

“In the beginning was the Word.”

Ephesians 4:29

July 7, 2024

Ephesians 4:29 (PowerPoint presentation)

Preface

Over the past several weeks, we have been looking at the content and practice of the new man which we put with the spiritual renewal in Jesus Christ.

The actions and practices that the Bible tells us about and expects of those who continue to be renewed in Jesus Christ are not something that we can keep to ourselves individually, but all of them are focused more and more on relationships with those next to me, with those with me, and with those around me.

Everything we have seen so far, from abandoning falsehood and telling the truth, to not remaining angry, to not stealing, has all been about our relationships with our neighbors and with others.

And the “speaking out” of Ephesians 4:29, which we have just read, is also about our relationship with our neighbors and others.

The reason why knowing God, believing in Jesus Christ, and being continually renewed in the Spirit are all about relationships with others goes back to Genesis chapters 1-3.

In other words, the way of life in which man has destroyed and twisted his relationship with God, forgotten the one true God, and willingly refused to recognize His existence, believing in himself as if he were God, or in false gods who are gods of decaying human beings, animals, things, and things that are not gods, is ultimately manifested in his relationship with man.

The Bible tells us that the root cause of the breakdown of human relationships is “the breakdown of the relationship with the One True Triune God”, “the most important and cherished relationship a person can have”.

Therefore, if I were to say where exactly all the spirit and heart of believing in Jesus Christ, the invisible Godhead, putting on the new man, and continuing to be renewed is expressed, I would say that it is always expressed in our relationships with others.

Galatians 5:13-15 (PowerPoint)

Ultimately, the real battle we must fight comes down to this Word.

It is just as Jesus said.

Everything will come to the word of Jesus, "Love God. Love your neighbor as yourself. This is all that matters".

In today's scripture, Ephesians 4:29, the Apostle Paul says, "Do not let any evil word come out of your mouth. Rather, speak words that help people grow and give grace to those who hear them.", saying important recommendation regarding the words we say.

Words are the beginning of all things, the beginning of relationships, the base and the foundation, and the most important deed and practice in human activity, which can be both blessed and cursed.

However, although we know its importance, putting into practice the words of the Apostle Paul seems to have become such an uneasy task for us sinners, human beings.

Without God's help, God's guidance, God's protection, God's mercy, God's forgiveness, and seeking, it is difficult to put these words into practice.

Part One

Originally, the Word belonged to God, and it is one of the most precious gifts that God has given to man, who is created in the image of God, and which most clearly expresses the difference between man and any other created being.

The Bible tells us that everything in our lives, in the workings of this world, and in every corner of God's creative work in heaven, earth, and all things, is made up of words, and that words began with God in the first place.

The Bible consistently speaks of the importance of words from beginning to end.

From the first words of God's creation in Genesis 1:3, "Let there be light," to Jesus, who was born as the words of God, "I love you," became the form of a man.

And the Gospel of John, from its beginning, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This Word was Jesus Christ, and in Him is life, and this life is light and truth and way, and only when one knows

the Word that He speaks does one know what the Word is.” which is today’s sermon title.

At the very end of the Bible, Revelation 22:20, ends with the blessing, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, come. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.” which is the responding words to the words of Jesus, “I am coming soon”.

The Bible continues to teach us about the source of all the words we say every day without thinking, and the importance of knowing that source, letting us know that the first words we heard were not the words of someone else, but God’s words.

The infinite, omniscient and omnipotent Triune God has already been with us human beings from the moment of creation, not hiding Himself in silence, but rather expressing Himself in words that we can understand and explaining everything we need, and continually spoken words of blessing to us human beings whom He has made in His own image.

He continues to say to us, “Hear my words”.

He not only gave us the ability to hear, but also gave us the ability to speak, which no other creature has, as a proof that we were created in the image of God, and made us as a person who speaks and as a precious being who does things with words.

But the Bible does not hesitate to tell us that the Word, the blessing that began with God and was bestowed by God on us human beings, not only brings blessings and good fortune to man and all created things, but has unfortunately become corrupted to the point of giving cursing, or even only cursing at times.

Part Two

In fact, there is probably not a single person who does not think, “There is nothing more difficult than words.”

A Christian counselor told me stories of various disappointments and struggles with words during the course of her counseling.

Here are some of them.

“I never thought when we got married and started living together, that we would be talking like this.”

