

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Ryan Epley

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Grace Unleashed:  
The Book of Ephesians

PART

19

TITLE

Words That Give Life

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:29



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Good morning Providence. If you're here today and you came in a little late and you're like "How late was I?" We only did two songs. Don't worry. We're doing some on the back end to really respond to God's word and what he would say to us today, so you haven't missed it. You're just in time. If you have a copy of God's word, go ahead and open to Ephesians chapter 4. I want to backtrack just a little bit. If you've missed a couple weeks or if you're new here at Providence, we've been going through this series in the book of Ephesians called "Grace unleashed." "Grace unleashed." We've broken it up into two parts. The first half ... There's only six chapters in Ephesians. First half is grace unleashed to you. It's grace that's been given from Christ to us and so the whole first three chapters is about what we should believe and what we should know about what Christ has done.

Then the second half of the book, where we are now, in chapter 4, 5 and 6 is grace unleashed through you, and so we've received grace from Christ. Now we spread grace in our neighborhoods and in the nations, and so there's a lot of practical things at the last half of Ephesians. It's gonna talk about how we do our work, how we live in our marriages, how we react in our friendships, and specifically today we're gonna see how we should act in our words, and so Ephesians chapter 4. We'll be starting in verse 29.

Before we read that, you guys have seen one of these before, or at least I hope you have. Most everybody has one of these hammers in their house, right? It's pretty common, hammer. You can do a lot of different things with this hammer, right? I was talking to one guy today who said he's used this hammer for a grapple before where he tied rope around it and threw it up and climbed using it as a grapple. Somebody else that I talked to said that they've actually used a hammer like this to get rid of rats, to finish them off. I'm like, "That's overkill but okay. If you need to do that, you can do that."

You can use this for a lot of different things. You can use it to demolish. If you need to tear something down, you can do that. You could use it as a paperweight if you wanted to and just lay it down and keep something from blowing away. There's a lot of different things that you can do with this hammer, but this hammer is built and is designed for something specific, right? This hammer is meant to put nails into walls or into lumber or to take nails out of walls and out of lumber. That's what this was made for. That's what this was designed to do.

Now, this passage of scripture we're gonna look at today, what you find is what our words are designed to do. It's so important that we grasp this, because you could do a lot of things with this hammer, but the thing that this hammer's going to do well is putting nails in the wall or taking nails out of the wall. That's what it's going to do well because that's what it's designed to do. At the same time, we need to grasp what God created our words for so that we can use them rightly. We want to use them how they have been designed by God. As we look at God's word today, look at his design for our words. We'll start in verse 29 and finish through the end of the chapter.

God's word says, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths. The only such is good for building up as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear, and do not grieve the holy spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you." Let's pray.

Take a moment right now, no matter where you are in your walk with the Lord, whether you believe in him or not, just take a moment in silence just to pray that God would speak to you this morning through his word. Take a moment just to pray for me, that I would communicate God's rich truth clearly this morning. God, as we look at our words today, your design for them, and let us first think about your words, Lord. You spoke all things into existence. Lord, you spoke and you calmed a storm. Lord, your word even says that even now, you sing over us because you love us. Lord, you are the creator of all communication, so, Lord, help us to gain wisdom into how you desire for us to use our words for your goodness and your glory, we pray, amen.

The first thing I want us to see from this text is that God's design for our words was to give life. God designed our words to give us life. Now, what does it mean? What does it say? God's words are designed to give us life. Look back at verse 29. This is where we're gonna spend our time today. Verse 29. Just one verse primarily. Look at what it says. Second half of it. "But only such is good." We should only speak which is good for what? Building up as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. God's design for our words is that it would build up and that it would impart grace, that it would give grace into other people's lives.

This word for building up, when we use it, what does it mean? What are we getting at when we say we should use our words to build up? This is a construction term. It's a descriptive word that we talk about, like building a new building or building a house. You're using your words like you would use nails or you would use lumber, to build up, or concrete for a foundation. Your words should be building up others. It should be strengthening them and supporting them. That's God's design for our words. If we think about this, think about words that have been spoken to you that builds you up, right?

