

18 November 2012

Good and Evil Communications

Today we will take a short break from our word studies and provide a teaching from Eph.4: 29. To enable us to establish the context let us read from Eph.4: 17-32. From verse 29 we will make three points:-

1. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.
2. Let your communication edify others.
3. Let your communication minister grace to the hearers.

Let us add a little more detail to each of our three points:-

1. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth

Eph. 4: 29 *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

See also: 1Pet.2: 1, Eph.4: 31, 1Cor.15: 33, Job 27: 4, Ps.39: 1 & 34: 13.

Some of our Scripture references that support our point have included the words; wicked, tongue and lips, because such words are synonyms (similar) with the word mouth. To help us understand our verse from Ephesians we will consider the meaning of the word *corrupt*, which according to the Oxford dictionary means "Rotten; depraved, wicked; influenced by bribery..." We know from the book of James that *the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity...it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature: and it is set on fire of hell* (Jam.3: 6). We know from James that no man can tame the tongue, *it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison* (Jam.3: 8).

Just think for a moment about the language that comes out of the mouth of the heathen?

Their words do not honour or glorify God (see Rom.1: 21). They utter blasphemies (see Rev.13: 4-6). They have lying lips. They are quick to condemn and judge (see Ps.139: 20). Their lips curse and do not honour their father or mother. Therefore by nature, our tongue, our lips, our mouth speaks forth evil. Such a man who walks in the flesh is unsaved (Rom.9: 7-9 & Eph.2: 3) and can only utter corrupt, evil, wicked communications out of his mouth, because they are servants to sin and so free from righteousness (Rom.6: 20). They do not have the power, strength, or wisdom to control or harness their tongue (Jam.3: 8).

No doubt, you have heard their wicked tongue speaking blasphemies at work, at school, on the street, in movies and TV programs. Language that 50 years ago was simply never heard of on TV is now common place. The god of this world has seduced the general population, by slowly introducing language, often through the media that is not of God. And the general population gets sucked into accepting it and using it without thinking what they are saying. I mean, why don't people say, "Oh, Allah" in a way that takes his name in vain, rather than using the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when something goes wrong?

For us who are saved by the grace of God, those who believe the gospel of Christ crucified (1Cor.1: 23, 1Cor.15: 1-4) and have repented of their sins, have turned from their conversations which were *in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind* (see Eph.2: 3), how do we tame our tongue if it is, as the Scriptures say, an unruly evil, that no man can tame?

What is impossible with man is possible with God (see Lk 18: 27), and He will help us when we ask Him, when we acknowledge we have a problem. I remember one brother telling me a story of a church meeting he attended. The elders, those who were supposed to be church leaders were swearing as temperatures rose during discussions about the use of the Authorised Bible instead of the accepted perversions, like the NIV or Good News. He rightly walked out, making a stand against corrupt communications.

Once we acknowledge that our tongue is out of control and we need the Lord's help, and we walk in the Spirit and not the flesh (see Gal.5: 16), then through His Holy Spirit our tongue can and will be tamed, but it will always be a daily battle, of the Spirit warring with the flesh (see Gal. 5: 17), and when we drop our guard our tongue will quickly remind us how unruly it is.

Let us pray and encourage the young believers in our midst who struggle to tame their tongue, to surrender their mouth to God and ask Him to help them walk in the Spirit and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh (see Gal.5: 16).

That no corrupt communication may proceed out of your mouth, to the glory of God.

2. Let your communication edify others

Eph. 4: 29 *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

What does edify mean?

According to the Oxford dictionary edify means; “Benefit spiritually; improve morally.” According to the online Etymology dictionary (origin or history of a word) edify means “to build or construct.”

Having established what we are not to do, what we are not to speak forth, let us now consider what Christians are to speak, or at least from our verse in Ephesians, what is the opposite of corrupt communication. Our verse continues, *but that which is good to the use of edifying*. Hence, whereas we are to let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth, we are now told that our communication is to be good for the use of edifying. 2Cor.10: 8 and 13: 10 both suggest that edification is the opposite to destruction, hence it would appear that the Scriptures attest to the meaning of edify as “build up”. What can you think of that would build others up? Firstly, not flattery (see Job 17: 5) and second, not by telling them how knowledgeable we are, not puffing ourselves up, but rather the opposite. Turn to 1Cor.8: 1 *Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.*

What is charity?

Let turn to 1Cor.13 and read the whole chapter. As a summary we find that charity suffereth long, and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth. What can we take from our meaning of charity that is associated with the tongue or mouth or communication, and hence would edify others?

We can speak kind words; we can rejoice in the truth.

