

Words are such powerful things, aren't they? Words can be delightful, but they can also be devastating. Words can build up, but they can also tear down. Proverbs 12:18 says: *The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.* Some of you know what it is like to be pierced by the words of someone else. Maybe someone pierced you with hurtful words years ago, and you can still hear them ringing in your ears. But some of you can also remember healing words, words that someone spoke that brought a flood of goodness into your life.

Becoming a Christian means changing how we use our words. When someone becomes a believer it means they change how they talk, they learn to talk in a new Christian way. Ms Megan Markle recently became a member of the royal family of England through her marriage to Prince Harry. Now that she is a Duchess married to a prince all kinds of things about her life are changing, including the way she talks. Journalists have been noting that Duchess Megan, who grew up in the United States, is starting to speak with a slight English accent. Some expect that with time her American accent will completely fade away as she learns to speak like the rest of the family.

Something similar happens to those who by grace through faith become members of God's royal family. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, members of his church are adopted children of God. You could call us princes and princesses in the kingdom of heaven. Christ is King and the church is his bride, so we have become royalty. And like what is happening with Duchess Megan, the fact that we have become royalty means that how we speak will change. By virtue of who we are in Christ, our talk must change. Not our accents of course, but what we say. Rather than reckless words that pierce like swords, our speech needs to become wise and healing.

That is Paul's assertion in Ephesians 4. Paul starts the chapter with these words: *I therefore urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.* We need to learn how to walk in a manner worthy of our identity as princes and princesses of the kingdom of God; we need to learn now how to live as members of the royal household of God. That involves getting rid of some old sinful behaviors, and adopting some new Christian ones, something Paul calls putting off the old nature and putting on the new. And that involves how we use our words.

Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 4:29: *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.* The word *corrupting* translates a Greek word that is sometimes used in Scripture to talk about bad or rotten fruit. So the inappropriate behavior that we must put off, the old behavior that is not becoming of a royal child of God, is talk that harms other people and makes relationships turn rotten. What we must learn to do instead is talk in ways that does good to others; to buildup, to give help, to encourage, to support, to comfort and to give grace to others through our words.

Ephesians 4:29 is a really good verse to write out and put on your bathroom mirror, or on your fridge or simply to memorize. *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give*

*grace to those who hear.* A lot of our interpersonal problems could be fixed if we lived this verse, don't you think? Imagine what our personal lives and our church lives would be like if no one let any corrupting talk come out of their mouths, but only talk that was good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Friends if you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, if you have been made a child of God by grace through faith, then God's command to you is that you live according to your identity in Christ! Get rid of the reckless words that pierce like swords, put on the language of the wise, be someone known for his or her healing words. Stop the rotten talk, start the righteous. Don't tear down with your speech, build up. Don't give grief with your words, give grace.

When our words are insensitive and offensive, when our words are dishonest, abusive or vulgar, we grieve, we sadden the Holy Spirit of God, by whom we have been sealed. That is what Paul says in the very next verse: *and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* What does it mean to be sealed by the Holy Spirit? Well, think of when you buy something big at the supermarket, like a case of pop or a big bag of dog food. When you purchase a big item like that the cashier will put a sticker on what you bought, and that sticker shows you paid for that item, and that way the security will let you through the door. Our sealing by the Holy Spirit is a bit like that. The Lord Jesus Christ has bought us who believe with his blood, he has purchased us, we are no longer our own we are the Lords. And so God marks us, he seals us with the Spirit. It is like he puts a Holy Spirit sticker on us, so that on the day of redemption, at the final day of judgment, the security at the door let us through.

Our role today is to live in a way that reflects this sealing of the Spirit, to live in a way that reflects that we have been purchased and we are the royal children of God. When you open your mouth to talk, think about the fact that you have a Holy Spirit sticker on your forehead! You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit. And that Holy Spirit uses the word of God to encourage us, to build us up and give grace to us. We grieve the Spirit when our words do not transmit this same grace to others. So listeners, if you are a Christian, you must learn to act like one, to speak like one. Don't act, don't talk like an unbeliever. Lets get rid of corrupting hurtful words in your life and the life of the church, and instead speak uplifting words worthy of the call to which we have received. Words worthy of a royal.

Words are such powerful things. The Bible says that God created this world with his word. In the gospel of John Jesus Christ is called the Word made flesh. Jesus knew how to use his words. John says he came in truth and in grace, and that certainly was true in the way he spoke. But Christ is so much more than an example to follow. Christ Jesus came as the word of God, the word made flesh, the word of healing. He came not only to be pierced by the reckless words of others, but to be pierced by nails on the cross. He came to be pierced for our transgressions, to die and then rise again. He did that so you and I could learn to speak in new ways, to give us the power to not let any corrupting talk come out of our mouths, but only talk that is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. Thank you for listening, until next week the Lord willing ☺