I can remember some of those as people speak encouraging words to us. Often times they're words of affirmation that we remember. Somebody building us up because they see some strength in our life and they say, "You do this really well." That just builds us up, right? Mark Twain said, "I can live two months on a good compliment." A good compliment, those that have received that, know what that feels like. It builds us up, but also on the other side of that, sometimes words of correction can be words that build up, right? Some of you can think of people that have spoken truth into your life in an area you were weak. Something you weren't good in, but they spoke it in love. As they spoke that word, you were strengthened.

You were built up the same way if I'm building a building or if we're building this new building over here and we see weaknesses in it, we want somebody to come and correct and to see what's wrong as well as somebody that can come in there and say, "No, these beams are where they should be. All of this is right." All of that is building up. All of that's how we should be using our words. This is God's design for us, but also that our words would give grace to those who hear. This is that it would benefit them, that this would just give them a blessing. Whether it's a temporal thing or whether it's a spiritual thing, our words should be used to give grace.

Now, we use grace a lot. That's like a super churchy word, so we're like, "What does it mean to speak grace?" That's another aspect that's interesting. Well, Paul, the same author that wrote this book of Ephesians wrote a nother book of Colossians, and in there, he gives a descriptive with it. Look at this verse on the screen. Colossians chapter 4, verse 6. It says, "Let your speech always be gracious." Same language, right? Let it be gracious. Then he connects an imagery to it. He said, "Seasoned with salt, so you may know how to answer each person."

What's helpful with this is, okay, gracious speech, what does this look like? What does this mean? Great, we've got this illustration of salt. Okay. At that time, salt was used primarily for two things, to preserve and to season. To preserve and to season. They would pour salt on food and vegetables to keep it from rotting. In the same way, God desires our words to move away from rottenness and transition our conversations to something more savory. That's how God wants us to speak grace, so when we hear conversations, we can steer conversations into something that's worth thinking about, worth savoring on.

At the same time, salt would be used to season foods. Our words should do the same. When we talk, when people know us, they should know that we speak hope, that we speak encouragement, that we speak words of affirmation. That should be the norm for Christians, because this is the way that God has designed our words to work. We should always be, as we speak as believers in Christ, we should be speaking to guide our words to a better destination, that we should be speaking words that would encourage you to build up other people. It's huge. It's extremely important that we know this, but at the same time, it's extremely important that we have wisdom on how to speak these right words, because we can know the right words. Okay, I'm supposed to speak truth that benefits and I'm supposed to speak gracious words, but if you speak them at the wrong time, then it's perceived as a cursing.

If you read the book of Proverbs, it talks about language a lot and how we use our speech, so you can find a lot more explanation on how we should use our words in the book of Proverbs. One of the things it talks about throughout the book of Proverbs is using our words at the right time. Look at Proverbs chapter 27, verse 14. It should be on your screen as well. It says, "Whoever blesses his neighbor with a loud voice rising early in the morning will be counted as cursing," okay? This is huge because we can say the right words but if we say them at the wrong time, they're not received well.

The person that it's speaking about in Proverbs 27, imagine walking out of your front door into your neighborhood at 5 in the morning and you're just screaming, "Jesus loves all of you!" Or maybe you're singing a song that's scripture, right? (Singing) You're singing that as you walk down the street at four in the morning. Your neighbors are going to hear that and they're going to hate you. They're going to be like, "That person makes me sad inside." That's reality, right? Because it's spoken at the wrong time. We have to speak words at the right time.

Proverbs chapter 25 verse 20 says this: "Whoever sings a song to a heavy heart is like the one who takes off a garment on a cold day." What that verse is saying is that in a very tangible way when we go to funerals we immediately, our desires, we want to speak some kind of sermon or advice to the person that's lost something and this verse is saying that when you do that, when you sing those songs and try to give words of cheer in sad moments, what you're doing is you're actually ripping a coat off of somebody in a cold day. Though it could be true, though it could be gracious words and words meant to build up, if they're spoken at the wrong time, they're perceived negatively.

