

A Letter to the Church at Providence in 2023 Part 6

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Letter to Providence Church

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Turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians 4:29. We've been dealing with some topical sermons recently, have stepped away from our exposition of 1 Peter, to deal with some things the Lord has put on our hearts and try to answer some questions from the congregation and also share some things that we see or that I as your pastor sees, and this morning I want to talk to you from this passage and then this is going to be a point of departure to talk about very important issue and that is the title of the message this morning is "The Vital Importance of Redeeming our Words." The vital importance of redeeming our words. We're going to talk a lot about the life-giving and life-destroying power of the things that we say and it's something that we do well to be reminded of, and I know for me it's been very convicting to work through these issues myself, to realize how important our words are, what we say. You know, we're going to give an account for every idle word, the Scripture says and God has made us in his image, and our words are incredibly important and much more, much more powerful than we realize. So we're going to look at this, Lord willing, today and next Sunday at redeeming our words, you know, the vital importance of redeeming our words, taking words that breathe death and making them words that breathe grace.

So this passage is going to be our starting point, Ephesians 4:29 to 32. There we read,

29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we come to You this morning praising You and exalting You as we have been lifting up Your name. We do worship You for the wonder of Your holy character, Your righteous character. We praise You that You are God who speaks and that Your word is life. We pray that Your word would speak to us today and that Your word would redeem our words, that You would make us people whose words breathe grace. So

convict us, expose sin in our hearts and point us to our Savior and make us like Him. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

The power of our words is the subject of this passage and what I want to do today is unpack this passage for us and then think about what redeeming our words looks like practically a little more next Sunday, Lord willing. But I want to start here in this passage, and I want to point out to you, first of all, the problem. I have four points this morning, and the first is the problem with our words. The problem with our words. He says, let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth. It's interesting, in the original language, the Greek, it literally reads, every unwholesome word out of your mouth, don't let it proceed. Starts off with the unwholesome word, every single one of them. The idea is, don't let a single unwholesome word out of your mouth. Picture as they're trying to get out, but you stop them from getting out. And if we really understand this, that's so true. It's so easy. We speak so many words and how many of them are edifying words and how many of them are unwholesome words. Paul says he's writing to believers who love Jesus Christ and he says, "Listen, you need to understand this is something you must be vigorous about, stopping the unwholesome words from coming out of your mouth."

The ESV translates this word unwholesome, corrupting talk. King James also, corrupt communication. The word translated unwholesome is a word which is an adjective which means rotten or putrefying. It's used mostly of fruit. It's used several times in the gospels when Jesus speaks of good fruit and bad fruit. Bad fruit is this word. Rotten fruit. Think about, you know, you eat an apple and most times you can tell an apple's rotten from the outside but there's been a time or two in my life when I bit into some fruit and found that it wasn't good after I bit into it. Have you had that experience? Very unpleasant experience. Stays with you a little while. This is what he's talking about, that our words can be like putrefying fruit. The word is also used in one of the stories of Jesus, parables about a fish story that he tells, and separating the good fish from the rotten fish. Think about that, rotten fish. These words stink. And if you put something rotten in your body, you eat something that is rotting, that is decaying, what happens? Food poisoning. Your body is reacting to what you put into it. He's saying our words are like that. Our words that people receive from us at times, oftentimes are like eating something rotten. We're serving, imagine you have people over and you want to be a good host and you serve some food and you serve rotten food. I mean, that would be horrible, wouldn't it? If you had a party and everybody got food poisoning. Some of you may have, if you've had that experience, we sympathize. I mean, that's one of those things you would just hate to have happen, right? We take great diligence in preparing the food so that nobody gets sick. You kind of want to expect that, right? You come to somebody's house, they serve you food, you don't want to be thinking, "I hope I'm not going to get sick. But judging on what I've seen you bring to our..." No, I'm just kidding. I was thinking about the old Baptist dinner on the grounds, you know? "Well, I've seen your stuff." No, anyway. Actually, that's one of the things about Baptists, we really know how to eat on dinner on the grounds. We need to have one again soon. Sorry I went there. But imagine if you had people over, you don't want to serve something that's rotten, that's going to hurt them. It goes without saying, you want to serve people something that they're going to enjoy, that's going to be nourishing to their bodies. Paul's using a word that says, think about

what you say with that same vigilance because you're serving something up every time you speak. Every word you say in the hearing of someone else is either rotten and putrefying, Paul's saying, often we let rotten and putrefying words out of our mouths and we need to replace those words, we need to stop them from coming out and instead speak words that edify.

