**Brought to Life; Brought Together**

**Walking Worthy: Words of Life or Death**

**Ephesians 4:29-30**

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We are continuing our series in Ephesians, Brought to Life; Brought Together. As I have said, Ephesians can be divided into two sections, chapters one through three describe what *God has done in us* through Christ while chapters four through six call us to *live out what God has done in us*, what Paul calls walking worthy. The order is important. The commands to walk worthy (4-6) are based on what God has already done in us (1-3). So, let’s see how Paul applies this to our words in 4:29-30.

**Words that Tear Down**

Paul commands us to replace old patterns of communication with new ones. He understands that there is a war within us between the old self[[1]](#footnote-1) and the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Though the old self has been displaced, it still lurks in the shadows, waiting for an opportune time to strike, deceiving and drawing us toward sin. We must always on our guard, spiritually awake so we are not taken in by sin’s deceptive schemes. We must be vigilant because even as Christians, the heart is still sinful and still susceptible to being deceived. If you do not kill sin, sin will kill you. We must fight sin and fight to renew our minds by engaging this book and being around others who encourage our faith. We need others in the body of Christ because our desires are deceived and deception by nature means we do not know we are deceived. Let’s look at how what kind of communication he is talking about.

Jesus uses the word corrupting[[2]](#footnote-2) to describe rotten fruit from a bad or diseased tree (Mat 7:12; 12:33) and describe spoiled fish (Lk 13:48) Stop or put off using unhelpful or hurtful language because it comes from a rotten heart, a sinful heart. These are hurtful words, demeaning language, insensitive words, or sarcastic words that hurt sensitive people. I also think included here are truthful words that are not appropriate at the time or not helpful in the moment. Unhelpful or hurtful words are sinful words that tear down people down, destroy relationships, and cause division in the body of Christ. Sticks and stones may break my bone and words will do hurt us. There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts (Prove 12:18).

**Words that Build Up**

In contrast Paul says, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. Good is contrasted with corrupting, describing words that are helpful and beneficial, for the building up of others (4:2-3). There is a time element here, as fits the occasion or the need of the moment. There is a time, a place, and words to use in some hard conversations that requires a sensitivity to the Spirit. These good conversations build up others, encourage them spiritually. Then he gives the reason why it is so important to do this well, so that it may give grace to those who hear. Good conversations that seek to build others up, done well, are a means of God’s supernatural work of grace to meet spiritual needs. The phrase to those who hear is a participle, a verbal noun, describing the listener as the hearing one, the one who has ears to hear. We must be receptive to hear from others even when the conversation is difficult. What he is not saying is to avoid hard conversations. We are far too easily offended to our own detriment. When we say we are offended, it usually really just means I was hurt by what you are saying. And we are far too afraid of having difficult conversations with people. It is unloving not to tell others something they need to hear no matter how hard it is.

Then Paul gives us the reason for edifying conversations as well as all the commands to put on the new self, so that we do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. The old sinful self destroys the unity of the body and thus grieves the Sprit who created that unity. We are commanded to maintain the unity of the Spirit (4:3) and when we use corrupting talk, we disrupt the unity of the community. Then he goes on to describe the Spirit as the one by whom God the Father has sealed us for the day of redemption. It seems odd at first why he says this again but he does so to give us hope. Hope because this sealing gives us three encouraging promises that give us power in the present in our battle to put off the old self and put on the new self. First the sealing of the Spirit points to God’s ownership of us. When someone shipped a container or sent a letter, they sealed it with wax and imprinted their seal into the wax with a signet ring to identify them as the owner. Then the sealing of the Spirit points to the security of the believer, we are sealed for the future day of redemption. We saw in chapter one that the sealing of the Spirit guarantees our future inheritance until we actually take possession of it (1:13-14). God keeps us spiritually safe until we receive our inheritance. Finally, the sealing of the Spirit ensures the Spirit’s presence and power in our lives so that live we walk in the new self, created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. The day of redemptions is when we will experience the final fullness of our salvation. When God finishes what he began in us, the removal of the power and presence of sin.

**Life Group Questions:**

1. Describe a conversation that you had that was very hurtful or discouraging.
2. Describe a conversation that you had that was very encouraging.
3. What was the difference?
4. Is my being hurt by the conversation always the barometer of whether the conversation good or not?
5. How is our mouth connected to our hearts?
6. James tells us that the tongue has great potetinail for good and for harm (3:5-12). Why?
7. How or why are these commands root in the gospel?
8. How is God speaking to you in this message?
9. How does this passage relate to you own discipleship?
10. How does this message help you in making disciples?

1. The old self, flesh, indwelling sin, old nature are all different ways of describing that force or source of struggle and rebellion against God within us. Though the power of sin broken as dominating life forvce, it is still present in us until we die. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The NIV translation “unwholesome” conveys vulgar or lewd language but that is not what he is talking about here. He will address that kind of language in 5.4 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)