

## MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Deconstruction / Reconstruction of the Disciples' Life Part 6

Characteristics of the Reconstructed Life (3)

Ephesians 4:29-32

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 01.20-21.10

Good morning. We're in a study in the book of Ephesians so why don't you take your bible; let's turn there together. If you don't have a bible there is one in the chair back in front of you. Ephesians, chapter 4. We're going to look at a text of scripture this morning that I have a feeling that all of us can make application one way or another to our lives regardless how long you've been following Christ. This continues to be an issue for all of us. We're going to be talking about speech this morning. Now, you know we've been in a study for about the past six weeks or so of Ephesians chapter 4 all the way through Ephesians 5:21 and we've talked many times about the beginning of Ephesians 4:1 where Paul says I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling. I want to remind you of that this morning. This is a call from a pastor. Paul was concerned for his people in Ephesus – his spiritual children if you were. And he's urging them. There's this emotion behind this. Every pastor understands this. There's a desire for our people, for our congregation, those people that the Lord brings to us, allows us to teach – there's a desire in us that they would reach a type of maturity, a type of Christ-likeness. This is certainly what I feel for you; certainly what Paul was feeling for the Ephesian church. And he was saying I want you, I urge you, I have a great desire for you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling.

Now, we talked about the idea that the anchor word of that passage is not the word walk. It's not something we do, rather, it's what has been done for us that God has called us to a glory of salvation and in that salvation He has given us the power to walk in righteousness. This was Paul's entire thesis statement for the rest of the book. He says, I want you to understand that God loves you; that God has called you now to walk like His son; to walk in righteousness. Now, do that. Take off the old. Put on the new. We looked at verse 17 where Paul said you need to no longer walk as the Gentiles do. Don't walk as those who do not know Christ. Walk as those who have been redeemed. We come to verse 25 and Paul gets very specific about what needs to be deconstructed in our life and what needs to be reconstructed in our life.

Let me just give you a quick reminder of where we've been. Beginning in verse 25 we learned that we need to stop lying and speak the truth. One of the characteristics of a Christ follower is that they are truth tellers. He says, having put away falsehood, verse 25, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor for we are members one of another. Then we move into verse 26 and he says you need to trade unrighteous anger for righteous anger. Be angry. Do no sin. Do no let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity for a foothold to the devil. Then we come to verse 28 and he says end stealing and begin sharing. We talked about this last week that it is now our role as a follower of Christ to be magnanimous in our generosity and in our sharing. Let the thief no longer steal but rather let him labor in doing honest work with his own hands – verse 28; so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

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Now we come to the fourth and fifth characteristics. We're going to round out this study this morning and we're going to look at this fourth characteristic closely. Verse 29 and verse 30 because here Paul tells us that we need to exchange unwholesome language for edifying speech. We need to exchange, trade out unwholesome language for that which is edifying in our speech. Now why is Paul so concerned about our language? If you've been tracking I've asked that same question about every characteristic we've looked at. In fact, that's just an aspect of Bible study. You want to bombard the text with questions and the why question is the first question. Why? Why is this here? What is going on? Why is it so essential? Why is it important to be concerned about how I talk? I'll tell you why. It's because the tongue, that little membrane, that muscle in our mouth is a powerful, powerful agent, muscle, membrane, whatever you want to call it that can have great turns towards righteousness or great turns towards unrighteousness and we all understand that. In fact, if we want to have a clear picture of what's going on inside of our heart, where we're at follow the word trail. This is Paul's point. Paul says this little instrument in your mouth really defines many aspects of your heart.

Before we dig down deep into Ephesians I want to get a biblical perspective on the impact, the power of the tongue so just hold your place in Ephesians. Come back to the back of the New Testament to the book of James. James, chapter 3. Let's just take a look at what James tells us about the power of the tongue. James is a great book; a very practical book; a great book to study. James starts by talking about the testing of our faith and how it leads to righteousness. It talks about hearing and doing the Word. That our faith without works is dead. On and on and on. Come to chapter 3 and it gets very specific, very practical and he starts talking about the tongue. Now, I want us to originally start in verse 4 but let's back up and let's look at verse 2 so that we can get everything in context. He says for we all stumble, chapter 3, verse 2 of James, for we all stumble in many ways and if anyone does not stumble what he says he's a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. He says if you can be perfect in how you use your speech then you are, in essence, a perfect man. We all understand we can't be perfect in our speech so that just gives us evidence that we are not perfect; that we are sinful. Verse 3. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also. They are so large and driven by strong winds yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member yet it boasts of great things. How great a force to set ablaze by such a small fire and the tongue is a fire; a world of unrighteousness.

