and death are in the tongue. You say, well, maybe somebody else's tongue. No, the tongue.

Your tongue. My tongue. And you think of how many people we talk to.

Think of the number of times we talk to these people in the course of a month, a year, a lifetime. But more than that, think of the people who repeat what you say. Think of the people who repeat what they say you said.

Think of how far the rumor mill or the grapevine or whatever we call it, think of how far your voice has the ability to travel down that and be passed on. How great a forest is set ablaze by certain things you whisper over there in the corner. Your tongue throws out a spark.

Next thing you know, the whole forest is burning. Listen, you probably can figure this out already. The most problematic people in the church, who are they? You really don't have to look any further than the tongue.

Now look at the word here. Ephesians 4.29 Let no corrupt words come out of your mouths. Or no corrupt word.

It's actually singular. Oh, brethren, there is no shortage of synonyms for this word corrupt. It's what you can imagine.

It expresses that which is rotten, that which is putrid, that which is rancid or stale or foul, decaying, disgusting, rank, perishing, advanced state of decomposition, spoiled. It's the kind of thing that if you eat it, it makes you sick. Now just imagine this.

You walk up to somebody here at church. And you begin talking to them. And as they start talking to you, they pull out some roadkill they picked up on the way here.

I mean, been in the Texas sun way too long. Full of maggots. And they start wiping it on you.

And all over your clothes and in your hair. You say, that's disgusting. Yeah, and that's exactly how Paul is talking here.

That's what he's saying. We're talking about verbal rottenness. You may not think much about how you talk to people.

But that's the kind of impact. That's what this word is implicating here. Loose words flying out of your mouth.

It can be like taking that dead thing and throwing it into a barrel of apples. It just contaminates. You going to eat those apples? It contaminates what it touches.

Our mouth can be like just shooting sparks. Poison. Corruption.

It can wreak havoc. That's the idea. It causes destruction.

It corrupts others. And this is serious. The old man tongue is never neutral.

It's an open grave and it stinks. And the stench of death is there. Oh, and it can come across so subtle.

And I'll tell you one of the ways that we can speak corrupt that's probably above everything else is we just make God out to be small. By our fears, by our anxieties, by our words of doubt. Some brother or sister in the church and they're thinking some crazy scheme about how they're going to serve the Lord and they're going to do some crazy thing.

We talk about the guy that's a wet blanket. But you know what that is? It typically is manifest by corrupt talk. It's talk that's full of unbelief.

You can't do that. Why not? We have a great God. Oh, you're sure to perish.

That won't succeed. You know, sometimes we think corrupting. We're thinking of the guy that just has the foul four-letter words flowing out of his mouth.

That is not even the primary type of corruption that's happening within the realm of God's people. That isn't. It can be.

But the tongue of the old man, it can just simply be light, trivial, frivolous, careless. Have you ever heard our Lord talk? You know what? He doesn't say that on judgment day, you're going to be judged because of all the four-letter words that came out of your mouth. Isn't it amazing what He says? What are we going to be judged on? Every careless word.

How careless. Oh, you know, you know what's so characteristic of the old man? They just don't shut their mouths. They just talk all the time and it's careless.

Their mouths just flow. One of the things we recognize when God takes hold of a man or a woman is they tend not to talk as much as they did before because they start thinking a whole lot more before they talk. You think of the corruption that can come out.

Talking to certain people... Talking to certain people can be a total waste of time. Why? Because it seems like every time you talk to them, it's careless, it's frivolous. The tongue is such... You know what the thing about the tongue is? That every evil we can feel inside, every evil thought we can have inside has the ability to be expressed on the outside by the tongue.

And so we're able to express pride, boastful, selfish, worldly, God dishonoring. And it doesn't matter that you're standing in a church building and you're talking to people who profess to be Christians. We can still whine to one another, complain, mumble, grumble.

We're no better than the Hebrews out there in the wilderness. You can display that you don't trust the Lord. Yes, you can speak falsehood.

You can exaggerate, gossip, slander. You can be devils. That's what the devil is.

That's what slander is. The way you are a devil or most like the devil is right here. That's what the word means.

Slander. You can express bitterness, anger. People express their lack of ability to forgive.

And it doesn't have to be, I'm not going to forgive them. It's just, it's tones, it's expressions, it's insinuations that you just pick up in people's voice. We have ways of communicating.

The whole picture. The expression on our face. The tone at which we say it.

We all know that. But think of the amount of self-pity that people express with their voices. The arrogance, the hardness of heart, lack of sympathy.

People express doctrinal error, wrong views of God. They misapply Scripture. People use their mouths to glorify ungodly preachers or ungodly singers or ungodly supposedly Christian YouTubers.

