



Sermon – August 4, 2019
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Verses Covered

Ephesians 4:25, 29
James 3:6

So, we're in Ephesians 4. I'm going to read you a real positive, affirming verse out of the book of James. Here's what it says.

[⁶So, the tongue is a fire, the world of unrighteousness; the tongue sits in our members which stains the whole body, and sets on fire the course of existence and is set on fire itself by hell.](#)

So that's our beginning, positive verse that we're going to operate from before we go to Ephesians 4. Now in Ephesians 4, I thought that would be funnier, but apparently not. So in Ephesians 1 through 3, remember it's all theology. Then he does this therefore in chapter 4, now we're into this section where he's telling us how that theology should show up in the way we live. So we've been in this long section that he's been kind of working us through. That we're all in this, believers, there are only, there's one road going two directions. You're either in the caravan with believers and you're walking toward the Father because of the blood of Jesus with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. So you're walking toward the Father. Or you're walking against us toward Satan. I mean there isn't any other option. Those are your two deals. Now he talks about the fact that for those of us in this caravan, that there are certain gifts He's given to the church to help you be healed enough to be able to walk correctly. And then he talked about last week various gifts we have and our impact on each other. And so, now he's going to come to a section we he just kind of throws out different things that we ought to be doing. So we're going to look at those kind of piece meal, but two of those gel together. Now they're not meshed together in the scripture, but they gel together. So we're going to look at those today.

Look at Ephesians 4, verse 25. Here's the first thing; and they address the tongue. Now we live in a day when the verse I just read about James fits American culture today. We are cruel to each other. It is hostile and we will take every opportunity. I'm always stunned, and really pretty angry, we have in El Paso 20 people dead, 26 wounded, some of those will probably die, critically wounded. And the first thing that happens is everybody on both side start trying to use a tragedy with their mouth to create their own political agenda. That is, to me, absolutely disgusting. I don't

care what you believe about guns. We've got 20 dead people in El Paso that we're whining about guns before they even have a funeral. So the tongue on both sides is out of control. This passage is speaking to us in this room. And I, we don't answer for people that don't know Christ. But if we know Jesus, we're going to live under the guidelines that are going to set before us here today. Now let me be clear and I'm trying to be nice here. Not trying to inflict guilt, I'm not trying, well that's not true. I'm not trying to be mean. That is true. But I want us to be clear here. What you write on Facebook is the same as what you say out of your mouth. Both is applicable under the directives of scripture in what we're reading in Ephesians 4. So for those of you, and I read those things. I know who you are because your names are in there. So he's going to say a couple things to us. Here's the first one. Verse 25.

²⁵Therefore, putting aside the lie, speak truth with each other, each's neighbor, because we are members of one another.

So there's the first thing he says. That inside this room, we're in this caravan, we're all walking together, and when we see somebody heading out, our job is to step over and breathe truth into their life. That's our job. Because we are, he says, members of one another. We're connected to each other no matter what our persuasion is anywhere. We are connected to each other in Christ and therefore when we see somebody straying off, our job is to step over and speak truth into each other's life. Truth. No dishonesty. Absolute truth. Now why is it in the Bible? Because it's hard to do because we know what may happen.

Years ago, probably, oh wow, maybe 15/16 years ago, two guys I left seminary with, best friends, we travelled. As a matter of fact, we would take a week of vacation to go see my parents. We'd play golf on the way. We talked in the truck. We just had a great time together. Extremely close. We all went to seminary together in the '70s. And one of us, we noticed, was beginning to do some things that were going to, in time, damage his integrity and his ministry. So two of us, one night we were at supper at a convention. We were in a restaurant and we were sitting down and two of us had talked and so we very gently said, "Hey man, there's two areas you probably need to fix because if you don't fix them, you're going to wreck yourself." Very crushed, left, obviously not happy. To make a long story real short, we lost the relationship with him. And so still 15/16 years later we still have no time together even though we spent countless hours together going to all sorts of conventions and conferences. But the relationship was lost because we obeyed 4:25. And if he, and somebody's bound to ask, "Well do you think it was worth it?" Yeah, I do. Because he corrected those areas and he retired a year ago or two with his integrity intact. Which I don't see, unfortunately, in a lot of pastors today. He retired with his integrity intact. And so even though I lost the relationship, his walk and reflection of Jesus stayed good. And so the reason we speak truth is because of a person's walk with Christ. Not because of our friendship or not friendship.

