

Where The Rubber Meets The Road (Part 2) – Eph 4:25-32

Eph 4:25-32. This is part 2 of a message started last week: Where The Rubber Meets The Road. Having talked about how to grow up and live for *Christ* in previous paragraphs, Paul gets specific. Specific about what it means in everyday *life*.

Putting new tires on your car is one thing; driving on them is another. This is driving; where the rubber meets the road. And Paul gives us several straightforward commands do so. 6 of them. 6 rules of the road, if you will.

First, was . . .

Be a truth speaker (v25)

It's the *loving* thing to do and It's what *families* do. Including God's family.

Second, was . . .

Watch your anger (v26-27)

1. It escalates quickly. 2. It tends to come out. 3. It's often unrighteous. 4. It likes to linger. 5. It exposes you to attack. Spiritual attack.

Third, was . . .

Work hard (v28)

1. To provide for yourself and your family. 2. To help others in need. 3. To provide for the work of ministry. 4. To promote the common good (Outline)

Those are the *first* 3 areas where the rubber meets the road in our walk with Christ.

➤ The next 3 come from v29-32. Take a look.

[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.* [30] *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* [31] *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.* [32] *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* (ESV)

The 4th command where the rubber meets the road, is . . .

Watch your mouth (v29-30)

V29 – *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths*. Corrupting, as in spoiling, putrefying, rotten. That's how the word was used in Paul's day. In our day we might say, "Don't be raunchy. Don't be foul." Keep it clean and watch your language.

But most of us aren't *nearly* that blatant. Most of us let corrupting talk come out of our mouth in the form of innuendo; or implication; or something said with a wink. Something that can be taken two ways, depending on whether your mind is in the gutter or the clouds.

But it's still wrong. *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths* it says. (29) *Nothing* rotten. *Nothing* raunchy. *Nothing* sexual. *Nothing* foul.

➤ But watching your mouth isn't just about the *negative*, what *not* to say; it's also about the positive. *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths* [v29], *but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion.* It's the first of 3 *reasons* to watch your mouth.

• To build others up instead of tear them down

That's the idea. Make sure you edify the people around you instead of undermining them; dragging them down. Or worse yet, *tearing* them down. Because your words are that sinful and hurtful. Or their severity doesn't match the *occasion* as Paul says it.

Like when Jessica, our oldest daughter was little, and we thought she was strong-willed. And scolded her on occasion when all she needed was a sideways glance. It didn't build her up. Fortunately, her sisters came along pretty quickly, and we realized just what strong-willed was.

The point being, watch your mouth. In *all* areas of life. Make sure your criticism is constructive. Make sure it's wrapped in encouragement. Make sure you *strengthen* those around you instead of weaken them. And make sure your words are fitting; *like apples of gold in a setting of silver* as Proverbs says. (Prov 25:11)

Second, watch your mouth . . .

• To bless people instead of curse them

V29 again. *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.* It referring to our talk. Our words. Make sure they bless people; show favor; extend grace.

Around the same time our *girls* were little, I was a bond trader in the pits of the Chicago Board of Trade. 1990's. And cursing people was *commonplace* in that setting. Like a locker room full of 3000 guys. And sometimes, they would get mad and go off. Like a warehouse full of fireworks. Turning the air blue in order to berate or belittle someone.

It was so bad on *one* occasion, where *I* happened to be on the receiving end, that a guy was fined and forced to publicly apologize for calling me a racial epithet. A derogatory name that I didn't even *know* was derogatory at the time. He was Jewish and called me a *goy*; a despicable Gentile. Far worse, at least to me, was the venom and anger *behind* his words. The cursing and shouting.

Don't go there. Watch your mouth. Whether it's in your workplace, your marriage, or your home. Make sure your words bless instead of curse; help instead of hurt.

Third, watch your mouth . . .