Now look here. You see he's already used four metaphors. He says the tongue is like a bridle, a bit in the horses mouth, a rudder of a ship, a fire. He says at the end of verse 6 this is such a fire it is set on fire by hell. This is the power of this tongue but now look in verse 7. For every kind of beast and bird, reptile and sea creature can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father and with it we curse people who

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are made in the likeness of God. Isn't that true? One moment we can be here; we can be singing praises to God. The next we can walk out that door and we can lose it before we can ever get out of the parking lot. You ever find that to be true? You ever lose it before you get to the parking lot? That's the power of the tongue.

Now, turn over to Ephesians. This is why Paul addresses this topic. He says in verse 29 let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth. Why does he put that in there? Because he knows we are prone to corrupting talk. He knows the power personally. He had a tongue. He knows the power of the tongue, of our speech; what it can do. And he says to us as people who are new in Christ, who are living a new life he says the characteristics should be showing up in your speech. He says don't let corrupting talk come out of your mouth. This idea of corrupting – it means unwholesome, literally it can be used to mean rotten, moldy, putrid. So he's saying don't let any moldy talk, don't let any putrid, rotten talk come out of your mouth. This would include things like off-color jokes, vulgar stories, profanity. That's corrupting talk. Gossip is corrupting talk. Lying, improper speech. All of that falls under the category of corrupting talk. Paul is so serious about the speech of the Ephesians that look; he mentions it again in Ephesians 5:4, about six, seven verses away he's talking about the same subject. He says let there be no filthiness, no foolish talk nor crude joking which are out of place. Filthiness. This is the idea of talk that's indecent. Talk that is immoral. Talk that is obscene. The idea here is that it is a stain. Again, the literal usage of this ancient Greek word is to mean incontinent. Do you know what that means? It's a great word picture isn't it? He says don't let your speech just be spewing out of control everywhere. He says that's the last thing that you want is filthy speech. Not only that he says, don't let it be foolish. Do you know what that means? That means if he's lacking good judgment. I know how easy that is. You get rolling and you're talking, trash talk. We do that back and forth with our friends. The next thing you know something slips out of your mouth, doesn't it? It's inevitable. Something just glides past your teeth and you want to grab it and pull it back in but it's too late. It's foolish talk. It's out there. He says, also don't let our talk be crude. This is the idea of talk that is raw; that is vulgar.

Now, I understand that we live in a culture that has corrupting, filthy, foolish, crude speech. I mean, you don't have to travel far. I can be in line at the grocery store and people behind me. I'm thinking, I've got to shield the ears of my children. I go walking through the mall. I'm walking out in public and we hear, it seems like we've seen more and more proliferation of this kind of speech than any time before. People are just saying whatever they want, whenever they want, however they want. It's all over and some of you are thinking that's part of our world. My business is like that. I've got to talk that way. You know – you don't. I want to tell you how bad this has gotten. Within about the last year there has been more and more published about profanity in the pulpit of our churches where pastors are using profanity for either shock value or listen – to make a connection to the culture. When I read that I thought that's crazy; that's ludicrous. We're

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supposed to be set apart from our culture. For one thing it's terrible for a communicator to use profanity when there's no necessity to it whatsoever. I tell you why. If I were to drop some profane word for a moment it might just be a minute, it might be five minutes you would stop listening to what I'm saying and you would be focusing on that word. Can you believe he just said that? I can't believe he just said that. Did you hear what he just said? And then that talk would go over because it doesn't do anything for the style of communication. Plus, it does not connect us to the culture. What it does it draws us to the culture and what are we? We're supposed to be set apart. In fact, you really want to make a difference in our culture watch the way you speak. People will notice that.

How should we? What is the biblical standard for our speech? Well, let's look at the text. Verse 29 about the middle of the way through to verse 30. Paul tells us, gives us three. He says the language of the new self, number one is that it is good for building up. We are to use our speech to build others up. You see that in verse 29? As fits the occasion he says. Now, make sure you understand this. He's not saying to just use our speech to pump people up. We're not using our speech just to make them feel good; flatter them. That's not it at all. There is a specific nature behind this concept. He's saying I want you to use your speech to build up, as if in spiritual maturity he's talking about. He's saying your speech should be part of other's people's spiritual sanctification process – their spiritual growth. Have you ever thought about that? It's easy just to kind of go out there and talk. It's easy just to kind of let your vocabulary, let your language however you want just kind of be out there. It's difficult to be with strategy, wake up in the morning and say I'm going to use my language specifically to help someone else grow closer to Christ. That's when you know you're watching your words. When you're up early and you're thinking through Lord, help me with the things that I say throughout the day. Help me use it in a way that is constructive, that is edifying for those who are around me. That's exactly what Paul is saying – that is good for building up.