You can just show an indifference to what's important by how you speak. You can show people that you treasure something besides God by how you speak. You can blaspheme, curse, swear, express hatred, divisiveness, cruelty, lust, disrespect for authority, idolatry, greed, covetousness.

Anything that's on the inside. And you know the thing about it is, you imagine those little fiber optic cords. And they're shooting out when you open your mouth.

And they never leave the hearer unaffected. And Paul doesn't even give you a middle category. It's corrupt or it's good.

And it's grace-giving. And that's the way. Because one is old mannish ways.

One is new man. And there's no in-between. There's no neutral man.

There's no in-between man. That person doesn't exist. Scripture says this, do not be deceived.

Right? You know the text. Bad company corrupts or ruins good morals. And by and large, it can be by our example, but so often it's by our words.

People who not only don't control their tongues but who don't really give the least thought to how their voices affect or infect others. As I was trying to think what to liken these things to, I have over the years, like I remember being at Fatty's and watching some guy come in, not a regular visitor even, not somebody that was part of the church. He came in and I remember he was just circling the offering box and he was watching people.

Just recently, I saw a guy come in. Again, not a regular visitor. And I was talking to somebody and I was looking past the person that I was talking to and I'm just watching this guy.

And he's going up and down the roads. Over the years, if I see somebody I don't recognize, I just kind of watch a little bit. And I've seen people that come in here and they are surveying.

They're looking for something. And I just want to keep my eye on them. There's been times I've said to somebody, maybe a deacon, hey, there's a guy over here who's suspicious.

Keep your eye on that person. I don't want them to be alone with our children. I don't want them stealing things.

But you know, you can get people who aren't just these foreigners, these rare visitors. They come in and it's not their hand that they're looking to drop in somebody's purse. They come in here and they're moving about.

And they're looking for somebody to engage with their tongue. And I'll tell you, this can do far, far more damage to the church than any guy reaching into one of your purses and pulling out your wallet could ever do. My wife had that happen.

One of the street people put their hand in her purse and off with her wallet and we had to cancel credit cards. But you know, that was relatively minor. People in the church with tongues they can't control have caused much greater problems than that ever did.

Much greater. And Paul's talking to you in Ephesians 4.29. And he says, you who have a tongue looking for a listener, and it's really not like choice silver, but more like throwing roadkill into that barrel of apples. It pollutes whatever it touches.

Paul says stop letting those rotten words fly out of your mouth. Take off the rotten language of the old man. Take off that old garment.

Put it off. The thing that Paul keeps saying in all of these is face yourselves. Face who you are.

Face what you do. Face your sin. Face the problem.

Don't ignore it. Don't justify yourself. This is between you and the Lord with Paul's words flowing in your ears right now.

Put it off. The worst thing you could ever do is say, ah, I'm not going to take that seriously. I'm not really going to heed that.

I'm not going to give any attention to that. I'm not going to give any thought to that. I'm just going to let these words fly right over my head.

I'm going to get out of here as fast as I can and forget what I've heard. I challenge you, don't do that. I exhort you, don't do that.

Do what Paul says. Look at your language. I mean, look, you've got something rotten in the refrigerator.

It doesn't mean you have to empty everything out of the refrigerator. Some of us, there may be very good things that you say with your tongue, but you've got your times, you've got your seasons, you've got certain people you talk to, there's certain times you're out of control, you're not governing your tongue. You don't go over to the refrigerator because something smells bad in there and you just empty the whole thing out.

You might, but you don't have to do that. Typically, what a woman's going to do is, a man, they're going to look in there, they're going to find the thing that's rotten. You've got a piece of rotten meat in there, what are you going to do? Typically, you don't just throw it in the garbage.

Typically, you don't want that rotten thing even in the kitchen. You've got to get it out. You're going to make sure that it's in the garbage, then it's out to the dumpster.

Because you want it out. You want it as far away as possible. That is the kind of word.

You see, don't underestimate this. When Paul comes along and uses the term corrupt, it's a disgusting word. And what he recognizes is real people, God's people, who are new men and have the capacity to speak good, often don't speak good and have to be admonished to speak good.

Put off the old man. Put on the new man. That's it.

As fits the occasion. Now that's interesting. Actually, in the original, there is a word here that is the word for need.

And it's interesting that the KJV actually kind of glosses over that term altogether. But all the other translations pick up on it some way. The New King James says the necessary edification or necessary

building up.

The New American Standard says this, according to the need of the moment. Young's literal, unto the needful building up. Holman Christian, building up someone in need.

