

Be Careful Of What You Say.

Text: Eph 4:29-32

Suggested Hymns:

600, 36, 337, 357, 610

1) By Evil Speech The Holy Spirit Is Grieved

2) By Good Speech God Is Pleased

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

The faculty of speech is one of the noblest gifts that God has given to man. When God created the world, He gave to most living creatures the power to utter sounds of some kind; but to man God gave the marvellous power of articulate speech, the power to clothe his thoughts in spoken language.

True, many people today believe that human language is nothing but an evolution from the inarticulate sounds made by man's supposed animal ancestors; but the Bible teaches us that man was created by God and was given immediately the faculty of speech.

If we recognise our ability to speak as a divine gift, we should not be willing to abuse the gift. The text today contains instruction concerning our speech and conversation. Let us therefore consider the topic, *Be Careful of What You Say*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. By Evil Speech The Holy Spirit Is Grieved

Our text begins, ²⁹ *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth.* What is meant by “*corrupt word*”? We use the faculty of speech to communicate our thoughts to others.

We are warned here against permitting any of these words to be corrupt, filthy, putrid, or rotten. What is meant here is the use of lewd, lustful, unchaste words in conversation, the relating of smutty stories and anecdotes, the recitation of improper pieces of poetry, or the singing of songs of filthy content.

Many people take great delight in hearing and repeating lewd stories. Songs of ambiguous and dirty character are heard from the stage and are sung in the home. There is a veritable inundating flood of rude literature on the market, in bookstalls and on magazine shelves. This moral poison, contained on printed page and spread by many tongues, permeates the mind and heart, ruining the thoughts of youth, leading hearts astray.

Many people think that such lewd words are harmless. But God knows what terrible results corrupt words lead to and therefore forbids it.

The Christian must never permit impure words to cross his lips; and when he hears them from others, instead of joining the laughter, he must show his scorn.

We can be like General Grant, who, when a story-teller began by asking, “*Are there any ladies present?*” answered, “*No, but there are gentlemen here.*”

We must remember that we are Christians. When some one speaks to us who has bad breath, we turn our faces away; when we hear some one’s mouth uttering putrid conversation, we should also turn away.

The text speaks of other evil communications, *bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking*. It happens frequently that people who associate together are embroiled in a quarrel. There is misunderstanding and anger, losing of the temper, and harsh words are spoken.

Among Christians such quarrels should soon be settled. They will not let the sun go down over their wrath;¹ there is explanation, and forgiveness, and all anger is cleared away.

But quarrels are not always put aside so quickly. Often hatred fills the heart, and the quarrel develops into bitter accusations and vehement, acrimonious denunciation. How often wounds are dealt with the tongue that can hardly ever

be healed! These are also corrupt communications, which do a great deal of harm.

A Christian must weigh his words carefully and guard his tongue; for the unbridled use of the tongue does much harm, turning friends into enemies, setting relatives against relatives, plunging churches into strife, and so on.

But the greatest harm done by corrupt words is that it grieves the Holy Spirit. Our text says, ³⁰ ***And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.***

The Holy Spirit works faith in us: justifies us before God, and sanctifies our life. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:11, ¹¹ ***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.***

Our conversion to Jesus and our hope of heaven are the work of the Holy Spirit. He dwells in us. He has chosen believers as His temple. Would you grieve such a valued guest? If an honoured guest lived in your home, would you willingly insult him and cause him to leave? Our text teaches us that corrupt words grieve the Holy Spirit. We should guard against evil words lest the Holy Spirit be grieved and leave our hearts.

2. By Good Speech God Is Pleased.

Our text teaches that by good speech God is pleased, ***what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.*** We have seen that we must avoid corrupt words, slanderous, abusive, vile, and lewd language.

But it is not enough to avoid such language; we must speak words that are good and kind, patient and helpful.

Everything we speak should have a good purpose. We often have opportunities to say something that will be a help to others. The Eighth Commandment requires us to defend our neighbour, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything.

If some one is being slandered and we know it is not true, we have an opportunity to do good with our words. We read in Proverbs 31:8-9, ⁸ ***Open your mouth for the speechless ...*** ⁹ ***Open your mouth, judge righteously, And plead the cause of the poor and needy.***

Even if an accusation is true, we can speak well of our neighbour. And when a neighbour's action can be interpreted in two different ways, we may be able to show that the neighbour did not mean any evil.

Furthermore, we have ample opportunity to admonish our neighbour and to teach him the will of God and to encourage him to do right. And when some one has done a good deed, we may praise him for it. All our words should be spoken with the purpose of accomplishing some good.

In order that we may speak kind words, we must have a kind heart. Our text says, ³² *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

Christians must love one another; they must not be cold and harsh toward one another; they must forgive one another willingly. It happens over and over again that one Christian offends another; complete reconciliation must follow in every case.

And Christians have every reason for such complete reconciliation. God forgives them all their trespasses every day. We ask for forgiveness of our sins, and God covers all our sins with the blood of Christ. Ought we not have the kindness of heart to forgive our neighbours?

Think of Joseph² and Stephen³ and the Saviour Himself; think of Christ's instruction that we should forgive up to seventy times seven⁴, which mean without limit.

The importance of forgiveness is illustrated in the story of the wicked servant, as we read in Matthew 18:23–35, ²³ *Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.* ²⁴ *And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.*

²⁵ *But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.* ²⁶ *The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'* ²⁷ *Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.*

²⁸ *“But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’* ²⁹ *So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’* ³⁰ *And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.*

³¹ *So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.* ³² *Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.* ³³ *Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’*

³⁴ *And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.* ³⁵ *“So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”*

Remember also the Fifth Petition in the Lord’s Prayer. In *Luther’s Small Catechism* we read, **And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.** *What does this mean?*

We ask in this prayer that our Father in heaven would not hold our sins against us and because of them refuse to hear our prayer. And we pray that He would give us everything by grace, for we sin every day and deserve nothing but punishment. So we on our part will heartily forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

Let kindness and love fill our hearts, and then kind and loving words will come from our lips.

Above all, we should spread the glad tidings of the Gospel. We read in Matthew 28:19–20, ¹⁹ *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* ²⁰ *teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”*

Concerning our words we read in Colossians 3:16–17, ¹⁶ *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to*

the Lord. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Let us accept the admonition of our text, avoiding corrupt words, which does much harm and grieves the Holy Spirit, and rather speak good words at all times with the purpose of doing good.

It is hard to estimate the good influence of well-chosen words. As evil words do much harm among men, so kind words do much good. They heal broken friendships; they end bitter quarrels; they bring estranged members of families together; and they heal broken hearts and cement broken ties.

We read in Proverbs 15:23, ²³ *A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!* and in Proverbs 25:11, ¹¹ *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver.*

But best of all, Christian words of love and kindness are pleasing to God. Many times the Bible declares that God was pleased with the words of His faithful servants: Samuel,⁵ David,⁶ and Solomon.⁷

We may be sure that the words spoken in accordance with God's will by believing Christians please God. And therefore we should choose our words rightly out of love for our Father in heaven.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist⁸

O let me never speak
What bounds of truth exceedeth;
Help me to weigh each word
Which from my mouth proceedeth.
Whenever in my place
I must and ought to speak,
Endue my words with grace,
Nor let me wound the weak. Amen.

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

¹ Eph 4:26

² Gen 50:20-21

³ Acts 7:60

⁴ Matt 18:22

⁵ 1 Sam 3:19

⁶ Psalm 19:14

⁷ 1 Kings 3:10

⁸ Hymn 357 v 3