The problem with our words, so he brings up this issue of unwholesome words and it's an issue that the New Testament, Old Testament as well, is replete with this issue. We have a problem with our words. It's a part of being a sinner that we speak words that bring decay, that bring harm, that don't bring blessing. And even just a survey of the New Testament, you have Jesus in Matthew 7 speaking about the kinds of words that we say. In Matthew 7, when he speaks about the issue of judgment, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged. By your standard measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" Saying, "Listen, it's natural and basic to sinners to judge one another." Now, if you read this text carefully, he's not saying you don't admonish each other. He's saying you're supposed to speak the truth. He says get the log out so that you can get the speck out. You're supposed to get the speck out, but you're not supposed to get the speck out with a condemning attitude that is looking down on the other person and you're standing in judgment upon them. No, you're to have a humble attitude that sees your own problem as a log, their problem's a speck, and when you come as a person who knows you have a log to someone who has a speck, there's a humility and a grace that accompanies what you say. You still bring correction, but it's a loving, humble correction. It's not a judgmental creation.

But Jesus was saying, even early in this gospel, there's a problem with our words. Let's just kind of survey a little bit of the epistles. Romans 2, Paul deals with the same thing, the same condemning attitude, and our propensity to condemn one another. He says, therefore you have no excuse every one of you who passes judgment for in that which you judge another you condemn yourself for you who judge practice the same things. And this is one of the things, he's giving us an insight into our own hearts. One of the things, if we find ourselves condemning other people, now, he's not saying there's a place for discerning error and speaking to it. When you look at the whole Bible, it clearly says we are to admonish one another. We're to set one another straight in our thinking. We're to speak the truth to one another. We're to teach one another. We are to correct one another. It's required of us to reprove one another, to rebuke one another. Those are strong words, but if it's done in the wrong heart, it's judging. That's when you place yourself over. And Paul says it's normal for people to do this, but when you do it, when you find yourself judging, when I find myself judging someone else that is looking down on them in the way that I'm speaking to them or I'm thinking about them, he says I reveal something about my own heart, that when I'm prone to, the things I'm most prone to judge in someone else are the things that are truly present in my own life and heart.

We recognize out there what's really in here and when we judge, we show that we have the same problem and our words then bring condemnation. This word judge means judge down. You're looking down on. Well, Romans 14, we're looking to see the problem with

our words that we see throughout the epistles. The authors of Scripture are dealing with this problem that we have with what comes out of our mouths. Proverbs 14, I mean, I'm sorry, Romans 14. Still working through this epistle. Romans 14:1. Paul dealing with the practical workings of life. He says, Romans 14:1, "Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls."

One of the realities that we just part of sin and pride, is we have a tendency to want to judge other people. I think part of it is the fact that we're in the image of God and God is a judge, and he discerns truth and error, right and wrong, and he's made us to have a heart that does something of the same thing. But sin perverts that, what would be a wonderful quality to discern good and evil, and turns it into a prideful way of exalting ourselves over other people. And he's saying this happens when it comes to questionable areas in the Christian life. Some things that Christians are allowed to disagree on as we read this, you know, whether you eat a certain diet or you don't, whether you observe the Sabbath a certain way or you don't, all of these things are up to the individual, but we tend to judge one another on that. And he says, who are you to judge the servant of another? I love that. When I'm tempted to judge someone else, I'm judging Jesus' servant. Every other Christian is Jesus' servant. I'm Jesus' servant. So we all have no business judging his servant. It's him that judges his servant, that judges each one of us and he says to his own master, he stands or fall, and I love this, and he will stand for the Lord is able to make him stand. When you and I are judging somebody else, God will make them stand.

