

EPHESIANS – “THE POWER OF OUR WORDS”

Matthew 12:30-37, Ephesians 4:29

August 28, 2022

Last time we gathered together we looked at **Ephesians 5:8-20** in this series on Paul’s letter to the Christians living in the city of Ephesus. Paul has been instructing these Gentile believers on how they are to put off the old-self and put on the new-self and live in the light, having nothing more to do with the deeds of darkness. What I want us to focus on this morning is on how we use our words. Paul’s point here is that putting off the old self means putting off the words we once used to use as well. Christ followers are to change their language from worldly language to kingdom language by, *“Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Ephesians 5:19-20), and that’s where we left off last time!

Before we continue on and look at Paul’s instructions for Christian households, I want us to go back to a single verse in chapter 4, where Paul warns believers on the power of their words – **Ephesians 4:29**, *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful in building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”* That’s the NIV, here’s the Passion Translation, *“And never let ugly or hateful words come from your mouth, but instead let your words become beautiful gifts that encourage others; do this by speaking words of grace to help them.”* Paul’s warning here is that every believer needs to pay close attention to the words they use, using only appropriate uplifting words, because if we don’t, then we grieve the Holy Spirit that resides within us. Paul’s point here is that the words we speak are important because God is recording every word we speak according to Matthew’s Gospel that we will be looking at this morning. In essence the words we speak dictate what’s in our heart, so we need to choose them wisely because our words have power over others – they can be a positive or negative influence on others, causing others to feel good or feel bad, happy or sad, encouraged or discouraged. Our words can promote peace or cause hostility, build up or tear down, heal or hurt, create or destroy, produce life or bring about death. Our words have the power to destroy community or strengthen community, especially the fellowship of faith that we have within the church. The topic of today’s message is **THE POWER OF OUR WORDS!**

The Bible teaches us that our tongue is a powerful and unruly weapon – how it’s impossible to tame the tongue without God’s help. The problem is that we are too quick to speak and slow to listen, often speaking before we think of the effects that our words may have on others. That’s why God’s desire is for His followers to not speak without first weighing the effect of every word so they will not end up speaking foolishly. Every believer needs to learn how to manage the power of their words, and we can gain wisdom on this subject from James the brother of Jesus on his teaching on taming the tongue: ***“The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts...The tongue is also a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell...no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth comes praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be”*** (James 3:5-10).

James point here is that the situations we are currently experiencing in our lives are a direct result of the words we have spoken, whether out of wisdom or out of foolishness. Today we are living out the words that we have thoughtfully spoken or thoughtlessly spoken in the past, because there are consequences to the words we speak. God’s Word tells us in numerous places that the wise mature believer who can control their tongue will reap a bountiful harvest, because their speech is seasoned with the fruit of the Spirit. While on the other hand, the careless words of the foolish person are toxic and unsafe for all of those that hear them, because they are filled with selfishness, pride and sin, leading to the destruction of relationships, friendships, marriages, and families as we use words like a sword, like a weapon.

James tells us that our tongue ***“is a restless evil, full of deadly poison,”*** because Satan is the one who provokes us to speak useless and damaging words. He wants our words to wound others, but they will also end up wounding us. Others are not the only ones that hear the words we speak; we hear them too; they affect us too. You may have heard the phrase, *“You are going to eat those words!”* That phrase comes from Scripture – from **Proverbs 18:21**, ***“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it and indulge it will eat its fruit and bear the consequences of their words.”*** When I’ve said something, I shouldn’t have, I get a

check in my spirit, because the Holy Spirit within me listens to the words I speak and sensitive to the words I speak. So, it's sobering to realize that our wrong words grieve and sadden the Holy Spirit, and the thoughts of grieving the Holy Spirit should make us take seriously this issue concerning our words. The next time you are felling sad, depressed or out-of-sorts, think about what you have been saying, those unwholesome and worthless words are most likely the root of the problem. We can of course repent for any wrong words we have spoken, but they have already done their damage. And YES, I can apologize to the person I have wounded with my words, but harmful destructive words often stick with that person for a long time and continue to do their evil work. There's a great deal of gossip, fault-finding, and slander in the world, but unfortunately, it's also within our churches, and that's why Paul warns us in this letter to not be like the rest of the world. There's no place for this kind of behaviour within the body of Christ!

Have you ever heard something come out of your mouth that shocked you? And immediately you may say, *"I don't know why I said that!"* But it did come from somewhere – hidden somewhere deep within your heart because the heart informs what the mouth speaks according to Jesus! When Jesus was talking to His disciples about producing good fruit in their lives, He told them this in **Luke 6:45**, ***"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."*** Jesus was saying that one can measure what's in their heart based on the words they speak. So, if you're hearing shocking things coming out of your mouth, it's a heart issue, because in the spirit realm there's a powerful connection between what the heart believes and what the mouth speaks. The mouth activates what the heart believes, even hidden things! And that's why in this letter Paul keeps praying for these believers that *"the eyes of their heart may be enlightened,"* and *"that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith."* Our heart needs saving just as much as our soul! When our heart is in the right place we will say the right words, sing the right songs, and talk the right talk, but if our hearts are not actively engaging our faith, it will not produce the fruit we desire. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Jesus said this about the Jewish leaders of His day, ***"These people draw near to Me with their mouth and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me"*** (Matthew 15:8). The religious leaders' hearts were dark and filled with all kinds of evil and deadly poison. Their words brought death to the people!