I'll never forget when my wife and I had our miscarriage. One of the best words that were ever spoken to me during that time was a guy that came up and he just gave me a hug and he said, "I'm sorry for your loss." That's all he said. "I'm sorry for your loss." There's times we need to realize we don't need to speak. We just need to be silent and just do the ministry of silence with somebody. Ministry of just presence, being there with them. As we spend time with them and as we know them, we know our neighbors, we know our friends, we know our coworkers, then we're gonna see the right time to speak the right words.

Lastly, we need to realize that we need to speak the words in the right way. The right words, ones that encourage, build up, give grace at the right time but also in the right way, when we speak words as Christians, we should speak gracious words. Words of humility and love. Just a few verses earlier, look back at Ephesians with me in chapter 4. Just a few verses earlier in chapter 15 it speaks of the right way to speak words. It says, "Rather speaking truth in" what? In love. We could speak truth in love. So often we could speak truth in arrogance and it's not received well. We could speak truth in pride and it's not received well. We should speak truth in love. That's God's design.

Don't misunderstand me this morning, I'm not saying speak tolerance all the time or don't speak at all because you're trying to be tolerant of others. Love doesn't equal tolerance. Love, sometimes, means speaking difficult words to somebody. It does. Proverbs chapter 27, verse 6 says this: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy." Think about that verse just for a minute. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend but deceitful are the kisses of the enemy." So often we don't speak the right words at all because we're so scared we might offend someone.

In reality we think we're doing something nice for them. We think, "I don't want to hurt their feelings or I don't want to step on any toes and so I just won't say anything at all," when in reality what we're doing is we're loving ourselves more than we're loving them. We're scared to speak truth to them in love and so we don't do that. What we're doing is we're being deceitful and we're actually being an enemy of them, but somebody who is really faithful, who really loves well will wound if it's the right time and in the right way.

We need to seek God's wisdom. All of these things. That's what I love so much. If you know Christ, you have the holy spirit within you that helps guide you to these destinations, to help you know when is the right time, what are the right words. Believers in Christ have that guide and that helper, and what's so amazing is so often words like this are spoken, we don't even realize it. These words of affirmation and encouragement. These words that spur people on. It just happens for us because the holy spirit is stirring our hearts to speak those all the time.

I'll never forget here at the church one time in the hallway Dave Owens stopped me and he said something that cut straight to my heart. I was like, "Man, that's exactly what I needed to hear from the Lord that day," so I went back to my office and I wrote down in my journal, "I just need to remember those words. That was really encouraging. That's what I needed to hear in this moment." A couple months went by and I was talking to Dave about this same topic and I said, "Dave, you said these words a while back and it just really spoke to me. It really encouraged me." Dave's like, "I don't remember saying that at all." I was like, "No, you said it." Dave's like, "I don't think I did, man. I think somebody else said those words." I was like "No." I went and I looked back in my journal again. I was like, "Yeah, Dave said and this is when I said it."

The reality is there's so much of that going on because this is the way our words were designed. Our words were designed by God to have impact, so what are you putting into the system? You're doing something with your words because that's how God has made them. He's made them to have impact, so we have to ask this question. It's extremely important for us to ask this question. Why do we say the things that we say? Why do we say the things that we say? Your words have impact. That's not up for discussion. God made them that way, so why do you speak the words that you speak?

Do you speak your words to impress others and to build up your own pride? Do you use your words to get rid of people that you don't want around? Do you use your words when it's only to your advantage? How do you use your words? The reason why this is so important to ask this question is because if we're not using our words according to God's design, then we're misusing them. This next thing we need to see is that when we misuse our words, we bring about decay and death. When we misuse our words, we bring about decay and death. Look back at verse 29 with me. It says, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths."

Your Bibles might have a different translation or different word there for corrupt. It might be an unwholesome word or an evil word. Corrupt, like this one, but the idea behind this word is the same for all translations and it is rottenness, and so when we read this passage, when we read this word, what it should do is it should bring up into our minds nasty smells or rotten images. It should make us think of maybe pictures like this when we think about corrupt talk.