So this is another example. Now, let's just continue. We're just surveying quickly to see how this is a prevailing problem. 1 Corinthians 1:11, Paul's dealing with problems with words again. 1 Corinthians 1:11, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.'" There's these factions that have broken out in the Corinthian church and they're proudly saying, "Hey, I'm of this party, I'm of Paul. I like the way he teaches and what his doctrines." And somebody says, "I'm of Apollos." And there's this competitive spirit.

He talks about this also in chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians, and he speaks about the fact that Corinthians were speaking against one another in a way that were doing damage to the church. He says, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God?" That is, you plural, the Corinthian church, you are a temple of God, a house, a sanctuary for God, "and that the Spirit of God dwells in you. If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him for the temple of God is holy and that is what you are." He's saying you are destroying the temple in the way you are relating to one another and pridefully exalting yourselves against one another. You're actually actively, he says, destroying the temple. That's what he's telling the Corinthians. In fact, he says, verse 18, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish so that he may become wise." They think they're wise. They think, "I've got it figured

out." This idea is, "I have it figured out, you don't." Other one says, "No, I have it figured out, you don't." Verse 21, "So then let no one boast in man for all things belong to you." Why are you boasting like this? So that was a problem.

Then you have Galatians. This is one of the strongest statements you'll find in the New Testament about how bad Christians can treat one another. Galatians 5:13. So here again, Paul's writing to a different group of believers. These are in a different area, but he's writing about the same issue, their tendency to hurt one another with their words.

Galatians 5:13, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Look at verse 15, "But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another." Wow, that's strong language. Paul's aware of the fact that Christians often bite and devour one another when they're not walking in love. In fact, he leads in, right, this passage leads into the discussion of the fruit of the Spirit. Right after he says, "But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." And he speaks of the deeds of the flesh.

This is walking in the Spirit versus walking in the flesh, which is going to be the key to redeeming our words. You redeem your words by putting off the tendency to judge, to gossip, to speak down with sarcasm to others, and by then leaning on Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit put on the fruit of the Spirit. And so what he does, look, he gives 15 different deeds of the flesh in verses 19 to 21. This is what marks you if you're walking after the flesh, and eight of these, in fact, the eight in the center of the list, are all relational sins. Listen to this. "Now the deeds of the flesh," verse 19, Galatians 5:19, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery," that's the first five and now listen to the next eight, "enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying." Eight in a row all about how we sin against each other in relationship. Over half of the deeds of the flesh are about our relational sins. Then he goes back to drunkenness and carousing to finish out the list. Fifteen horrible things, most of which relate to the way we treat one another and so often enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, faction involve our mouths.

Then you come back to Ephesians where we are today and you look at what he says in 29 to 32, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth," and you turn past Ephesians to Philippians. In chapter 2, he's dealing with relational issues in the body of Christ that relationships are a problem and words are a problem. Chapter 2, verse 1, "Therefore," Paul's writing to this church, he says, "Therefore, if there's any encouragement in Christ, if there's any consolation of love, if there's any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in Spirit, intent on one purpose." This is what I want for you, to be like that. Look what he says next, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves. Do not look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of

others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." Listen, our tendency is to be selfish and conceited and to not regard one another and that's why these instructions come. He also says in verse 14, another sin of the tongue, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." That's our natural bent. The flesh grumbles and disputes. The flesh exalts self and acts in conceit.

And then probably the epistle that really deals with the sins of the mouth is the book of James. We could go through others, but for the sake of time, we'll just jump to the place where God really hammers this truth home in a powerful way. James. James 3. Well, verse 2, "For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well." We all stumble in many ways, but hey, if somebody can stumble and not stumble in what they say, that is a perfect man because we all stumble in what we say, is what he's saying.