The Revised, as need may be. The ESV, as fits the opportunity. You know what one of the Proverbs says? It says, a word in season.

How good is it? There it is. The word spoken at the right time. In season.

Or Proverbs 25.11, a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. Well, here's the thing. Need.

Need. You know what? One of the things God has saved you to do and given you a voice for is to minister to needs. You're to be a giver.

God's people are meant to meet needs. And they're meant to meet needs by the way we use our tongues. I mean, you just think about some of the most basic intentions behind what Scripture says about why we meet together like this.

What did Jesus do? Jesus gave gifts to men. Jesus gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. To do what? To equip the saints for the work of ministry for the upbuilding of the body of Christ.

Now you notice, there's our word. Upbuilding. If you think about what apostles and prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers do, they use their mouths.

You basically come together here. We talk about the primacy of preaching. One of the primary reasons that we gather together is to hear preaching.

That's audible. That's one of the primary functions of why we even meet together. Or you think about Hebrews 10.

Very popular text with us. Why should we not forsake meeting together? Because we're supposed to be stirring up one another to love and good works. And what it says is encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Encouraging one another. How do you stir up one another? You engage. Conversation.

That's one of the primary reasons we meet together. Or you think of this. Colossians 3.16 says, let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.

And yes, it goes on to talk about singing. We sing to each other. We impart truth that way.

Seeing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Hebrews 3.13, exhort one another every day as long as it's called today that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. You see, the mouth of the wise, the righteous, it's like choice silver.

What does it do? It imparts knowledge. It imparts life. It imparts health.

The reality is we have a whole string of words that flow right out of this book that talk about all the different ways that we use our voices. We can rebuke. We can reprove.

We can admonish. We can teach. We can preach.

We can encourage. We can warn. We can comfort.

There's a word of knowledge. There's a word of wisdom. Yes, they can be done through writing I suppose, but most commonly, the way that we are interacting, the way Paul views us as a church affecting each other is by way of our voice.

Your voice, and being part of the church of Jesus Christ, your voice and the part that voice plays is critical. It has the potential to do massive amounts of damage. But you know what? Just like I said before, some of the most problematic people over the years that we've ever encountered in this church, you can look no further than the tongue.

But I'll tell you this, on the other extreme, some of the most profitable, most blessed gifts to this church, it's typically people who use their mouths so well and are able to give a fit word as suits the occasion, meets the need at hand. There's discernment. And you know, the only way we're going to get there that we actually are addressing the occasion at hand is you have to talk to people and you have to listen to people and you've got to know your Bible.

But you have to be engaging people. And I know, brethren, I know, there's different personalities. And I know some people are much more socially comfortable in talking.

But you know, even if you're shy and even if you don't say much, sometimes silence is not so bad. Sometimes people just need somebody who will listen. And if you know your Bible and you might even be able to listen to them and even impart one Scripture that might apply to their situation, or sometimes it's weeping with those who weep or just smiling and rejoicing with those who are rejoicing, sometimes we have to rebuke people.

Sometimes we have to comfort people. See, as fits the occasion, a word fitly spoken. There's times when a person doesn't need a rebuke and there's times they do.

And knowing the difference, because you'll do harm. We can have the right words at the wrong time. You want to determine what the need is.

But see, you have to even start thinking that way. It's like I'm not just headed there. We spoke last week.

There are givers and takers in the church. And this so much comes back to that. It brings that into play.

Are you really thinking about coming here and giving? Are you thinking about others? How can I help? How can I help people fix their gaze on Christ? How can I help people have a greater faith in God? How can I help people be more solidly grounded? Not as worldly. Not as distracted. Not as anxious.

Not as fearful. What can I do? How can I be a help? If you're that person that's always like, your sentences always begin when you engage them with, did you hear? All it is is gossip. You just want to be the first person to spread the news to people.

Brethren, the old man is full of hot air and garbage. Put the one off. Put the other on.

I remember, as I was thinking about this, I remember years back we visited my mom when she lived in North Carolina. And you may know, she had a woman priestess. And I think it was that message I

confronted her about.

If your words don't line up with this book, it's because there's no light in you. Because it was an abomination of an attempt at a sermon. But she said to the people something like, oh, there's been so many deaths, and there's been so much disease.

And she made this pronouncement. So it's just going to stop. It's like, what? It needs to stop.

It's like, yeah, that really helped people. Like it's going to stop old people from getting sick, and it's going to stop old people from dying. And you know what? Just a flippant, empty, oh, everything's going to be okay.

That is such a worldly expression. People throw that around all the time. Oh, it's going to be okay.