Now, when we think about images like this or we look at images like this and how it's describing our talk when it's misused is rotten, several things should flood to our mind as we kind of flesh this out. It's rotten fruit, rotten food doesn't nourish anything, right? It doesn't help build up or strengthen anything like God designed for it to do. Instead what it does is it's useful for nothing. We take rotten fruit and rotten food and we put it in compost heaps and wait for it to dissolve into nothing so we can actually use it.

It's the same for our words. If we're speaking corrupt words all the time, it's rottenness. It's not doing anything. It's not helping anyone. It doesn't nourish at all, and actually, it can do the opposite. When we eat rotten food or rotten fruit, it can make us sick, right? When we listen to rotten words, it does the same thing to our hearts. It does the exact same thing. It can make us sick, even of our hearts. It can cut us so extremely deep where there's scars and there's wounds. I mean, some of you in here, if we just talked, you could probably think of something that someone said to you 10, 15, 20 years ago in a corruptive way and it still bears on your heart today. It still has power over you today because they cut you so deep. That's what happens with our corrupting words, is it has deep impact and it actually ruins everything that it touches, and yet there's something within us that's drawn to speaking this way. It's because our hearts are broken.

Pew Research did this study long ago looking at social media as a whole and then looking specifically at Twitter for some kind of trend, anything that they would have in common, and they looked through all different ages and all different races and all different genders. They went through all these things and they struggled to find something in common, but in Twitter there was one thing that they found that was common more than anything else. There was one common denominator that spanned over every person and every person that had a Twitter handle. The one common trend that came out loud and clear was that people love to complain. That's what they found, that people love to complain. Complain about everything. Everything.

Not this Olympics but the one before, literally there was a Twitter handle for the original Olympics, like official Olympics, and then one that was not the official Olympics, that just complained about everything that went wrong in the Olympics, and the one that complained about everything that went wrong had three times as many followers as the official Olympics one. What's wrong with that? Like our hearts are just bent towards that direction of listening to complaining and corruption.

Think about it for a minute. Social media sites, we've been given an empty platform to fill it with anything we want. We can say anything, and what have we filled it with? We filled it with complaints and negativity and corrupt speech instead of using it to build up and encourage. I think one of the reasons why we love to look at complaints or whether we complain ourselves is because ultimately we think it makes us feel better, because you see somebody else complain and you're like, "Well, at least I'm not alone in this pit," and so you sink down to their level, or we complain in hopes that somebody would be brought down, not built up, or we complain about certain things or hide behind our words because there's deep insecurities in our own hearts that we have fears if anybody knows, they'll judge me for. So we hide and mask with all these corrupt words instead of laying bare before the Lord and allowing him to heal them.

If we misuse our words, what we'll find ultimately is not pleasure from that. What we'll find is it destroys us. It ultimately destroys us. Think about this, if you speak dishonestly, you speak out of anger, you speak these different words, what you'll find is that you start to believe these lies, that the slander eventually begins to believe the slander, that the complainer eventually loses all hope and you let yourself slip into thinking that everything is wrong, all the time. The more we complain, we're not building ourselves up anymore, we're breaking ourselves down and we're corrupting our own hearts. That's what happens, and unfortunately you're not breaking just yourself down, you're breaking others down when you do this.

I'll never forget, I had a coworker at one point that would complain about everyone. Everyone, they would complain about, and one day I'm riding in the car with him and he called another one of our coworkers a 200 pound paperweight. I'm sitting there and I'm thinking through all the different people we work with, I'm like, "Man, he's complained about every single person we work with. What does he say about me when I'm not here?"

What he's doing is he's tearing others down but he's also tearing himself down because what he's doing is he's making himself not trustworthy. I don't want that guy as my friend. I don't want that guy, that's gonna always break down instead of build up. I don't want him to be my friend. Instead, I want someone who's using words the way that God designed for them to be used. Some of us sit here today and we're like, "Man, I can think of so many people that talk like this. I can think of so many coworkers." You've got this truth nugget in your mind of, like, "I've gotta speak this truth to them to tell them to stop doing this," and you're just going to go home to your family and you're gonna go home to your workplace and you're just gonna shoot these truths at other people, like, "You just need to know this. You're wrong. Corruption. We don't need this. This is death in the system."