Now sometimes it works and you keep it. Now Jesus used humor. He looked at James and John one day and he said, "Boys, you guys are sons of thunder." Now those of you who can't see humor in the Bible, I'm sure you're trying to figure out, "Well I wonder what He meant by that spiritually." What He meant was they were loud and obnoxious. That's what He meant by sons of thunder. He didn't mean they came from Thor. He didn't mean they came from Zeus. And He was sarcastic. He was teasing. But clearly saying, "Hey, you guys are wearing Me out. You are

sons of thunder. You are loud and obnoxious.” Now it impacted John. Because the Bible, at the end of the gospel, says about John that he was the one Jesus loved. Now that doesn’t mean Jesus didn’t love the others. But what it does reflect is he’s the only one of the disciples that got quiet enough to allow Jesus’ love to penetrate his life. Peter doesn’t do that until after their resurrection when finally Jesus gets him alone after the huge denial. And He says, “Peter, do you love Me?” “Lord, You know I love You.” He’s finally at a place where he can receive and experience Christ’s love. John, that moment of calling them sons of thunder, altered him completely so that he wound up deeper in love with Jesus and the relationship intensified to the point where he was the only disciple that when Jesus died had experienced in a deep way, the love of Christ while He was alive. And sometimes you’ve got to speak the truth right then. So sometimes you speak the truth, you lose somebody. Sometimes you speak the truth, you gain them. And there are times when you can’t wait to speak the truth, you’ve got to speak it right at the moment. Galatians 2, Peter and Barnabas, and remember Barnabas. He was the guy, nobody in the church wanted Paul. Barnabas is the one that went to the church and said, “He’s legit. Let’s let him in.” I mean this is son of consolation. This is the guy that was the nicest guy; the encourager, the OK guy. He’s sitting with Peter. They’re having some barbecue. And they’re sitting in this place with a bunch of Gentiles. So they’re having a great time. They’re talking about the no-hitter in Houston. Thought I’d get that in there somewhere. So they’re having a great time and all of a sudden he door opens and some Jews walk in. They come in and they give this to the Gentiles and Peter and Barnabas jump up and kind of walk over and go, “Who let those Gentiles in here?” Paul comes in right behind them, catches the scene, and he’s so angry by it, this obvious racial disharmony, that the Bible says in Galatians 2, he walks up to Peter and he says, “I withstood him to the face.” He got up in Peter’s face right there in front of everybody and said, “What in the world are you doing?” He had to do that because if he doesn’t do it, these Gentiles who have now been crushed because now they’ve realized by the apostle of the Jews and by one of the greatest men in Christianity that they’re not as good as the Jews. They’d been absolutely crushed and the only way for Paul to make them understand, I am not complicit in this, is he’s got to bust Peter’s chops right there in front of everybody. So understand, we have a responsibility in this room to bring truth to each other’s life. Now I’m going to say it again. It’s not your political truth. It’s not your personal truth. It’s absolutely what the scripture says. Don’t come to me and tell me I can’t wear a fishing shirt when I preach. And I will tell you this. I have to wear a coat and tie four days a week. Oh stop it. I don’t want to hear any applause. There’s always one Methodist in every crowd. So sometimes we’ve got to speak the truth with each other even right then. OK. So our job, biblical truth, is when we see somebody heading off, we’re going to bring truth to their life no matter what the cost might be.

Now here’s the next thing we’re going to do. Look in verse 29.

²⁹Every rotten word, don’t let it come out of your mouth, but instead if there’s anything good to be said that will edify those who need it, do that that it might give grace to those who are listening.

Now rotten word. So you’ve got to speak truth. Number two, I can’t allow rotten words come out of my mouth. Again, I’m going to tell you teasing is not rotten words. Teasing can get harsh, but it’s not Jesus teasing. There’s nothing wrong with teasing. Somebody bought me a shirt for Sports Camp that said, Sarcasm... It’s how I hug. There’s some truth to that. We’re in deacon’s meeting