Then we can also look at Jesus' words to us found in **Matthew 12:30-37** – where Jesus talks about the connection between our heart and the words we use. Jesus first warns us about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, that speaking destructive words against the Holy Spirit is deadly, it is so serious that it will never be forgiven by God and result in eternal damnation. Then Jesus speaks against the foolish destructive words spoken by the religious Pharisees, who should know better, calling them a brood of vipers, comparing them to a bad tree, which only produces bad fruit. These religious leaders speak untruthful words because they have an evil dark heart. As Jesus tells us in **verse 34** – the source of our words are from within our heart, ***“For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”*** So, every word that comes out of our mouth originates somewhere in our heart and gives the listener a window into the condition of our heart. And then in **verses 36 & 37** Jesus gives us the sobering news, ***“You can be sure of this: when the day of judgment comes, everyone will be held accountable for every careless word (harmful word, negative word, worthless word, untruthful word) he has spoken. Your very words will be used as evidence, and your words will declare you either innocent or guilty.”*** Jesus informs us here that every word spoken is being recorded in God's books in heaven and one day we will need to give an account of every word that has come out of our mouth!

Jesus makes it very clear that every word we speak makes an eternal impact, so whether you like it or not, every word counts, and Jesus warns us that one day we will need to make an account of what we had spoken on that day of judgment. Let's face the fact that most people, including believers, need a radical healing of their vocabulary. Since birth, we've all been raised in a negative world, raised in a society that is always drawing us away from God towards self: self-worth, self-reliance, human thinking, human reasoning, and human understanding. In numerous ways we have replaced almighty God with ourselves, we have become little gods who want to control everything. As a result, our world is filled with self-help books and YouTube videos, as well as every type of drug and source of entertainment to help solve all of our problems, to help us take our mind off of our problems for awhile. But as Christians, we have been placed in this world to make a difference, to stand out in the crowd as a counterculture, an alternative way to live, which means not blending in with, or being influenced by, or manipulated and controlled by the society we live in. Instead, we are people of hope who point others to the God who saves the lost, who heals the sick, who forgives and restores

relationships, who delivers us from ourselves, and from our selfish desires and ungodly ways and destructive words. The enemy we constantly fight against is negativity.

The starting point to healing the tongue – is to first recognize the many empty negative words we speak, and then admit that our vocabulary needs healing. And then we also need to pay attention and listen to all the negativity taking place around us, admitting that most of the conversations around us are critical, condemning, demeaning, self-centred, judgmental, and filled with fear, anxiety, and worry. Our news stations reporting all of the suffering and disasters taking place around the world, one crisis-after-another doesn't help. And then the negative conversations around our tables don't help either, as they are often about the latest person diagnosed with cancer, or in the hospital, or going through tests and treatments, or about the next victim of a marriage breakup, or another person in the community that has died. And before you know it, you are caught up in the middle of another negative conversation filled with faithless responses about tragedies and weak aging bodies that are racked with sickness and pain. And probably the best way to know that your tongue needs healing is that you can't handle being around that positive upbeat person who is always full of life, joy, happy and content no matter what is taking place in their lives. To the negative person, a positive upbeat person is hard to take!

Then, negativity can be so subtle that it can easily go unnoticed and even seem normal – especially in coffee shops. The solution is not to stay out of coffee shops, but start listening and paying closer attention to our words and the words spoken around us. As believers, who believe that God's Words are always positive, uplifting, life-giving, life-changing, and filled with hope, we need to be so aware of the negativity around us that always tries to suck us in, that it should have the same effect on us as the sound of fingernails scratching a chalkboard and cringe every time we hear those empty negative words that come out of our mouth and the mouths of others.

Then we also need to also be aware of self-talk – self-talk is how one talks about one-self both internally as well as externally, because self-talk has the power to shape one's life. Studies have proven the value of positive self-talk on the performance of students, athletes, salespeople, and children – they experience

greater strength, enjoyment, and long-term success, as well as physical and mental health benefits. On the other hand, those with negative self-talk tend to experience greater anxiety, fear, shame, physical and mental health issues. So, we need to be careful of those negative words that we often speak about ourselves. For example: I am getting older and feel my age, I have this ache or that pain, I'm having trouble sleeping, I can't remember things like I used to, God is distant, I don't sense His presence, I pray and nothing happens, I am discouraged, etc. The point is that as long as you continue to speak these types of negative words, they become curses as you open the door to Satan, and you will not be able to attain all that God has for you, including a physically healthy body, a sound mind and soul. It has been scientifically proven that the physical body responds to both stress and negativity – bringing about early aging, disease, and even death if we allow stress and negative thinking take over our lives.

