

## **Discovering Our Purpose**

Distinctive Speech

(Eph. 4:29-30)

Intro: What did God have in mind when he purposed the church of Christ? That is the subject of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. What God purposed was a people like Him, like His Son Jesus Christ, empowered and led by His Spirit.

In practical terms, God wants us to be a people who are transformed by the truth in Jesus and who walk not as the rest of the world but in the illumination of God's revelation. God wants us to be a people transformed in every part of our lives. Even something as fundamental as our speech is affected by the call to follow Jesus. Even here we demonstrate a uniqueness that the world can see and that will bring glory to God. Consider these words of Paul (Eph. 4:29-30)

Surely all of us have come to appreciate the power of words. Our words may either build up or tear down, they may bring life or kill it, they can cause pain or bring healing.

Talk is cheap because the supply always exceeds the demand.

According to recent statistics, the average person spends at least one-fifth of his or her life talking. Most people do enough talking in a single day to fill a 50-page book. And in only a year's time, the average person's words would fill 132 books, each containing 400 pages! If those figures aren't enough to make us think about what we say, imagine what it would be like if those books really existed, if we (or someone else!) could sit down and read a running account of everything we said the past year! Today in the Word, July, 1989, p. 17

## **Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth...**

**Unwholesome means here that which is not healthy, rotten.**

**God said about the ancient Jews (Rom. 3:13-14). You talk about "bad breath"!**

**Imagine a people from whose mouth come forth the issues of death and destruction.**

**Speech that is not healthy might include:**

**Gossip or whispering—the destructive reporting of the failings, mistakes, or misfortunes of others to satisfy carnal and selfish purposes**

A gossip is just a fool with a keen sense of rumor.

Gossip is like soap -- mostly lye!

If you don't say it -- they can't repeat it.

**Slander or destructive criticism—to wrongly accuse others, to misjudge their motives and attribute to them that which they did not intend. The Greek word is "diabolos", the same word for "devil". One can not be any more like Satan than when he joins in this dastardly ridicule of others!**

**Profanity—To hold what is to be revered with irreverence. To use the awesome name of God in trivial ways. To "take the name of the Lord in vain" means to "swear by God's name falsely".**

Profanity is a public announcement of stupidity.

**Blasphemy**—To speak against what is good and right. The Pharisees blasphemed not only Jesus but the Holy Spirit when they said, “He performed miracles by the power of Beelzebul”. They were calling the Holy Spirit “unclean”. Jesus warned, “Mt. 12:31-37.

**Cursing**—To angrily pronounce condemnation upon others, or even upon oneself in anger or pride.

**Grumbling & whining**—To verbally protest one’s station or condition in life. Often the Lord is the implied target. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:10.

Have you ever considered how God may feel when the tongue he made to praise Him and love others is used to do all these things? You can find the answer in v. 30! “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit”. Let me give a brief explanation of this challenging verse.

The Holy Spirit came to earth to finish the work Christ began. The end point of our salvation is “the day of redemption” the day that God will resurrect our dead bodies and reunite our spirits with them and enable to experience the eternal life that is ours when we become Christians.

What assurance do we have that we are God’s children and that this promise will be fulfilled? The Holy Spirit was given to the church to teach and guide us. When we open our hearts to his message, he begins his work in us and he confirms that we belong to God. That’s what Paul means when he says we are “sealed” unto the day of redemption.

Can you imagine the Spirit’s reaction when He came to teach us love and take charge of our bodies for righteousness and what comes out of our mouths are these “rotten” words that dishonor God and hurt others? Can you imagine how we grieve Him when he hears such words come from our mouths and it is He, to whom we attribute our spiritual life?

Let me ask you. Would your speech on the job every day grieve the Holy Spirit? Think about that before you go to work each day and before you pick up the telephone to report something you’ve heard about others.

**But only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment that it may give grace to those who hear.**

Our speech should be edifying. The Greek word “oikodomeo” means “to build a house”. Our speech should be intended to build people up spiritually—to make them want to do right. The first test that every word should pass is, “Will this be spiritual beneficial to the person?” Our speech should need oriented. What does that person really need to hear from me?

Have you ever been thinking out loud and said something like this, “I’m so happy. I feel so good right now. I desperately need

someone to come along and cut me down to size so I can feel depressed and angry again”.

What we need is:

**Appreciation—Look for the opportunity to genuinely compliment someone for a job well done! Every letter of Paul begins with a word of thanks.**

**Affirmation—Look for a chance to observe the good you see in someone else and tell them about it. Phil. 2:20-22**

**Admonition—Encouragement to do right (teaching), Rom. 15:14**

**Consolation—Comfort each other in times of disappointment and loss, 1 Thes. 4:13**

**Correction—Make sure you’re right and then offer a word of reproof or rebuke (Cf. Gal. 6:1).**

I once formed a mutual encouragement fellowship at a time of stress in one of my pastorates. The members subscribed to a simple formula applied before speaking of any person or subject that was perhaps controversial.

- T—Is it true?
- H—Is it helpful?
- I—Is it inspiring?
- N—Is it necessary?
- K—Is it kind?

If what I am about to say does not pass those tests, I will keep my mouth shut! And it worked!

**Our speech needs to be gracious. It should be expressed so as to cause the favor of the listener. Col. 4:6 We sometimes say, "Take this with a grain of salt". We may have lost sight of the original significance of that figure of speech and what it means. Adds some salt to make what I’m saying palatable to you. A Christian should not have to say, add some salt to make this acceptable. He should add the salt! Say it in a way that is the easiest for the person to accept.**

Keep your words soft and sweet; you never know when you may have to eat them. Sodium is an extremely active element found naturally only in combined form; it always links itself to another element. Chlorine, on the other hand, is the poisonous gas that gives bleach its offensive odor. When sodium and chlorine are combined, the result is sodium chloride--common table salt--the substance we use to preserve meat and bring out its flavor. Love and truth can be like sodium and chlorine. Love without truth is flighty, sometimes blind, willing to combine with various doctrines. On the other hand, truth by itself can be offensive, sometimes even poisonous. Spoken without love, it can turn people away from the gospel. When truth and love are combined in an individual or a church, however, then we have what Jesus called "the salt of the earth," and we're able to preserve and bring out the beauty of our faith. David H. Johnson

**Think about in view of our studies this week how our speech contributes to evangelism. We create a warm moment by our speech and then we make a recommendation to others about Perry Heights. Now that’s using your speech to glorify God.**

**Think about how our speech can help us in our work groups. Who needs a word of appreciation? Affirmation? Consolation? Admonition? Correction?**

**Conclusion: Don't you think there's too much bad speech going on in the world already? Let's show people a better way. Let's live according to God's purpose. I have a challenge for you. Look at that word "only". Go this entire week without one "rotten" word. Every day look for a way to build someone up.**