"Now if we put," verse 3, "if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things." I love that. It's a powerful image. A bit controls a horse, piece of metal like that long, that controls the horse, massive animal. A rudder, you know, something, I don't know how big a rudder is depending on the ship, but something like this big, and you got this massive ship as big as this room, and something this big turns the whole ship. He says, "Look at your body, think about the size of it, and think about what this one implement does, this tongue."

In the next image, what a word picture, "See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!" One spark, hundreds of thousands of acres burn. He said, so also is the tongue. And the tongue is a fire. Look at the language he uses, "the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell." James could not be more emphatic with how powerful the tongue is in destroying. And then he explains, well you can't tame it. Look, verse 7, "For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race." Think about that. We tame elephants. We tame killer whales. I mean that's just mind-blowing. I still can't get over that. The killer whale is doing what that guy wants to do when he could just eat him if he wanted to. Elephant, massive power in an elephant and a man sits there with a little stick, hits him upside the head and the elephant does what he's supposed to do. We can tame animals like that. Look how great man is, what God has made man to rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and everything that creeps on the ground. He says, you can tame all of that, but you cannot tame your tongue. I cannot tame my tongue. It takes the power of God and the cross and the resurrection to tame this. No one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. Saying the same thing about that that Paul says in our text, "Let no unwholesome speech, putrefying, decaying, poisonous speech come out of your mouth." The problem with our words, we have a problem with our words. We need God's grace.

The second point this morning is the power of our words. The power of our words. Back to our text, Ephesians 4:29. Our words can either, even as we saw in that passage we just looked at, they can burn things up, they can bring poison, but they also can bring life. "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment so that it will give grace to those who hear." He's saying your words can either tear down or build up. Your words can either damage or edify. Your words can emit death or they can breathe grace. I love that, so they will give grace to those who hear according to the need of the moment. This is really strong language. He's saying instead of a word, an unwholesome word, that's a bad word. I mean, it's hurtful. It's harmful. It is decaying, putrefying speech. It comes out and it brings decay and destruction. Instead, you can, rather than to be destructive, you can be constructive. You can bring out words that are good for edification. This word means to build the house. You can speak words that build the house. I love that. I think he's doing that for a couple of reasons. One is you're building up every other believer when you speak good words. You're building them up in their faith. We're called to do that. To build one another up, as 1 Thessalonians 5 says. But I think in context, remember Paul's been talking about the power of our words already.

Look with me at chapter 4 earlier, verses 15 and 16. In these verses, in verses 11 to 16, he's been talking about the gifts of apostles and prophets and evangelists, pastor, teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to all grow up into the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, a passage we looked at a few weeks back, and he says the way that we grow up as a body, this whole body, it's corporate growth, that we grow up to look more like Jesus is, verse 15, the key is speaking the truth in love. "But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ." When you speak a word of the truth in love, you build up, not just the individual, you build up the corporate body and I think when you look at this in context, he's saying that when we speak words that tear, we speak words that are decaying, putrefying, negative words, those words actually tear down the corporate body. This is why Paul said back in 1 Corinthians 3:16, remember he's talking about the whole party spirit. You guys are saying, you're a Paul, I'm of Apollos, it's all about your own pride, your own boasting. He says, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, that the Spirit of God dwells in you, that you are the plural temple and you're destroying the temple when you speak like that?" He's saying the same thing here. We have the opportunity, though, to build up and here the metaphor isn't the building, it's the body itself, the physical body that he's saying that our body, as a corporate group of believers, we began to resemble somehow, in some spiritual way, we now resemble the fullness of Christ and his maturity. Verse 16, "from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies according to the proper working of each individual part causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

So he's saying your words have incredible power either to destroy or to edify, either to destruct or to construct. The power of our words. Words are incredibly powerful. I mean, you know, silly thing that many of us learned when we were kids, "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." One of the dumbest sayings. I mean, there's so many of them that are not so bright, but that's one of the worst. I mean, we

know, we already know intuitively it's not true. And we say other things like "the pen is mightier than the sword." What does that mean? Words are more powerful than the sword. You write things, you capture hearts through words, you change a whole culture, you change a nation through the pen, not the sword. You don't change hearts through the sword, you change hearts through the pen or through the spoken word, the written word. You see that? This is where actually I mentioned earlier we tend to judge because we're made in the image of God. This is so true with the power of our words. Now there are people who take this too far and act like you by your words can be like God and create things. No, you can't create things. Only God speaks into nothing and makes something. But you are made in the image of God and there is something powerful about the way he's made us to speak. I mean, think about it. We are made in the image of God who actually said these words, "Let there be light," and suddenly in nothing, there was light. And he spoke the whole world into being by the breath of his mouth, Psalm 33:6, and by his word, he created.

