

**Words of Grace**  
Ephesians 4:29-32  
By Phillip G. Kayser

Last week we looked at verses 17-28 and saw that Paul was giving us incredible hope for holiness. I love those verses. They are verses I go back to over and over again. We looked at some the very detailed steps that Paul gave for how to put off the old habits and put on the new habits. In verses 29-32 Paul ends with some admonitions related to words and attitudes. And even though we are separating the two subjects this week and next week, the two really are bound up with each other. Jesus said, **out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks** (Matt 12:34). Over 150 times the Bible connects our words with the attitudes of the heart. And many times these attitudes and words are contagious. Our kids pick them up. Even when we don't want them to, they pick them up. So we want to evaluate to what degree our words and attitudes need changing.

Perhaps some of you can relate to the confessions of a mom that she posted recently on a Mother's Day website. She said that she had unwittingly taught her children much about life through her angry words. She taught her children:

How To Value A Job Well Done

"If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning."

How To Engage in Time Travel

"If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"

How to Use Brilliant Logic

"Because I said so, that's why."

How to Use Irony

"Keep crying and I'll give you something to cry about."

How to Give Clear Instructions

"Shut your mouth and eat your supper."

### How to Engage in Hypocrisy

"If I told you once, I've told you a million times. Don't exaggerate!"

### How to Define Justice

"One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you."

I think we have all had to repent of similar words. But I want us to challenge ourselves this morning and see if there are any other ways in which our speech needs to change. Speech is powerful. Ever since I was a child I heard children comforting themselves with the words, "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." But I think deep down we always knew it wasn't true. Speech can hurt terribly. Psalm 42:10 says, **As with a breaking of my bones, my enemies reproach me.** David sure didn't buy into that statement. Proverbs 12:18 says that our speech can be like the piercings of a sword.

And since some of what I will bring up may seem too hard to change, let me remind you of last week's sermon – that there is hope for holiness. An old dog can learn new tricks. And by God's grace we can conquer sin habits. Though we will never be totally free of sin this side of heaven, Scripture assures us that we do not need to be held captive to deeply entrenched habits of sin. We can progress from Romans 7 to Romans 8.

Anyway, just by way of review: in chapter 1 Paul tells us that we've got the Father on our side. Verse 3 says that **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...** He chose us to be holy. This was part of His plan. This means that the Father is on our side. He is rooting for you.

In chapter 2 Paul tells us that we've got the Son on our side. The holiness that the Father planned before the foundation of the world, the Son purchased and has made available to us. He too is rooting for you.

Then chapter 3 tells us that we've got the Spirit on our side. He follows the Father's plan for holiness, and takes all the resources that the Son has purchased, and He works those things into our lives. Verse 16 says, **that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man...**

In chapter 4:1-16 we saw that we've got the church on our side as well. God has crafted the body in such a way that each part contributes its share to our growth and maturation.

Then in verses 17-24 we looked at nine steps to victory, and in verses 23-28 we looked at three examples of how to put off our old habits of the flesh and how to develop new habits of righteousness. And I won't review

any of that. But if you weren't here, I would encourage you to listen to that sermon since that is the foundation. I'm not going to be repeating what I said last week even though much of that material would help us to put off bad speech and to put on gracious speech.

***D. Replace corrupt speech with good speech generated by the Spirit (vv. 29-30)***

**1. Put off bad speech**

**a) Anything corrupt (v. 29)**

Verses 29-30 say, **Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.** What is a corrupt word? Literally it means rotten or unwholesome. One dictionary gives these meanings: "rank, foul, putrid, rotten, worthless, disgusting." This would rule out crude talk, scatological talk and obscenities. Pillar New Testament Commentary says, "What is prohibited, then, is harmful speech of any kind (cf. Col. 3:8; Eph. 5:4), whether it be abusive language, vulgar speech, or slander and contemptuous talk."

There are many Christians who have coarse speech. They have used that kind of language all their life, and now that they are Christians, they don't know that it is wrong to talk that way. Nobody has confronted them on it. They think such talk gives zing and interest to their conversation and that life would be kind of boring without these raunchy zingers. And when everyone else does it, it is easy for any of us to fall into this. But look at 5:3. **But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints.** He says, "Don't even talk about it." Americans let it all hang out. We are used to talking about the sins of others. But Paul wants us to be discrete and to not even talk about the dirty secrets of others. Look at verse 4. **Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.** Coarse jesting is off-color joking, dirty jokes, or jokes about the former president's indiscretions. Foolish talking is simply that – it doesn't build up, it doesn't make sense. A lot of jokes are simply foolishness. There is no cleverness in the joke. And we ought to discourage our children from jokes that don't even make sense. But I think the way we sometimes violate Paul's admonitions are through the use of coarse language to describe body functions or scatological language (dealing with body excrement).

