

## How We Can Walk Worthy Of Our Vocation.

Text: Eph 4:29-32

1) By putting away evil speaking

Suggested Hymns:

2) By being kind to one another

373, 353, 621, 346, 337

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Ephesians 4:29–32, <sup>29</sup> *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.* <sup>30</sup> *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* <sup>31</sup> *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.*

<sup>32</sup> *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

*“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”<sup>1</sup>* These words give the keynote to the entire chapter, which gives us rules for Christian conduct. The faith within us must show itself in our behaviour toward others. We *“no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk.”<sup>2</sup>*

We must not only *“Abhor what is evil.* But *Cling to what is good.”<sup>3</sup>* This is not always easy, for we still have the sinful flesh and are surrounded by many temptations. There is a constant conflict going on between good and evil; for it is just as impossible for good and evil to dwell together as for darkness and light to remain in the same room. The one must expel the other, and consequently Christianity in truth, is a battle and a conflict.

In this chapter the great Apostle Paul is encouraging us to strive for an ever greater efficiency in our Christian conduct. — Among the sins which beset us again and again are the sins of *“evil speech.”* The faculty of speech is one of the noblest gifts that God has given to man. Oh, how thankful we should be for the

marvellous power of articulate speech, of clothing and conveying thought, in spoken language!

But, like so many other blessings, it is often misused, and for that reason we cannot ponder too often the earnest admonition of our Saviour written in Matthew 12:36–37, <sup>36</sup> *But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.* <sup>37</sup> *For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*”

How we can follow this injunction is told us in our text. Let us, therefore, under God’s blessings, consider *How We Can Walk Worthy of Our Vocation*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

**1. In The Negative Sense**  
**We Can Walk Worthy Of Our Vocation**  
**By Putting Away Evil Speaking**

Our text begins, *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification.*

What do we mean by “*corrupt words*”? That which is filthy, corrupt, and rotten; lewd and unchaste words in conversation, smutty stories and anecdotes; the singing of songs that are filthy and questionable. Surely, this is a warning against such things that are in place in our time, such as stage, TV, movies, internet and so on.

**Filthiness of Speech**

Much of the modern literature is so filthy that Christian homes cannot be too careful in selecting reading material. As to relating stories, remember what General Grant said when a person was about to relate a shady story and asked: “*Are there any ladies present?*” Grant replied, “*No, but there are gentlemen present.*”

Did you ever analyse jokes carefully? Did you ever notice that some never seem very funny unless they are a little bit filthy? And did you ever notice that many of our so-called funny stories always approach the sacred?

In movies and cartoons they often ridicule the sacred. The devil always delights in making things look funny when it concerns a preacher. If you

carefully study joke-books and funny conversations, you will find that nine out of ten take a certain amount of sinning to make the people laugh.

Surely, this admonition, *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification*, is in place also in our time. We Christians must live on the plane on which God wants us to live. Let us stop saying things that Jesus would never say, and let us stop listening to things that Jesus would never listen to.

Rather <sup>31</sup> *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.*

### **Strife, Bitterness, and Malice**

Fighting and quarrelling among people is only too common today. Even Christians are in danger of forgetting themselves at times, and hence this warning. Misunderstanding and anger and losing one's temper often result in harsh words. Christians should remember the words of Ephesians 4:26, *do not let the sun go down on your wrath.*

When John, the patriarch of Constantinople, had a quarrel one day with a good Christian man, he went home very much dissatisfied with himself; and when he looked toward the west that evening and saw the sun going down, he remembered what Paul wrote <sup>26</sup> *“Be angry, and do not sin”*: *do not let the sun go down on your wrath*, and the man who had the quarrel with him remembered the same thing.

John started out at once to see his neighbour, and when they met, he said: *“My neighbour, the sun is going down.”* That was all that was necessary. The sun was going down. They both had been instructed in God's Word. And such instruction is the only help and the only salvation for the world today.

If people were instructed in God's Word and knew what God expects of them, there would be less quarrelling and less misunderstanding and more co-operation and more peace. Let us forgive each other and go home and sleep as God's children and never go to bed hating each other. Bitterness, wrath, anger, evil speaking, malice, and bad tempers must be put away.

These are some of the most common sins today. You pick a quarrel with your neighbour across the street. Then you stop talking to that neighbour and

keep on nursing that hatred. You are trying to find out something about that enemy that you don't like and keep on hating and letting your temper run away with you. You foster bitterness and malice, which results in more anger and evil speaking.

If you do such things, you cannot be a child of God. You cannot go to heaven hating any man on earth or having any bitterness toward anyone. A Christian prays every day: *"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."* But if you do not forgive, you are asking God to treat you the same way.<sup>4</sup> Oh, my friends, let us beware of the sins of speech!

No wonder the Apostle James says in James 1:19, ***"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."*** Do not be too swift with your tongue. Always hold the tongue in check.

Did it ever occur to you why God gave you two ears for hearing and only one tongue for speaking? Did you ever think of it that when God made you, He not only gave you one tongue to speak with, but He put around that tongue two gates called lips and around that tongue also a double fence of ivory teeth that you might be careful with your speech?

Remember again, the Saviour says that we must give account of every idle word. If there is one verse in the Bible that condemns us, this is the one.