Second thing the language is of the new self is that it gives grace to the hearer; that we shouldn't be tearing people down that we should be people of grace with our language. What is grace? What is the definition of grace? I've told you this many times. Grace is unmerited favor. Right? God has given us, provided us through faith unmerited favor. That's grace. We don't deserve it. There's nothing we do to earn it. It's unmerited. This is God's grace to us. Paul says take that concept, with what's been given to you – apply that to your mouth; apply that to your speech. I mean, the reality is even truth can be raw, right? I think that is why Paul says in Ephesians 4:15 speak the truth in what? In love. Now he's saying you ought to take your speech and you ought to wrap it in grace. Even the things that you have to say in truth, things that might be difficult – wrap that in grace. Be careful what comes out of your mouth.

And then thirdly, he says the language of the new self that it does not, verse 30 grieve the Holy Spirit. I find that interesting that our language can grieve the third person of the

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Trinity. The word grieve means to afflict with sorrow. Imagine that, that we can afflict sorrow on the Holy Spirit with our language. Why is that? Well, Paul tells us. Look at the end of verse 30. He says, the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. He's the divine watermark on our life. It was through the Holy Spirit that the old self was taken off and the new self was put on. There is an emotional attachment; there's a vested interest that the Holy Spirit has in you. Why? Because He lives in you. You see, you've got to stop thinking about the Holy Spirit as some ethereal ghost-like creature that floats around. The Holy Spirit is a person.

In fact, John MacArthur in his commentary, there's a great vignette on the Holy Spirit – helps us understand His person. I put in your notes because this would be an excellent resource for you to go home this afternoon and work through these passages and come to an understanding. He says the Holy Spirit has intellect, feeling, will, He works, He searches, He speaks, He testifies, He teaches, on and on and on. These are all aspects of a person and Paul tells us that our speech can grieve the person of the Holy Spirit.

I was reading in the commentaries and interesting study on grieving. Many of the commentaries mention that grieving comes before quenching. Have you ever heard of that word quenching? It's out of 1 Thessalonians 5:19. Paul says, do not quench the Holy Spirit. What does that mean? It means do not dampen the Holy Spirit. Don't ignore Him. He's trying to exert His influence on you but you have a will and you can ignore that. Do you know what I mean? The Spirit of God tells you to do something; you sense you ought to be acting a certain way, being a certain way, doing something and then you push away from that – I'm not going to do that. That's quenching the Spirit of God. Now, what we've come to is saying that when you grieve the Spirit of God it's like an emotional attachment. You say, fine – I'm ok with that. I'm going to go ahead and do what I want to do but that leads sequentially, very quickly to grieving where we now are pushing back from His influence and we're no longer following Him and when we no longer follow Him the next thing is the sequence is disobedience. So, do you see how important it is to be able to be people who listen carefully to the spirit of God? We don't want to disobey Him. We don't want to quench Him. We don't want to grieve Him and so how do we do it? We have to be careful of the things that grieve the spirit of God and what does scripture say? The thing that grieves the spirit of God is our language and so we need to be careful of that.

I want all of us, take your bibles, turn with me to the book of Psalm. Now I've used this illustration over and over again because it works. If you're not sure where something is Psalms is about the middle of the bible. Just boom. Open it up and you'll probably hit Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon and you'll be close. But I want you to hit Psalm 103:13. I want us all to turn there because this is an important passage for us to hear. Actually, I'm going to back up and I'm going to have you start in verse 10 because it gives us a sense of context. Psalm 103. We're going to start in 10 and then end in verse

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13. Now listen. He, this is God the Psalmist writes, does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities for as high as the heavens are above the Earth so great is His steadfast love towards those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west so far does He remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear Him. Now, why do I take you to this passage? It has nothing to do with the tongue. Really? You know what? We've all blown it when it comes to the tongue. We've all lost it. We've all sinned. We need to hear that our God is a compassionate God. He's like a father.