• To please the Holy Spirit instead of grieve him

V30. *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths . . . And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* The word "*and*" is a conjunction that links what was just said, to what follows. Namely, corrupting talk in v29, to grieving the Holy Spirit in v30. When we fail to watch our mouth, we grieve the Holy Spirit.

And lest you think that's no big deal, the word *grieve* here means "to cause severe mental or emotional distress." Severe. Like you feel when your son or daughter does something terribly wrong. Or your spouse *betrays* you. Or someone you greatly respect goes off the deep end. It's severely distressing.

➤ But why with the Holy Spirit? Doesn't he know it's coming? Doesn't he know the end from the beginning? Yes.

But he's also *heavily invested in us*. Having gone to great lengths to create us, save us, and seal us for *the day of redemption*, the day Christ returns, he's all in. So when the *bottom* falls out, when we fail to watch our mouth, he feels it.

Not only that, but *he cares about us*. The Holy Spirit grieves at our sinful mouth because he cares about our heart. And they're connected. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*. (Mt 12:34) If our mouth is dirty, so is our heart. And the Spirit cares.

What's more, *he lives in us*. Hearing every swear word, every false word, and every wrong word. The Spirit is grieved by what we say, because he's present and hears.

And last, *he's holy*. Hence his name – the *Holy Spirit*. Used *here* I think, instead of just the Spirit, to *emphasize* his holiness. And highlight his sensitivity to *unholiness*.

He's grieved at our foul mouth because he's invested, he cares, he's present, and he's holy. **(Summary)**

So whatever you do, watch your mouth. And *wash* your mouth. So that you build instead of destroy. Bless instead of curse. Please instead of grieve. It's the 4th way the rubber meets the road.

5th, is . . .

Stop hating (v31)

[31] *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice*. Malice, as in hatred. Malevolence. Put away the hate.

The problem is, we love it. We *love* to hate. We hate those who oppose us. We hate those who disagree with us. We hate those in authority over us. We hate those who offend us. We hate those different than us. We hate each other. We hate strangers. We, just, hate.

And Paul says, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, let it be *put away from you*. As in, knock it off. Stop it. Purge your heart and stop hating.

And lest you think this doesn't apply to you, because you're not *that* bad, Paul makes sure to cover every last *aspect* of hate. Every connection, every result, every precursor, everything.

➤ Starting with **bitterness**. *Let all bitterness . . . be put away from you*. (31) Resentment. Holding a grudge. Thinking dark thoughts about someone. Rehearsing what you'd say to them if you had the chance. That's the bitterness of hate. And if you don't get rid of it, if you don't let it go, it will eat you alive. Becky likes to say that bitterness is the poison *you* drink, while wishing it on others.

And then there's **wrath**. *Let all . . . wrath . . . be put away from you*. Probably referring to passionate outbursts of hate. Like an explosion from a fire. Wrath is to hate as explosions are to fire. And if you're going to avoid it, you have to deal with the source. Firefighters don't spray the flames, they spray the fuel. The wood, the carpet, the furniture. So get rid of the wrath by dousing the hate. Go to the source.

Third, is **anger**. If wrath is the passionate *outburst* of hate, anger is the rising *rage* of hate. Welling up in your soul like boiling water in a pressure cooker. The hotter your flame of hate, the more your anger boils. Until pretty soon it explodes in wrath. Get off the burner.

4th is **clamor**. Quarreling. Drama. Making a stink about something. Arguing for the sake of arguing. Making mountains out of molehills because you're hateful and miserable. If that's you, stop. Stop the clamor by stopping the hate.

And last, is **slander**. Anything disparaging; or insulting. Explicitly *or* implicitly. A slight inuendo; a subtle look. An accusative tone. Implied or not, it's still slander; born of hate. And must be put away.

Along with the hate itself. *All malice* God says. Don't just stop with the ill-*effects* of hate, go to the source. Remove the fuel. Quench the flame.

You say, "How do I do that?"