Think about that. He could have created any way he wanted to. He creates through his word. He saves through his word. Psalm 107, he sent forth his word and healed them. It's his word that heals. His word saves. His spoken word. And he says, now you're in his image, and you and I, when we speak like him, we speak his word to one another. That's what he's talking about in Ephesians 4:15. Speak what? The truth in love and you speak his word, then God uses your words, your throat, your tongue, your breath, your voice box, and the words come out, think about this when somebody is saved, you're speaking the truth. Paul says in Romans 10, "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved, but how shall they call upon him in whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear unless someone preaches?" Think about that. he's saying in Romans 10, there's no way for people to be saved unless somebody preaches the gospel to them. So somebody has to speak the gospel. Somebody speaks the word to them. Now sometimes people read their Bible and they get saved. I know that happens. But the most common way people get saved is another human being speaking the word of God to that person. Overwhelming majority. Even when people are reading their Bible on their own, they usually had somebody else that was speaking to them, sowing seeds in already.

God has chosen to do that. In fact, I've mentioned this before, how amazing it is that he chose to speak this way, to speak through prophets. He could have spoken directly out of heaven and just said, "Get your pen and write down what I'm going to say." And he could have just spoken the whole Bible out of heaven like that. Could have. Would have been really impressive, wouldn't it? But he said, "I'm going to choose a man, and I'm going to put My words in his mouth, and he's going to speak My words." That's what you have in the pages of Scripture. These are the words that a man chosen by God, inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak exactly what he wanted and to put it on the paper the way God wanted, 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God, breathed out by God," that which is written is breathed out by God but he used a man to speak it and write it. God chose to do it that way. He chose to use human beings like you and me and what an incredible privilege that is. I mean, that is staggering. Why? And he's saying, "Listen, our words, our words can be so incredibly powerful for good but our words can also be incredibly powerful for evil."

Now think about someone else who speaks. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and he puts man in the garden. God spoke to the man. First thing he did when he created him was speak to him, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. I'm giving you an instruction. I made you and you listen to Me. My word is," as Jesus said, "man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." God made us to need his word more than we need our bread. And so God speaks to him and he also in the garden says to him, "Listen of all the trees I've created there ought to be food for you but that one tree in the center, Eve, I command you not to eat of it." He gives them his word. His word is life, but there's someone else in the garden who speaks. Satan, the serpent. And he speaks and says, "Has God said?" Calls into question the word of God. But he speaks. He does his work through the spoken word. And think about what Jesus said about him. He describes him as the one who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. He's a murderer from the beginning. Satan was a murderer. How does he murder? He's the father of lies. He's a liar from the beginning and the father of lies. How he kills is by speaking falsehood. Contradicting the truth, he speaks and he kills. He steals. He destroys. In fact, his name, Satan, the Hebrew word satan means to accuse. His name means accuser. Scripture calls him the accuser of the brethren, accuses them night and day. The word devil, English word devil comes from the Greek word diabolos, which means literally to throw through. It's like somebody throwing a spear and it pierces, you throw something at someone and it pierces through them. The devil, he's the slanderer. He hurls insults and they pierce and they kill. So think about that. God is a God who speaks and he creates and he brings life, he breathes grace, and Satan is a liar who steals, kills, and destroys, he murders, and God has created us in his image to be people who speak life and yet we have the power also to speak death.