### **Grieving the Holy Spirit**

Our text says, ***<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*** The greatest harm done by the sins of evil speaking is not the wrong which is committed against our fellow man, but the wrong which is committed against the Holy Spirit.

What does *"grieving the Holy Spirit"* mean? Not only to wound the feelings or cause an experience of sorrow, but also to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit.

We all know that the Holy Spirit works faith in us,<sup>5</sup> but He also sanctifies our life, as we read in 1 Corinthians 6:11, ***<sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.***

And in this work and endeavour He is greatly hindered by our *"evil speaking."* The Holy Spirit also dwells in us and has chosen us to be His temple.

Should one grieve such an exalted Guest? If an honoured guest lived in our home, would we willingly insult him and by our sinful behaviour cause him to leave us?

Our text teaches that by “*corrupt words*,” by evil speaking, we grieve the Holy Spirit, who has called us and who is willing to keep us and to seal us unto the day of our redemption. Surely, this ought to induce us to be constantly on our guard against the sins of the tongue.

### **Growth**

This entire chapter of Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians is an exhortation for all Christians to walk and to grow in godliness and good works. As Gentiles serve iniquity, so we are to go from righteousness to holiness day by day.

In other words, Christianity is growth. A man does not change from being a child of the devil to being a child of God in one moment and in the next become a full-grown Christian. Paul says of old Christians that they were once babes and needed milk, but that when they have grown up, he will give them solid food.<sup>6</sup>

Of himself he writes in Philippians 3:12, *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.”*

Having seen what we are to avoid in order to walk worthy of our vocation, let us now see what we should do as Christians in order to demonstrate our Christian calling and vocation.

### **2. In The Positive Sense We Can Walk Worthy Of Our Vocation By Being Kind One To Another**

Our text continues, *“but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”* We have seen that we must avoid evil speaking, but this is not enough. We must also speak words that are good and kind, hopeful and helpful.

The Eighth Commandment says, **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.** *What does this mean for us?* We are to fear and love God so that we do not betray, slander, or lie about our neighbour, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain his actions in the kindest way.

We often have opportunity to say something that will help others. We can admonish our neighbour, teach him the will of God, encourage him to do right. We should also praise him when he is deserving.

### **Mutual Kindness**

*<sup>32</sup> And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

*“Kind, tenderhearted, forgiving.”* Oh, how much that is needed in our day and our time! How much unkindness and hard-heartedness is found everywhere! And we do not need to look very far to find it; the seeds of this evil are also found in our own hearts.

There are people in this world who simply delight in hating somebody and say something terrible about someone, jealous of their prosperity, always ready to push somebody down in order to lift themselves up.

That kind of spirit marks him as one who has murder in his heart.<sup>7</sup> The devil never forgets his religion. It was he who caused Cain to be envious and hateful, so that he raised his club against his own brother and became a murderer. Whenever you find yourself hating this man or that man, watching for an opportunity to take revenge and filled with an unforgiving spirit, then look out; the devil is planting the seeds of murder in your heart.

### **Forgiving One Another**

Above all we are to be *forgiving of one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*<sup>8</sup> Because we have received mercy, we must show mercy. In this age of personal hatred, national hatred, class hatred, and religious hatred we hear Jesus say in Matthew 5:44, *“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”*

If we want to belong to Christ, we must try to put His command, and also that of the Apostle, into practice. We are not worthy disciples of the loving Lord unless we ourselves radiate forgiveness and compassion.

True, forgiving charity starts at home, in our family circles. Some are living in households that are split apart by long-nourished grudges. Brother is estranged from sister, parents have banished their own children, and, unbelievable as this

may be, husband and wife are often practical enemies, working at cross purposes, with never a kind word, never a kiss or a hug.

Should we Christians, blessed as we are by Christ, who freely forgave us the multitude of our many transgressions, can we wreck our own lives and the happiness of others through sustained quarrels over trivialities, or through proud and selfish insistence on our own rights?

Look at Christ on the Cross. Suffering indescribable agonies, yet He pleads for His enemies and forgives them.<sup>9</sup>

Or think of Stephen. Though dying under the cruel stones that are thrown at him from all sides, yet he prays for his enemies and forgives them.<sup>10</sup>

Seek forgiveness from those whom you have injured, and gladly grant forgiveness to those who have injured you.

Think of Joseph. His jealous brothers were ready to kill him, and they sold him into slavery. Yet he forgave and told them: *You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people.*<sup>11</sup>

Let us, as our text admonishes on the one hand, avoid corrupt communications and, on the other, speak that which is good and edifying. The value and the influence of well-chosen words and of kind speech are incalculable. They heal broken friendships, end bitter quarrels, bring estranged families together again, but, best of all, they are pleasing to God.

Think of how Jonathan spoke of David to his father Saul,<sup>12</sup> and Abraham to Lot.<sup>13</sup> There are many stories of blessings that have come through kind words. Let us do the same to the glory of God. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:1

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:17

<sup>3</sup> Romans 12:9

<sup>4</sup> Matt 6:15

<sup>5</sup> Third Article of the Apostles' Creed

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. 3:1

<sup>7</sup> 1 John 3:15

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 4:32

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<sup>9</sup> Luke 23:34

<sup>10</sup> Acts 7:60

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 50:20

<sup>12</sup> 1 Samuel 19:4

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 13:8