One of the most widely used negative word in our vocabulary is: *"I CAN'T."* Whenever we use this negative word, we are either telling someone that we do not know how to do something, or that we refuse to say or do something. So, in the first case: if you don't know how to do something you need to seek help, and remain positive by reminding yourself that with God, ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"*** (Philippians 4:13). All things are possible through Christ when we exercise the God-given authority He has given to every one of His followers, and remember Jesus' promise that we can do what He did when He walked this earth and even greater things. And then in the second case, if you refuse to say or do something, then you need to examine the motives of your heart and see if they line up with God's Word, and if your reluctance or fears or refusal doesn't line up with Biblical teaching, then you need to do some soul searching with God and repent. There are certain negative words that we need to eliminate from our vocabulary and *"I CAN'T"* is at the top of that list. Instead, we need to choose positive words that please our heavenly Father and encourage others, lifting them up, giving them life; thereby, never being in danger of grieving the Holy Spirit!

YES! People will disappoint us, and we will continue to disappoint others – but we still need to exercise grace towards one another and choose words that lead to peace, unity, repentance, and forgiveness. And then at those times when we feel frustrated and disappointed, we need to be especially careful to hold our tongue,

making sure that our words do not offend and hurt others. Again, James the brother of Jesus can offer us some help here, ***“My dearest brothers and sisters, take this to heart: Be quick to listen*** (make every effort to be a careful thoughtful listener), ***but slow to speak*** (take the time to choose your words carefully) ***and slow to become angry*** (be patient, reflective, forgiving). ***And be slow to become angry, for human anger is never a legitimate tool to promote God’s righteous purpose,*** (James 1:19-20). We must practice the high standard of behaviour Jesus requires from His followers, by spending more time listening than speaking, and never speak in anger. As well Paul tells us this in his love chapter – **1 Corinthians 13:1, “If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love** (love for others that grows out of God’s love for me), ***I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal*** (just a loud annoying distraction).” If our words are not motivated by love, we are a windbag, making a lot of noise and ticking everyone off around us. Our words need to be put through the filter of love!

Christians cannot afford to enter into Satan’s evil schemes of the tongue – because there are negative spiritual consequences whenever we align ourselves with the devil. So, we need to realize that there’s a price to pay for our foolish empty words. Our foolish empty words are costly to our eternal soul unless we are ready and willing to repent, breaking off all ties with the enemy of our soul. We need our tongues purified and our vocabulary forgiven, crying out to God as the Old Testament prophet Isaiah did when he was taken to heaven and saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on His throne, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Here was Isaiah’s rightful response of that heavenly encounter: ***“Woe to me!” I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for”*** (Isaiah 6:5-7). Isaiah understood that his unclean lips needed to be purified by the Lord, and that his vocabulary needed forgiveness before we could be used by the Lord.

The prophet Isaiah is a model for us, as we also need to come to the realization that our tongues are full of wickedness and our words can produce great evil. We especially need to repent from our careless negative words of doubt and unbelief that go against the promises of God found throughout the Bible. What we need to

be doing is proclaiming words of healing, health and miracles whenever we hear bad news from our doctor and others, speaking against disease and anything that Satan uses to destroy us and others by the authority given to us as believers. What happened to the prophet Isaiah also needs to happen to us. We need our mouths, lips, tongue, and words touched by the Holy Spirit so that our physical bodies and circumstances can be healed and transformed to the glory of God!

In closing I want to return to **Proverbs 18:21** – *“The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”* According to the Good News found within this verse, the Holy Spirit teaches us that there is the power of life and death in our tongues. Having power in every word we speak, means that the condition of our health and all aspects of our lives are in the words we speak. As I said at the beginning of this message, today you are living out the words that you had spoken over yourself and others in the past. You are the product today of the power of words spoken by you and others over you and your situations. This verse confirms to me that God has given us control over our health and our lives – so negative words bring negative outcomes, and positive words bring positive outcomes. This verse tells me that I need to learn how to speak words of faith that will bring about healing, health, and strength into my mortal body and that of others. God’s Word tells us that our words can either create or destroy, and we have been given the choice to use our spoken words wisely or foolishly. I suggest that we start using our words to destroy the works and attacks of the devil and make decrees renouncing sickness, disease, and death which is attacking our bodies, and release the healing power of the Holy Spirit to remove the mountains in our lives and the lives of those around us.

We find in **Mark 11:22-24**, Jesus telling His disciples, as they are returning to the Temple in Jerusalem the day after Jesus cursed the fig tree, to have faith in God when they speak, *“Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”*

Remember, Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is all about identity – who you are IN CHRIST. The biggest faith challenge you will ever face is about your identity, and your self-talk is critical to your identity, so start speaking those words that bring

life and not death, being positive, never negative, leaving the outcome to God. And some will be healed and some will not, some will be saved and some will not, some will live and some will die – but I will remain faithful to my Lord in both my words and deeds because I belong to Him and He holds me tightly in His loving hands, and I depend upon Him regardless of what happens or doesn't happen, and I will speak words of life and not death. All because:

MY CONFESSION DESCRIBES ME!

MY DECLARATION ELEVATES ME!

MY PROCLAMATION EMPOWERS ME!