We're gonna speak all these truths when, reality, what I would say is let's just pause for a second and let's look at our own hearts, because what we're gonna find is that we think that this applies to so many other people and this ultimately applies to us, and I would encourage you, if you're wondering, "Am I speaking corrupt words? Am I speaking corrupt language?" To ask these three questions. Before you speak, ask, "Is it true? Is what I'm about to say, is it true right now or is this gossip?"

Second, "Is this beneficial? Something can be true and not beneficial to someone. I've seen somebody be made fun of because of the clothes that they wore, because they didn't have the money to buy the fancy clothes that this other person was wearing. I thought, "Yeah, it's true that their clothes aren't as nice as yours, but they don't have the finances to buy clothes like you buy, so why even speak that truth? Because it's not done well. It's actually doing the opposite. It's breaking people down, so, is it true? Is it beneficial?"

Lastly, is it kind? Is it kind? We ask these questions in our mind before we speak because as we do that, what we'll find is, "Okay, I don't need to say that word. I'm just gonna keep my mouth shut there." It's in a spirit of kindness and in truth. What we'll find is we start to use them the way that God desired for us to use them. Also, as we ask these questions, what we're gonna find is that we fall out of God's design and into the brokenness of our sinful world so often. If that's the case, if we find ourselves speaking more corrupting words than building up words, what are we supposed to do? How do we fix that problem? What's the remedy with this? The remedy is Christ, and it's found in the redeeming work of Jesus.

Christ is redeeming our words as he redeems our hearts. Christ is redeeming our words as he redeems our hearts. We see that all throughout scripture, but just looking at Ephesians for a second, look at the first three chapters of Ephesians. What's happening is God is showing you how he's redeeming all things, that he's looking at all the brokenness in this world and he's fixing it, so where we're separating from God, now through the death and resurrection of Christ, we are his child. We are adopted into that family. We were once far off and through the blood of Christ now we are brought near. Ephesians chapter 2 says we were once dead in our sins and trespasses and now we're alive in Christ.

All those things, what Christ is doing is he's looking at our deepest root problem and he's fixing those things, and then he comes to chapter 4 and he's like, "Since I've already done all that work for you, this is how I want you to speak. Since the inside is fixed now, I want you to speak in this way." You see, what the Bible teaches, what we need to know is that the end battle for the purity of our mouth is fought from the inside out. If it were fought from just the outside in, then the Bible would just say, "Brush your teeth more and gargle." If we could just our dirty words and our corrupt words from the outside in, that's what we would do, but Christ saw that we had a heart issue and that only he could come and fix that.

Jesus said it like this in Matthew chapter 12. He says, “For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.” If you don’t like what comes out of your heart or out of your mouth, listen carefully. If you don’t like what comes out of your mouth, it started with your heart. I’ve heard people say, “I just speak my mind.” No you don’t, you speak your heart. You speak your heart. What’s in there is what comes out of your mouth. The tongue only speaks what the heart tells it to say, and the root of our speech problem is a heart problem, and it’s helpful to have questions that ask, that say, “Is this corrupt talk or is this not corrupt talk?” Ultimately that’s not gonna fix our heart problem, and that’s why Jesus came. To fix us from the inside out.

The Bible says that Christ came to take our heart of stone out and give us a heart of flesh. What in the world does that mean, Jesus? Okay, I’m with that. Okay, you want to change my heart. What does that mean? What that means is he’s taking our desires and he’s shifting them to something different. The things that we used to love, we don’t love anymore, because God has taken out our heart of stone and he’s giving us a different heart, a new heart, so the things that we used to think, things that we used to say, we don’t say anymore. He’s correcting our speech problem from the inside out.

This is a true story and some of you guys are gonna doubt this, but it’s true. I had a friend that had an old Neon and he went on a trip. He parked it in a parking lot for a few days and when he came back from his trip, he got in the car and he started it up and started down the interstate. When he’s starting down the interstate, he noticed his lights started flickering a little bit because it was at night. He’s like, “That’s not normal.” Then he noticed that his car started cutting in and out. He’s like, “Man, that’s not normal either.” Then finally his car just cuts off completely.