“I couldn’t believe my ears that my son would say something like that.”

“She would hang up the phone in the middle of our conversation.”

“Every time I get into trouble, my parents hurl very harsh words at me.”

“He only speaks to me softly when he asks for something.”

“My husband says, ‘It pains me to talk to other people.’”

”It’s annoying to here when my wife talks to other people.”

“I don’t think we’ve ever had a good enough conversation.”

“He speaks so many words, but I have no idea what he’s talking about.”

“I don’t know why we always stop talking and arguing.”

“I don’t understand why we always end up in this situation. I thought we were so close, but now we barely speak to each other.”

“I spend most of my time trying to get the children to stop arguing.”

“My husband has begged me for forgiveness. But I still have a hard time because of it. I was so shocked by what he said.”

“I would be happy if my family could go just one day without anyone yelling at each other.”

“I don’t know why I waste all of my time by chatting. It doesn’t make any particular difference...”

“If everyone there only talked about themselves, there would never be a meeting.”

“My sister is always talking about herself.”

“He only speaks kindly to me when we are in public.”

”It would be better if we could all live without speaking at all.

I wonder if there was anything that made you think, ”That’s me.”

We are all living in the fact that there is no one who has never regretted a word, and there is no one who has never had a conflict with a word.

Words that were not uttered with the intention to hurt, but they did.

Also, even though the words were not intended to hurt, but rather were spoken with the intention of encouraging, we are hurt by the words and continue to hold a grudge against them, clinging to the wrongness of the words and continuing to think that our words and thoughts are more correct, and continuing to think that it is right to do so. I would say that this is a common or daily occurrence, and I am sure that it happens to everyone at some time or another.

I myself can easily name occasions such as “Such his words were wrong”, and I have also experienced the regret of ”I wonder why I chose those words...” not once or twice.

The word is the most precious divine gift that God the Father, Jesus the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, have made available to man to show that man is a special being different from any other creature. Therefore, everyone seems to be instinctively aware of the importance of that word.

Therefore, for better or worse, we seem to become attached to words.

We try to keep what we consider to be good words in our minds forever for self-praise, but we try to let go of words that we think were not good enough.

On the other hand, if someone says a good word to us, we unexpectedly tend to forget it and let it go, but if someone says something bad to us or something that makes us feel bad, we will try to remember the hurt caused by that word and will try to keep it in our mind as a basis to say, "I can rightfully hate the person who said that word." I think we all have a sinful tendency to keep such words inside of us as the basis of our justification for hating the person who uttered them.

I think it has been more than 15 years ago, but I once heard a lecture for pastors called "Pastoral Care School," and during the lecture, the instructor told me a shocking story that I will never forget.

He was in his mid-60s when he gave the lecture. When he was in his mid-50s, a church member who had served as a board member of the church came to him and said, "Sir, I would like to talk to you."

He said, "Sensei, for 27 years I have not been able to forget those words you spoke to me when you were still young in 20s, and they have remained as a scar on my heart until now. So, I am sorry, but I would like to leave this church after today."

I am sure that the church member must have been in a lot of pain because he had been holding these words in his heart for more than a quarter of a century.

At the same time, I wonder how shocked and distressed the pastor who heard these words after 27 years.

I have often hurt people with my inadequate words and expressions, and this is a shocking true story that I will never forget, and from the time I heard the story until now, I have been choked by it, both as a human being and as a pastor.

It seems that people have a habit of clinging to words, for better or worse.

As recorded in Genesis 3, from the time when people believed the words of Satan disguised as a serpent, instead of respecting and protecting the words of

blessing spoken by God, we all seem to have developed the habit of clinging to words in whatever way we want to perceive them.

In this way, people came to curse others with words of cursing, even though God had given them the words of blessing.

Therefore, God, through the mouth of the Apostle Paul, said, "Do not let any evil words come out of your mouth. Rather, speak words that help others to grow and give grace to those who hear them when necessary," God lovingly urges us to put words into practice.

It says, "Speak words and give grace to those who hear you." What is grace?

Grace is to give and to be given even though we do not deserve it.

And the ultimate grace for us human beings is to remember God, right?

Remembering the love of the Lord Jesus is grace, right?

In other words, the important thing in the practice of the word is to remember one another as those who also fail by the word, but who also need God's mercy and forgiveness.

We should share with each other that we are both still practicing the word of blessing, and that we are both kept alive by God's grace.