I had an illustration of that happen just this week. Jack, I think he was building something, putting Legos together and he was carrying it and it slipped out of his hand, hit the floor, crashed everywhere and out of this little five year old's mouth came a profanity that we don't use in our home. My children don't use it. I know my girls and my wife don't. I don't use it and yet here was this little five year old looking like, sounding like a sailor in my living room. And Michelle and I looked at each other. Jack, do you know what that means? And he said, no. Where did you hear that? I don't know. And we're thinking we monitor what he watches on television. We're thinking it has to be at the playground. He probably picked this up, he heard someone, he probably heard one of your kids – came out of your house! And so now we're sitting there and we're talking and we're trying to help him understand we don't use that language. In fact, I always tell my kids you have to be creative in your speech. Everybody uses those. Don't use those - be creative. I'm sitting down and I'm telling Jack, ok now, we don't use this. This is why we don't use that. That doesn't please the Lord and on and on and on. And it was if I was transported because Jack has the same DNA that I have and when I was growing up I thought, you know I just felt kind of full of myself when I was able to use language and my parents didn't know it. And I'm sure they did. In fact, I know there's one particular time my dad pulled me aside and question me about why I was using certain vocabulary; why I was acting that way and he told me that this was not something that he wanted to hear out of my mouth. He was very comforting towards me in that rebuke, very compassionate. And I have a feeling I'm probably going to have to be that way with Jack someday. I'm going to have to pull him aside. That's what fathers do. We understand our children aren't perfect and at times you have to be strict and you have to discipline and then there's time for comfort and compassion.

Do you hear what the scriptures are saying? The Lord understands that we're not perfect. The scriptures even tell us in a sense of understanding that this thing in our mouth, this muscle is powerful and it sometimes gets away from us. So what do we do? We go to the Father. We go to the compassionate Father. We confess to Him. We say, I want to move forward. I want to sanctify my mouth. I want my mouth to represent the new me that you have placed here; that you have done this work in me. I want that to be representative coming out of my mouth here.

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Well, the last characteristic is really kind of a summation characteristic. Verses 31 and 32. And the best way to say this is we are to replace ungodly actions for godly actions. We're to trade in, change the ungodly ways. We're to start the godly actions. This is what he says in verse 31. He says, let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, 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. Now look at this text again. Look at the six shotgun blasts that he fires at us. Six negative followed by three positives. Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, malice. Now, I don't really have to go into a lot of detail, do I? These are all very self explanatory words. Bitterness – that's something that you hold against somebody. Wrath – that's that churning anger that you've got brewing inside of you. The third word anger – means explosive anger. We talked about this a couple of weeks ago. People with a very short fuse. Clamor – it's clamoring around about something. Slander – that's holding a grudge against someone and then saying it. Malice is saying it all around to other people. You see what he's saying? He's saying these are the negatives of ungodly actions. But you see what they all have in common? They weren't just put out there in random fashion. God has a purpose behind these words. Do you see them? They describe conflicts with other people. These are not private sins. These are public, visible sins. In fact, each one of these words could probably have a face if you think about it. Are there people, is there a face that comes up when you think about the concept of bitterness, that you're bitter towards? Wrath, anger. Do those words have faces that are long in your life? Slander. Malice. Is that something that's going on? Are there people associated with these? How do you know that this has this interpersonal relationship? Well, look at the text. We are to be, that's an imperative kind, tender hearted, forgiving to who? To one another. Relational text.

Now, take these six words – bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, malice. By the way, all action words. Look at the next three words – be kind, tender hearted, forgiving. Again, all action words. Take those same faces that come up with the six and exchange them and say are these people I can be kind to? Are these people I can be tender hearted to, look into their life and see what they're going through. Are these people I need to forgive? Because Paul slams it down and he says you know why we're to do this? Because this is how Christ has acted towards you. He's been kind to you. He's been tender hearted to you. He's forgiven you. He says if this is what Christ has done for you then the greatest characteristic of one who names the name of Christ is to act like it. Be kind. Tenderhearted. Forgiving.

Let's just take a look at these six words again. You notice Paul zeros in again on our speech. These are all things that tend to come out through our speech. Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, malice. All tend to exude from our tongue. Why is he hitting this subject again? Well, we say this because it's powerful. The tongue is powerful. It's like bridling the whole body. It's like a bit, a rudder, a fire. We understand that. But it's also a window. We mentioned this a few minutes ago that our tongue is like a window. In fact,

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out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. If you really want to understand what is going on in your own spiritual life, where you are at, where you need to progress look at your speech. Follow your words. Maybe we should be like the Psalmist. Psalm 141:3 that says set a guard, Oh Lord, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips. Walk in righteousness this week. But ask the Lord guard my mouth. Set something over my lips so that I do not say something that defames your name, your character or anybody else's. But let my speech represent the new me. Let my speech represent the characteristics that I've taken off the old and I've put on the new.

Let's pray for His help in that area.