But some people say, “Pastor, you would have to live in a different world. Everybody talks crudely where I work.” And the answer is, “You are a Christian. You belong to a different culture. Everything about you must change, including the way you talk.” And it’s true, it can be difficult to change the way you talk if you have spent years using coarse terms. And we’re not even talking about swear words here. We are simply talking about crude language. Paul says to put it off. And last week we saw that you can change. I think one of the most striking and rapid changes in this area of language was when the church came into being in Irian Jaya. When missionaries went to Irian Jaya, they had a difficult time, because this vulgar language was everywhere. The formal greeting you would give to a person when you first met them was scatological – a reference to body parts or emissions. It isn’t something I can even mention from the pulpit. So when natives became Christians and were taught how to talk, it made a revolutionary change in language. Overnight they were forced to develop a Christian culture. And they were odd. They were totally different than their culture. It wasn’t simply that they quit murdering, engaging in fornication and stealing. Their speech was revolutionized as well. And if they could do it, you can do it too.

I don’t have a lot of commentaries on Ephesians, and I wish this one used a bit more modern English. But I think you can get the gist of the meaning if I read to you from Simpson’s 1957 Commentary on the verses we just read in chapter 5. He said,

Let there be no coquetting on their part with infractions of rule, no dalliance with (1) sins of the flesh, (2) mammonism, (3) fooleries of babblement, especially drolleries verging on obscenity. These crying evils would flaunt as established conventions of society in such libertine environments as Ephesus. From such vicious practices the grace of God has set them free; and it is their veriest wisdom to shun even passing fraternity with topics and scenes steeped in pernicious associations... Madcap joviality, and wassailing, the wildfire of farcicalities, or saucy sallies of persiflage, appear to be reprehended next... Flippant facetiae or ribald pleasantries, garnished with blasphemous expletives, draw vengeance sooner or later on the offender who knows better all the while.”

The commentary is saying that chapters 4 and 5 are commanding that all coarse, crude language should be put away from us. Now Paul is giving the seemingly impossible task of not letting one of those words come out of our mouth. Just because it is in the dictionary doesn’t mean that it should be said.

### b) Anything that grieves the Spirit (v. 30)

A second aspect of what should be put off would be anything that grieves the Spirit in our speech. Verse 30 says, **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God...** I will be talking about that in a moment in connection with motivations to help us change. But at this point I just want to say that we need to measure our speech by what the Spirit says is good, not by what our friends, family and neighbors think is good or fun speech. And if you study the Proverbs, you will find a wealth of information on what kinds of words we should put off.

We've talked about crudities, but taking the name of the Lord in vain is also something that grieves the Spirit. The third commandment says, **You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.** God considers the misuse of His name to be a blasphemy, and we should stay as far away from violating that commandment as we can get. Yet many Christians try to see how close to blaspheming as they can get because it makes them feel like they fit in with our society. They wouldn't dare to say the name "Jesus" as a swear word, but they say "Geez." The American Heritage Dictionary says that "Geez" is a "shortening and alteration of Jesus." It's the same thing as saying, "Jesus!" Some people would never say "Christ" as a word of disgust, frustration, anger or exclamation because they know it is wrong. But they have no problem with saying something that rhymes: Cripes [C-R-I-P-E-S]. The first time I heard that as a kid, it sounded so similar to Christ, that I thought my friend was indeed saying the real word. But again, the dictionary says that this is an alteration of the word "Christ." Why would we try to get away with how close we can get something to sounding like blasphemy? It still grieves the Spirit because He knows exactly what it means. Let me give a sampling of milder forms of blasphemy so that you can look them up for yourself and realize that you may be engaging in habits of speech that need to be changed. I was frankly shocked that I have used two of these without realizing their meaning. And I am so glad that I found out the meanings. I don't want to grieve God.

All of these that I am going to list are a taking of the name of the Lord in vain when you use them in disgust, or surprise or anger. But you shouldn't even use these reverently because God wants us to use His real name. There really is no basis that I can think of for Christians to use any of these terms since the dictionary defines them as either minced oaths or euphemisms for God. You can argue with the dictionary all you want, I'm still going to understand you to be blaspheming when you use these terms:

