

“Watch Your Mouth!”

Ephesians 4:29-31

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In Ephesians 4:29-31 Paul exhorts Christians to monitor their speech according to holiness. Since Jesus has saved us from sin, given us a new mind, and put His Spirit in us, every area of our life should be lived in submission to God’s expectations—that includes our speech. If you are a Christian, then talk like one. Here Paul tells us how...

1. Christians should be characterized by constructive speech (vv. 29-30)

A. No foul language

“no unwholesome word”

B. Only edifying language

“good for edification”

C. Language that is gracious

“that it may give grace to those who hear”

D. Language that does not grieve the Holy Spirit

“do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God”

2. Christians need to abandon destructive speech (v. 31)

A. No resentful words

“Let all bitterness...be put away from you”

B. No outbursts of rage

“Let all...wrath...be put away from you”

C. No deep-seated stewing anger

“Let all...anger...be put away from you”

D. No unbridled shouting

“Let all...clamor...be put away from you”

E. No personal maligning

“Let all...slander...be put away from you”

F. This kind of speech is wicked

“put away from you...all malice”

Study Notes:

“any” (NIV) (4:29)—Gk = *pas*, this is actually the first word in the sentence and is emphatic; it means “every,” and the idea is that we are accountable for every word that comes out of our mouths; unfortunately, the NASB and NKJ leave the word untranslated.

“unwholesome” (4:29)—Gk = *sapros*, this word is used of rancid fish (Matthew 13:48), dead flowers, as well as things that are useless and worthless; used 8 times in the NT; in the present context it could be translated as “foul, putrid, unprofitable, corrupt” and it is contrasted with those words which are edifying.

“let no...proceed” (4:29)—Gk = *me ekporeuestho*, this verb is an imperative, so it is a command; to do otherwise is to sin against God and your fellow man.

“good” (4:29)—Gk = *agathos*, morally good, wholesome; the opposite of evil, bad or injurious.

“edification” (4:29)—Gk = *oikodomen*, from 2 words, *oikos* (house) + *domeo* (to build), hence “build up” as the NIV says; constructive, encouraging, edifying words as opposed to words that tear down, undermine, or cut down—this rules out making fun of others sarcastically no matter how funny you think you are.

“that” (4:29)—Gk = *hina*, “in order that, for the expressed purpose of”; we are supposed to speak words with deliberate purpose, and that purpose is to build others up and grace them with our speech; this is in contrast to ongoing flippant, superficial, purposeless, shallow, non-edifying, ungracious speech that rules the day.

“do not grieve” (4:30)—Gk = *me lupeite*, this verb is a present imperative, another command; the verb refers to “grief, pain, sorrow, distress,” all in reference to a Person; the Person in this context is the

Holy Spirit, particularly His indwelling presence in the believer. When Christians use harsh words with one another the Holy Spirit is grieved and pained, and Christian growth is stifled and undermined; our sinful words hurt others, but they hurt God even more; we need to repent to God’s Spirit when we are guilty of sinful speech (Psalm 51:4.)

“bitterness” (4:31)—Gk = *pikria*, used 4 times in the NT and always in reference to a “resentful” attitude (cf. Acts 8:23; Romans 3:14; Hebrews 12:15).

“wrath” (4:31)—Gk = *thumos*, from the Hebrew, “to snort”; can mean “emotional burning anger and rage”; it’s used of God (Rom 2:8), the devil (Rev 12:12), and humans; God’s rage is always holy, pure and justified; human rage is most often sinful and selfish.

“anger” (4:31)—Gk = *orge*, akin to *thumos* and at times synonymous, but also having a slight nuance of distinction depending on the context; a subtle, deep flowing anger; seeking hostile revenge and retaliation for wrongs done. Used 36 times in the NT, 31 times it refers to God’s anger, righteous wrath or holy revenge. When humans try to usurp God’s righteous indignation then they are sinning; that’s why Scripture says, “leave room for the wrath of God, vengeance is mine, says the LORD” (Romans:19; cf. James 1:20).

“clamor” (4:31)—Gk = *krauge*. “shouting, screaming.”

“slander” (4:31)—Gk = *blasphemia*, from which we get the word “blasphemy”; to slander, malign and defame someone’s character; a personal attack on one’s character/reputation.

“malice” (4:31)—Gk = *kakia*, used 11 times in the NT meaning “bad, evil, wicked.”