Still there in James 3, look at James 4. "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?" That's verse 1. "Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask." He says, you want something. The reason that you and I speak in anger and we say what Scripture calls murderous things to one another is because of our lusts and our pleasures, that we see other people as obstacles to what we want, and then we speak, and as Jesus said, remember he said in explaining the law in Matthew 5 when he said that a man who lusts after a woman has already committed adultery in his heart. Before that he says, if you've called someone a fool, you're guilty of murder. You've murdered them. You treat them as worthless. Their life is worthless. And that kind of stuff comes out of our mouths so easily.

So chapter 3 in James, he talks about this. Chapter 4 verses 1 and 2. Look at chapter 5 verse 9. James is really concerned about what we say. Chapter 5 verse 9, "Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door." We tend to judge one another and complain against one another. He says, this is just not the way it should be.

So the power of words, We can use our words, and remember, one of the most sobering verses to me in the New Testament is when Peter says to Jesus, took him aside, remember, Jesus had been talking about he's going to have to go and suffer on the cross and die, and Peter takes him aside. He was gracious enough to take him aside. "I'm going to take you aside privately and talk to you." And he rebuked Jesus and said, "These things will not be this way. It doesn't make sense that You, the King, the Messiah would now go to the cross. This can't be." And he rebukes him and Jesus looking at Peter says, looking at Peter, think about Jesus looking at you and saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for your eyes are not on the things of God, but on the things of man." Peter was Satan's mouthpiece. A man who had come to know him, he just right before that said, "You're the Christ, the Son of the Living God," and Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon, Son of John, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." A saving work has happened in your life, Peter, that's why you know this, and yet the next thing you know, that Christian basically, this believer, he hadn't got the Holy Spirit yet fully, no, but he's been saved, that new believer is the mouthpiece of Satan himself. How easy it is for us when we are not walking in the Spirit, we walk in the flesh and we hurt one another.

And back to Ephesians 4, the power of our words, power to destroy, power to build up, but don't miss verse 30. After he says, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." He says, "Listen, when you and I hurt one another with our words, we grieve the Holy Spirit." One of the most beautiful teachings to me in all of Scripture, one of the beautiful things about God is God is a personal God who relates in personal ways. He made us to feel the things that we feel, we're in his image. We think we have affections, we have a will in the same way God thinks and has affections and has a will. He is holy in all of his ways. From the very beginning of the Bible, we see that God has a heart, even though he is unchanging, yes, and he's amazing, and he's more amazing than we can understand, but he reveals himself as a God who feels. In Genesis 6:5, the Lord looks at man and he was grieved that he had made man. He knew what was going to happen. He knows all things from eternity past to eternity future and yet in the moment he's grieved, his heart breaks over what man has become already. That's the heart of God and he's saying the Holy Spirit is three persons, one substance. The Holy Spirit is grieved when you and I sin against one another. The Spirit that indwells us, the Spirit that inhabits our coming together, our communion on Sunday that makes us the temple of God, the Spirit of God dwells in you. 1 Corinthians 3:16. He's saying, you grieve the Spirit, and I grieve the Spirit when we speak words that tear down. So our words are powerful.

Thirdly, we're going to begin to look at this, the birthplace of our words, not just the problem with our words, the power of our words, but the birthplace of our words, back to our Ephesians passage. Understand the logic of what Paul is saying here. He's saying, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth." He's saying, "Stop those words that want to come out. Stop them. Don't let them come out. Fight against it. Fight against those words coming out. But that's not enough. That's a start." And you see that after he

tells us about the grieving of the Spirit, he says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice and instead be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." It is futile to just try to stop the words from coming out of your mouth. I mean, you can get better at biting your lip. You can walk out and walk around till you cool off. And there's a place for that. I'm not saying there's not a place for it, but that's not enough. That's not sufficient. It may be helpful. And he's giving us a window and the logic of Paul is, "Listen, unwholesome words come out of your mouth because in your heart, in my heart, what we have is bitterness and wrath, anger and clamor and slander. That's what's in our hearts and the mouth has to speak what's in the heart." Luke 6:45, "Out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks." The heart is full of something, the mouth just, it has to come out and you can fight it, but it's still in there. And Paul is saying, "Listen, the way that you're going, first of all, stop that stuff coming out of your mouth, see how damaging it is, see how much it grieves the Spirit, and now go to the root of the problem." The root are the attitudes of the heart and you've got to replace these evil attitudes. The birthplace of our words is our heart. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice." Six different words he speaks of are attitudes.