We can cease from words that show rivalry or jealousy. We can cease from vain or proud words and puffing ourselves up. We can cease from speaking unseemly. We can cease from seeking our will and surrender to the Lord’s will. We can cease from rejoicing in iniquity. All of these can be spoken by our mouth.

The unsaved shun believers because they often see them as having a ‘mightier than thou’, sense about them, whilst having a log in their own eye. Reminds me of myself as I constantly struggle with proud words that puff me up. Let us remember that knowledge puffeth up (see 1Cor.8: 1) and the more knowledge we think we have, the more often the devil uses this device against us, and we know we should not be ignorant of his devices (see 2Cor.2: 11).

In a discussion the heathens and the Christian both want to get their point across, they both want to prove they are right. I remember an example of two heathen engineers having a stand off argument about lighting and the only thing that was accomplished was both thought they were right, and the conversation got louder and louder, with neither backing down. That’s an example of the opposite of our conversation edifying others or building them up, but rather they sort to destroy each other’s position.

Under the heading of “believeth all things” perhaps we can include encouragement and speaking positive words. Encouraging others builds them up and edifies them. Watch the effort on children when you encourage them; they grow in confidence. And each member of the body of Christ, needs words of encouragement. Such communication edifies, rather than destroys.

Positive re-enforcement is a form of encouragement where we choose something that a person is doing well and compliment them. It is not saying something positive that is clearly false, but rather looking for one thing that is positive and speaking it out. Such communication destroys, rather than edifies.

Under the heading of “suffereth long” perhaps we can include; if you have nothing positive, encouraging or charitable to say, then say nothing.

The Scriptures give us examples of men that spoke words useful for edification;

Moses was very meek (see Num.12: 3), he asked Israel to encourage Joshua before going into the promise land (see Deut.1: 38). Such words are good for the use of edifying; such words build up the body of Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ used uplifting words even when people had sinned. For example, the woman caught in the very act of adultery (see Jn.8: 4-11). In verse 11, the Lord said, *Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.* Such words are good for the use of edifying; such words build up the body of Christ.

Paul encouraged the churches by letting them know that he and others in the ministry remembered their *work of faith, and labour of love* (see 1Thes.1: 3). Such words are good for the use of edifying; such words build up the body of Christ.

Therefore, let our speech be seasoned with salt, let us be members of the body of Christ that tend toward charity and edifying our brothers. When we share the gospel with the unsaved, let us point out; that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, rather than focusing on their specific sin. When we share the gospel with the unsaved, let us beseech the lost to receive Christ with all meekness and lowliness, that our words, would edify and build up the hearers.

3. Let your communication minister grace to the hearers

Eph. 4: 29 *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

See also Col.4: 6 & 2Cor.1: 12.

This point comes at the end of our verse and provides the reason for us not to have corrupt communication but to have good communication, and that reason is; that our words may minister grace unto the hearers. You will note that in all of Paul's epistles begin with "Grace to you" (see Rom.1: 7) or "Grace be to you" (see 2Cor.1: 2, Gal.1: 2) or "Grace be unto you" (see 1Cor.1: 3).

So what is grace?

According to the Oxford dictionary, grace means; "unmerited favour of God, divine regeneration, inspiring & strengthening influence...." Our words, our mouth, our lips, our tongue, our communication is to administer unmerited favour unto the hearers. Corrupt, wicked, and evil communication do not minister grace to the hearers. Judging, condemning and proud self-centred words do not minister unmerited favour to the hearers.

Look to your neighbour; do they deserve your words of charity, your words of encouragement, do they deserve your words that edify them and lift them up? Most probably not! I know I do not deserve words that edify, yet when I sit down and talk with my mentor, he uses words of encouragement that minister's grace to my spirit and I get up and continue in the battle. Let us remember that it is only the devil that wants us to feel discouraged, destroyed, and delayed. Satan is the only one that wants a brother to be in division with his brother, or to see a husband and wife in division. None of these examples are uplifting, none edify or build up the body of Christ, and none minister grace to the hearers.

We all deserve God's wrath, we all deserve to spend an eternity in hell, being tormented forever and ever. But, God in His infinite love and grace and mercy, sent His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will have everlasting life (see Jn.3: 16), and will be made righteous (see Rom.5: 19 & 2Cor.5: 21). We who believe the gospel of Christ crucified, do not deserve to go to heaven, but we do, and we will, from the moment we believe. It is no different for the lost or our brothers in Christ, they do not deserve our words that edify them, that minister grace to them. But, let us who have been shown such grace, turn to those in our midst who do not deserve our grace, and speak words that edify, that build them up, that it may minister grace to the hearers, and glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. There is good communication, and there is evil communication. From Ephesians 4: 29 we established three points:-

1. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.
2. Let your communication edify others.
3. Let your communication minister grace to the hearers. Amen!