the other night and we're discussing that we're changing the pulpit committee structure and how it's picked. So we go through this long discussion about it. And one of my hunting buddies, Ed Wren, right there, we finish this kind of lengthy discussion clarifying all the issues. And Ed Wren said, and I quote, "So why are we changing the way we pick the pulpit committee? Was the last choice really that bad?" No! No! No! No! Yeah. You people are pathetic. And that's biblical truth right there. I'm just sharing it from my heart. So there's nothing wrong with teasing. OK. That's not a rotten word. Nothing wrong with teasing. Rotten word, though, is anything that does legitimate damage to somebody else's life. Like, for example, gossip. I had a lady in seminary, wife of one of our friends, who was great at stopping gossip. We're sitting there one day and I had some juicy gossip about some seminary student. And so I started repeating it and I got about halfway through the sentence and she said something like, "Did you see how well the Cowboys played the other night?" And I'm thinking, "Well she didn't hear me." So I start back on my juicy gossip and she went back to the Cowboys. I'm a little thick so it took a couple times for me to realize she's not going there with me. She's not going where I'm going in the gossip. And so we don't gossip. We don't let rotten stuff come out of our mouth. But here's what we do. If there's any good, where there's a need for building up, our lips bring good to people where they need building up. And here's the deal. OK. When you meet Christ, the blood of Jesus covers your sin. The Holy Spirit indwells you and you get on this caravan and you start walking towards God. Now there's coming a day when you die and you go home to be with the Father and He's going to come back and clean this whole mess up and when He does, no more mess. No more problems. Nothing. But until that moment, you're walking on this road, right. Listen, we're in a world that's broken and we're in a world that's broken with broken people. So when you walk in this world, there's not a one of us ever walking down in this caravan that is not at some point going to get stung, cut, bitten, or somebody hurt their feelings. There's none of us that isn't at some point going to need somebody to come into our life and breathe a word of encouragement that we need. So we have that responsibility to each other.

When I do weddings, a lot of times you have a middle aisle. And it's the perfect picture of the Old Testament covenant. In the Old Testament, it was called, not enacting a covenant, but cutting a covenant. What they would do, they had two parties that were enacting a covenant. They were making a deal together. They would take an animal and they would cut it in half and they would spread the pieces out. PETA was not there in Israel. So they would cut the animal in half, put the pieces out and the parties making the deal would walk between the halves of the animal with basically the visible statement being, if we break this covenant, then you do to us what happened to the animal. And on both sides would be the people with this person and the people with this person. And their job from that day forward, now listen, was to encourage these people to live out the covenant they made. When a wedding comes, what's the old thing you used to do? Sit on the groom's side. Sit on the bride's side. Whatever it is. But whoever you know in that wedding, when you go to a wedding, you have a responsibility out of that wedding to go home, remember the name of the person you're connected to in the wedding, and make sure you breathe them to the Father in prayer. And that when you have ample opportunity, you encourage them in that covenant. So we have this responsibility. We're to encourage people where they need it. Not a day at some point that one of us doesn't need somebody to come along and bring some encouragement. Why? You're speaking grace to those who hear. What a great truth. None of us in this room that doesn't at some point need God's personal grace.

There was a family, big on adoption, and they adopted a young girl. She was 8. She was troubled. She had come out of a home previously that had thought about adopting her. They kind of foster parented her for 2 years working toward adoption. But she was troubled and had some behavior issues. And they would go to Disney World every year. It was kind of the big family thing. And so when she would misbehave, they'd look at her and say, "Well, you misbehaved so you're not going to Disney World." So the family would go to Disney World and she'd stay at home by herself. She's like six and seven. So the family let her go. Decided not to adopt her. So obviously, right, one more rejection. So this other family picked her up. Brought her into the home and did adopt her. Now she still had behavior issues. It was pretty tough. And they decided one year to go to Disney World. Well they noticed about a month or two out that she really began to act up. And so they did what biblical parents do. They brought consequences. They disciplined her. They dealt with her. They corrected her. They disciplined her over and over and it didn't affect the acting out. So finally, about a week before they're going to Disney World, the dad's in there with her and she said, "So I'm bad. I'm not going to Disney World am I?" And he admitted, he said, "You know, I really thought about looking at her and saying, 'No, you're not. You've been horrible. You're not going.'" But he didn't. He said, "No." He said, "Look, you've got to quit the misbehaving. And we're going to bring consequences to you in this misbehavior. But I want you to understand. You're part of the family and the family's going to Disney World." So they go to Disney World. First day's done. He walks into her that night. She's snuggled down in the bed. He walks up and says, "So tell me, how was your first day?" She didn't talk about the day. She made one statement to him. She said, "You know, I got to go. Not because I was good, but because I belonged to you." That is the grace of God in Christ. I don't go to heaven because I'm good. I go to heaven because of what Jesus did for me. And we need to breathe that out to people with our mouths in a way that they feel God's grace.

Let's pray.

Father, we're here because You have graced us. Not one of us that's in this room because we're good. We're in this room because we're not good. But thank You for Your grace. So Father as we come to Your table, remind us two things today. Remind us about that grace for us and then remind us about giving that grace to others with our lips. Make that true in every heart in here. In Jesus Christ's name.