Now, when are you bitter? You're bitter when somebody's offended you. Sometimes you just perceive they have, but you perceive an offense. And a lot of times they do. I mean, we're sinners. We offend one another, don't we? Wrath. And that's burning anger, desire to get revenge. And he piles these words on top of it, each other, anger and clamor, the noisiness, the urgency in the heart. I'm angry, I'm bitter, I'm wrath, I've got this going on inside of me, It's just got to get out. And slander, to tear someone down, to speak words, harmful words, along with all malice, just a general attitude of wanting to do harm to you. He says, you've got to get these things out. Put these things away from you. How do you do that? Through the gospel. "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ Jesus has also forgiven you." All of those words I just mentioned, those six words, that ugly list of things that come out of our hearts or in our hearts, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, malice, the antidote is the gospel. You know, whatever someone has done to me, whatever someone's done to you, Paul's saying, just put it up against the cross. Step back from what's happened. You've got these attitudes in your heart. I have these attitudes in my heart. They want to come out. They're fighting and we're keeping that door closed. It's not coming out. Go to the cross. And take this, and many times legitimate offense, right? Sometimes it's perceived. We're even wrong in how we read it. There's always some measure of incorrectness in our assessment of a situation, but even if we're right, take that legitimate offense and take it over to the cross and step back from the cross and think about what I have done to God and think about all of the reasons for anger and wrath that he has against me, and look at all of that, pile it up, and realize that I can't even begin to comprehend that I'm so unable to know how much I've sinned, but what I know, I'm the worst person I know. Nobody's worse than what I know of myself because I don't know anybody like I know me. And I pile that up and I see what God has done in taking that wrath and anger and putting it on his Son, exhausting all of it, and then giving me now his love, his tenderness of heart.

Think about that. God is tender-hearted toward you. This is a wonderful word. It speaks of affection that comes up from the kidneys, the bowels. It's not the way we speak in our modern day. It's the way they spoke back then. From the bowels, the deepest part of your heart, tenderness. What God feels when he looks at you in Christ is from the deepest part of his being, he feels tender affection toward you. Can you imagine? That is a miracle and he says, think about that. Meditate on that. Bask in that. And now come back to your friend who sinned against you and just give to them a little bit of the overflow of what's washing over you. It doesn't mean you don't have to, may have to deal with their sin. You may have to go and confront them. You may have to go and admonish them, but you'll go as somebody who's gotten the log out. You'll go as somebody who's humble and loving and who has a tender heart and you will be forgiving. Even before they ask, your heart's already there. "I've already forgiven you before the Lord." They still need to ask you because that transaction needs to happen. That's what peacemaking is. We need to know how to do that. But it all changes right here. Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander die at the foot of the cross.

So the birthplace of our words is our heart, and our hearts are transformed by the gospel. Lord willing, next week we'll look at the replacement or redemption of our words.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are for the glory of what You've done for us in Jesus Christ. Lord, when we think about we heard Isaiah 1 read earlier where so much sin and wickedness, "The donkey knows its owner, but My people don't know Me." Lord, that was true in Isaiah's day and it's true so often of us. We live disobedient lives. So often we live in anger and wrath and clamor and slander and malice. We have no right. God have mercy on us. Be propitiated toward us, the sinner. We thank You, Lord, that You're a God who abounds in lovingkindness, who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin. Help us be like You. Help us from our hearts forgive one another from the hearts, be tenderhearted, and then, Lord, let our words be transformed because our hearts are being transformed. Show us how to speak in such a way that our words breathe grace, they meet needs. We pray this so that You might be glorified, Holy Spirit, we pray that You might be no longer grieved by us, but that we might please You, delight You. And we pray this for the glory of our great Savior Jesus, in His name, amen.