He pulls over to the side of the interstate and he gets out. He pops the hood to see if something’s wrong on the inside, right? Could you imagine if he, in that moment, called me and he said, “Hey man, my car cut off. It’s not working when I was going down the interstate, and so if you could bring some car wax, that would be awesome because I think I just need to wax the outside of my car and as long as I wax the outside of the car, it’ll look good and then I’ll get back on the road and drive again,” or if he said, “Hey, will you bring a Shop-Vac so we can vacuum out the inside of my car? Because I think that’ll really fix the problem that I have.”

No. That’s foolish, right? What’s crazy about it and what you might not believe is while he was going, a groundhog actually climbed up inside of his engine and chewed through the wires. No joke, the groundhog was still there when he opened the hood. It’s unbelievable, but the reality is if he’s trying to fix it by something on the exterior when there’s an interior problem, it’s foolishness. It’s foolishness, right? It’s the same with us. It would be so foolish of us to try to clean up our mouths through our morality. It’s so foolish of us to think we can clean up our mouths through our morality. If I’ll just be a better person, I won’t say these things. I won’t speak this way.

If that was the case, Jesus never would've come, but he knew we couldn't fix ourselves, and so he came to save us. He came to come down, to give us a new heart, and we would love to speak truth instead of gossip, that we would love to encourage instead of slander, that we would love to talk about our hopes instead of our problems, that we would love to share the good news of Jesus instead of complain about all the problems of the world.

Jesus came to save us from that and he also came to show us the way. Christ is our example. Look at his words. Look at the things that Jesus spoke. It's things that were within his heart, so remember, they catch a woman in adultery at some point and they bring him to Jesus to judge. What does Jesus do in that moment? He speaks words of mercy to her. "Go and sin no more." Jesus had just justice within his heart, so when he saw injustices, he spoke out against them. When he saw hypocrites within the religious world, he called them out. That is what was within Jesus's heart and that's what came out. Even Jesus, as he hung on the cross and died in our place, he said, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do."

Even to the point of death, Jesus is speaking life to us. Forgiveness is found. This is the example for us to model. Because he has saved us through his life, his death and his resurrection, we should speak in this way, and this is what's so hopeful. Some of us are Christians today and we're like, "I'm not there yet. I still struggle with my words." Yes, I do too. We all do, but Christ is showing us one day that our tongues will be tamed and all things will be made right. Imagine just for a moment. Imagine what it would look like if everyone only spoke words the way God designed for them to be spoken.

Think about that. If you spoke words, if we all, the whole world spoke words that built up and imparted grace, what would that world look like? Because what Christ is doing is he walked on the earth and he spoke in this way, is he's showing us what his kingdom looks like and how he, one day, will make all things new. He will redeem all things including our mouths to work the way that he designed for them to work, so as we imagine this, what would a world look like? What it looks like is heaven. That's what it looks like.

No more slander and breaking people down because of their looks. No more friends betraying friends and stabbing them in the back with their words. Instead, encouragement and truth will flood through the entire world. It will flood through all of our social media, it will flood through all of our news reports and it all starts with Jesus, the one who redeems our hearts, redeems our words and redeems this world for his glory and his greatness. For now and for all of eternity, our desire and our striving should be to model Christ's example. To use our words to build up and to impart grace.

Let's look to Christ and pray and strive to this end. Let's pray. Lord, how we long, that our words will be trees of life so that people can eat the fruit of them. How we long to have our words strengthen people and build them up, to help them change, but God, there's times that we're not doing that, and so I pray that you would enable us to do this, and Lord, we know it starts with you. That it starts with your sacrifice, it starts with your love, it starts with your redemption, and father, I pray that you would help us not to strive after morality but, Lord, to strive after you, Lord Jesus, because you're the only one that can change us from the inside out.

God, as we sing now, as we sing more than we've sung before, may this be a response to your word. Lord, may it cause us to sing greatly to you, Lord. To use our words the way that you design for them to be used to build up one another and to praise your name for now and for all eternity. It's in Christ's name we pray, amen.



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