Well, you know what? For the Christian, that might be true. But you do want to tie this to God's Word and to God Himself and how God acts and how God moves and what God's doing in their life. Just saying, well, it's all going to turn out okay.

I mean, what do you mean by that? Somebody has a lost child. Well, it's going to turn out okay. Well, my child may end up in hell.

I mean, even if everything's going to work out for my good, that isn't good. And so we need to think. And don't be so concerned that you're going to say something wrong that you never try.

If you're going to try to do right, I mean, sometimes you will mess up and sometimes you'll say the wrong thing and sometimes you'll pull your foot out of your mouth and I probably have a tendency to do that a lot more than some of you. But wholesome words. Brethren, I want you to think about something.

Wholesome words. This goes back to what our Lord said. You speak words, where do they come from? They come from here.

Wholesome words must first be in our thoughts. That's a given. Isn't it interesting? I come back to this.

We think in words. The words you want to be speaking that help other people and minister grace to other people need to be thoughts that you're thinking prior to speaking them. We can force ourselves to say things simply parroting what we know ought to be right.

But if you're going to truly be doing what Paul wants you to put on, this isn't just morality and speech. And I mean even worse, hypocrisy, where you're saying one thing but you actually feel another. Listen, if you're going to really confront this head on, you have to confront your thoughts.

If you constantly have bitter thoughts towards a certain person, you try to come in this place, you've got to resolve that. One of the reasons that the Lord is talking about us leaving our gift at the altar, one of the reasons that Scripture is telling us to deal with things and be forgiving is because we want there to be sincerity at the deepest levels. You have to be thinking the right thoughts.

You need to be thinking about helping other people. You need to be thinking as you're driving here about how to give of yourself by way of your tongue. Even if you're shy, you can still ask, Lord, would You maybe allow me to talk to one person that I might be able to help by the things that I say or that I might be able to encourage or say something that You would use in their life? Wholesome words.

They've got to be in your thoughts before they're going to ever flow off your lips in a way that's truly going to impart grace to others. Don't force your lips and your vocal cords to say right things when you don't feel them and embrace them in the innermost man. Just look.

Judge yourself. Judge the evil thoughts. Attack them.

Face them. Confess them. Repent of them.

That is at the root of speaking right. Brethren, I'm going to come back to this again. You as Christians are the only people in this world who have the capacity to impart grace by your voices and to do good.

There was a day when they could look at Jesus Christ and He was there in the world and He was there preaching and He was speaking and He was healing. And you know, they sent those guys there that one day to arrest Him and they came back and they said, why didn't you arrest Him? No one ever spoke like this man. I mean, we never heard anyone speak like this guy.

And you know, there's that Psalm 45. You are the most handsome of the sons of men. Grace is poured upon your lips.

In Hebrew, that handsome is literally a double. Beautiful, beautiful. Our Lord Jesus Christ was stand out for the beauty of language.

But you know what? He's not physically present here. Now He says to us, even to the uttermost parts of the earth, we are His witnesses. We are the people who now, people ought to sit up and take note, wow, I don't hear anybody else speak like this guy speaks.

That ought to be the reputation you have in your family, in your workplace, in your college classroom. Nobody speaks like this person speaks. Because He said, follow Me.

And He was one, the words came off His mouth and no one spoke like Him. But we should be the imitators of Him. That should be our reputation.

People ought to recognize. They ought to recognize of us what they recognized of those early disciples. Oh, they noticed, you know, they put it together.

Ah, these guys were with Christ. They ought to notice that about us. Ah, these people, they talk different from everybody else.

And there's a connection with Christ. Here we are. The time is short.

And Jesus says that when you get to the end, He says you're going to be justified or condemned by the words you spoke. That is an infallible test because Jesus says we're going to be judged. He doesn't judge us on a scale that's faulty.

He's the judge. And He basically says this. He knows what judgment day is going to be like.

And He looks at His disciples. He says this. You know what comes out of your mouth? It's going to prove who and what you are perfectly.

It never fails. It is a test that never fails. Justified or condemned by what you've spoken.

Our voices give us away because our voices are a window to who we are on the inside. They always are. The new man.

That's what Paul's telling you to put on because you have the capacity to do it. What a gift we have. Not only do we have the gift to speak, we have the gift to speak and please God.

That is a tremendous gift. Don't squander it. Put it on.

Father, I pray that You'd help us to talk different if we need to speak different. I pray that You'd grip us by these realities. Convince us, convict us to be renewed in the spirit of our minds.

Minds that are gripped by the reality of the significance of what our tongues are capable of both in the area of corruption and destruction and of doing good. Life and death. Lord, I pray that we would indeed be a people who speak like no others.

I pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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