Part Three

While it may be very meaningful to examine language academically, linguistically, or ethically and morally, in a sense these are superficial, the Bible teaches us language in a deeper, spiritual, and life-giving way.

It is known that during the war, Nazi Germany conducted various human experiments, some of which were very quiet but brutal.

In one experiment, one baby was held and spoken to daily along with the nutrients necessary for its body to grow, while the other baby was given all the nutrients necessary for its body, but no words at all.

The baby who was given daily words grew up quickly, but the baby who was given no words at all grew weaker day by day and eventually died, even though he was given all the food and nutrients he needed.

Through human experimentation, which showed that people can be so quiet and brutal, it became clear that "words are life," and that "words have the power to live and kill people."

What kind of words we speak to people determines whether they live or die.

It has also been shown that the words spoken to plants and animals can change the quality of the flowers that bloom and alter their emotions.

We are sinners who, in the midst of using such an important ability as words that can even affect our lives, tend to speak words of curses. The Bible always tells us that the most important thing for us is to forgive and pardon.

Matthew 18:21-22 (PowerPoint)

Peter bragged to Jesus about himself, saying, "I am the kind of person who is ready and able to forgive people up to seven times. Then Jesus said to Peter, "No, Peter, forgive not seven times, but seventy times seven." In this way, He taught him the most important thing to observe in our relationships with others. He taught us that we should not live our lives clinging to what has hurt us, but live with the awareness that we are only permitted in God's forgiveness and love, saying, "I too live while hurting others, and I cannot live without hurting others."

This awareness is the most important thing which encourages us to practice the word of God, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

"No one is sinless. There is no way before God that my sins are lighter than his sins. If he is a sinner in his sin, then of course I am a sinner in that sin. Or rather, I am a sinner in a worse state than he is, that is a definite fact." By thinking so, vividly remember that the death of Jesus on the cross is "my sin" and pray and have a prayerful heart is probably the most important thing in the practice of grace through words.

In fact, he says this in verse 32 following his words in Ephesians 4:29.

Ephesians 4:32 (PowerPoint)

"forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

This, I believe, is the most important main point in the restoration and practice of our word.

And the one who reminds us of this point and urges us to put it into practice is

the Holy Spirit.

God the Holy Spirit.

The words of verse 30 that follow the words of today's scripture, Ephesians 4:29, "Give grace with the word," is,

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (PowerPoint).

and the words that follow the words in Galatians 5, which we read at the beginning of the sermon, "If you bite and devour one another, you will be destroyed among one another," are also the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:13-18, 25-26 (PowerPoint)

It is God the Holy Spirit who makes us aware of our "conceit," that is, our lack of awareness as sinners, "My degree of sinner is lighter, better, better than that person's degree of sinner, or rather right."

The practice of expressing grace with words, which is expected of us, is not done by our skill, degree, or ability, but is practiced as grace with the help of the Holy Spirit, by guidance, and by seeking the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

As a pastor myself, I struggle daily with how to speak my words, I struggle, I fear, and I pray.

And yet, I fail.

I have thought and said things like, "I'm quitting this job as a pastor because I have to speak in front of people," and when my wife heard what I said, she said with countless times, "No, you, a pastor, can't quit just because you want to quit, but you have to do it until God says, 'That's enough!'"

I spent countless days arguing with my family, getting angry when they didn't do what I wanted, what I hoped for, or what I asked for, and not talking to anyone in the family, saying, "I'm right."

I can't count the number of times I have become attached to words I thought were "right" that I uttered, and have become obsessively attached to words I thought were "wrong" that people uttered that offended me.

But the key to the solution to all those countless situations is always Jesus. If the Holy Spirit within reminds me of Jesus' forgiveness, Jesus' cross, Jesus' love, Jesus' peace and Jesus' grace, I respond to that prompting and confess, "I'm sorry".

That confession is healing and grace.

God knows better than anyone that we fail in our words.

Yet, He does not give up on us at all, but speaks through our mouths of God's love, of the salvation of the Lord Jesus, and of grace.

Rather, He chose us human beings who only try to do His own bidding, who try to speak according to our sinful instincts, and He is still working diligently to transform and change us into people who speak grace through us.

Let us pray that we may be grace-givers to those who hear, remembering together the grace that is put into practice and practice of the Word of Ephesians 4:29.

Let's pray.

Benediction : Ephesians 4:29