(A) *See* the hate in your heart. (B) Admit it and own it. (C) Repent of it. (D) Stop it; and bear fruit in *keeping* with your repentance. That's where the rubber meets the road.

And then 6th . . .

Be kind (v32)

The polar opposite of hate. V32 – *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you*. What a great verse to memorize.

Don't just stop hating, start loving. *Be kind*. Be good to each other. Caring, nice, sympathetic, generous. Gentle, thoughtful, compassionate, considerate. It's such a *massive* concept, that it encompasses almost *everything* good in our interpersonal relationships. From how we treat the cashier and waitress, to how you interact your wife and kids.

Ever been in that uncomfortable moment when somebody at your table treats the waitress like a second-class servant? Not good. And even worse is when you do it at home.

Stop being mean, and be kind. Get rid of your edge, and be kind. Stop presuming on people, and be kind. Stop treating them poorly, and be kind. That's where the rubber meets the road.

➤ Then, just to make sure we're *feeling* it and not *faking* it, Paul adds some *qualifiers*. The first is **tenderhearted**. *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted*. Softhearted. Caring about people. *Sensitive* to their difficulties in life. Merciful toward them. Because the more tender you are, the more kind you'll be.

Some of you come by this easier than others. But *all* of us would do well to cultivate it; more and more. So that we're *affected* by the plight of others, instead of calloused. And *attend* to them instead of ignoring them. That's the first qualifier. Be *tenderhearted* in your kindness.

➤ The second is **forgiving**. *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you*. It's another participle to say, "As you're being kind, and in *order* to be kind, forgive like God forgives."

The question is, how's *that*? How does *God* forgive? Completely, immediately, and permanently. *In Christ*, in his death and resurrection on our behalf, God forgives our sin. He no longer holds it against us. Ever. Not even a little bit.

And we're to do the same. Whether the offense is past, present, personal, or borrowed. Forgive. Completely, immediately, and permanently. That's God's way.

➤ And **don't wait** for someone to ask. It's one of the biggest lies out there. That you don't need to forgive someone, or *can't* forgive someone, unless they ask you. Not true. What if they've died? Or simply refuse? Are you forced to carry that burden and remember their sin all your life? No.

What's more, Paul himself said, writing from Ephesus to the believers in Corinth, 200 miles across the Aegean Sea – *Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive*. 2 Cor 2:10. Did they *ask*, these people he forgave? Did he even *know* them? Did they sin against *him*? No. No, no, and no. But he forgave them anyway. Because Jesus said if we don't, neither will God forgive us. (Mt 6:14)

Waiting to forgive, or waiting for someone to *ask* forgiveness, only holds *you* hostage; hostage to *their* hardness of their heart; hostage to their refusal. Which is the exact *opposite* of being free in Christ.

Don't wait. Be *kind* to one another. Tenderhearted and forgiving.

➤ In the summer of 1972, as the Vietnam War was ending, the South Vietnamese Air Force mistakenly dropped napalm on a village where a little girl named Kim Phúc lived. And it just so happened that a photographer was there to snap one of the most iconic photos in all of war. You've likely seen it. But that's not even half the story. Take a look. (Video – <https://mobile.twitter.com/cbcdocs/status/1217653450986721281>)

“Forgiveness set my heart free” she said. Free from hatred. (Quote) And later on she said: “Napalm is very powerful, but faith, forgiveness, and love are much more powerful. . . . If that little girl in the picture can do it, ask yourself: Can you?” (Kim Phúc, NPR 2008)

I hope so. In fact, in Christ, I know so. Because God never leads where he doesn't provide. He never commands where he doesn't supply. (Summary)

So be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another. And while you're at it, stop the hate and watch your mouth.

Prayer – Lord, first of all, forgive us. Forgive us for failing in these things. And help us. Help us build and bless instead of destroy and curse. Help us put away our hate; whatever the form. And help us to be kind; from the inside out. Just like you.