- Begorrah --> By God ☐
- Bejabbers --> By Jesus ☐
- By gum --> By God ☐
- By Jove --> By God ☐
- Cheese and Rice --> Jesus Christ ☐
- Chrissakes --> For Christ's sake ☐
- Crikey --> Christ ☐
- Criminy --> Christ ☐
- Cripes --> Christ ☐
- Dad gum --> God damn ☐
- Dadgummit --> God damn it.
- Dagnabbit --> God damn it ☐
- Dagnammit --> God damn it ☐
- Dangnabbit --> God damn it ☐
- Doggone --> God damn ☐
- Doggone it --> God damn it
- Drat --> ☐[which I was surprised to find is a shortening of “God rot it” – whatever that means]
- Egad --> A God ☐
- Gadzooks --> God's hooks ☐
- Gat Dangit --> God damn it ☐
- Gee --> Jesus ☐
- Gee whizz --> Jesus ☐
- Gee willikers --> Jesus☐
- Golly Gee willikers --> Jesus ☐
- Good garden party --> Good God ☐
- Good grief --> Good God ☐
- Goodness gracious --> Good God ☐[which I have been guilty of in the past]
- Gosh --> God ☐
- Gosh darned --> God damned ☐
- Jason Crisp --> Jesus Christ ☐
- Jebus --> Jesus ☐
- Jeepers Creepers --> Jesus Christ ☐
- Jeez --> Jesus ☐
- Jeezy Creezy --> Jesus Christ ☐
- Jehosaphat --> Jesus ☐
- Jiminy Christmas --> Jesus Christ ☐
- Jiminy Cricket --> Jesus Christ ☐

- Judas Priest --> Jesus Christ ☐
- Jumping Jehosaphat --> Jumping Jesus ☐
- Land sakes --> For the Lord's sake ☐
- Lawks a mercy --> Lord have mercy ☐
- My goodness --> My God ☐
- My gosh --> My God ☐
- Sacré bleu (or Sang de Dieu) --> God's blood ☐  
Suffering succotash --> Suffering Saviour ☐

There may be others, but those are the ones that I have found were clearly connected to the name of God. And I don't want you to chalk this up to my legalism. I want you to ask yourself seriously if your speech is holy and sanctified. Does it meet the criteria that Paul lays out in Ephesians 4 and 5. Jesus said, **But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.**

Beyond those clearly blasphemous statements are ones that use God's attributes as an exclamation, such as "mercy me," "goodness sakes," "O my goodness," "Holy Cow." Think of it: can we really believe that God would be pleased when his holy attributes are put into such mocking contexts as "Holy mackeral," "Holy Smokes," or "Holy Cow." If you are Batman fans, you might look at those movies through totally different eyes after this sermon. According to the Shorter Catechism, those are not a reverent use of His attributes. Here's what it says,

"What is required in the third commandment? The Third commandment requireth the *holy and reverent* use of God's names, titles, *attributes*, ordinances, word, and works." Older Presbyterians would never have tolerated irreverent use of God's attributes with expressions such as "Holy Mackeral." The Larger Catechism says in part, "the third commandment requires, that the name of God, his titles, attributes... and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be *holily and reverently* used in thought, meditation, word, and writing... to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves, and others." "the sins forbidden in the third commandment are the not using of God's name as is required [in other words, you can't substitute something else for God's name such as Gosh or Cripes – even reverently], and the abuse of it in an ignorant, vain, irreverent [way]..." etc., etc.

I think by now most of you are convinced that we have a lot to put off in our speech. Some of you are blasphemers. As I have already mentioned, I have a couple phrases that I need to put off. We need to take this seriously.

And the third commandment says that God will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. You will suffer for it. In fact God's severity against blasphemy is so serious that I am ever so glad for the comfort in 1 Timothy 1:13 where Paul said, **although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.** He says, "God forgave me because I did it ignorantly." God can wash that all away. But if after hearing this message you persist in your blasphemy, God will judge you. Of that I am sure. So I would urge you to come to His grace for cleansing and come to His grace to put on new habits of speech. We saw last week that we can do it if we will follow God's methods. And again, I would urge you to review that material.

And to help each other in this problem, I suggest that we use sign language of slapping our hand over our mouth momentarily every time one of us uses these bad forms of speech. That way we don't have to interrupt the flow of conversation constantly and it will be a reminder that can either be ignored (if you think this is legalistic) or can help you if you are trying to conquer this problem. But I think we need to do something as a body to move forward.

## 2. Put on good speech (v. 29-30)

### a) Good

But let's move on to what we should be put on. And I've divided those things into five categories. Paul says first of all that we should speak "**what is good.**" This is talking about the standards for speech. And who defines what is good? It's God, isn't it? Though books like, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* do have some good criteria that lines up with the Bible, you can't just assume that such books will always accurately define good speech. Jesus said, **no one is good but One, that is, God** (Luke 18:19) He was pointing out that Biblically speaking, God is the criteria of good. All else is only good relatively speaking. And Paul is here pointing us to the standard of Scripture. God did not just tell us to practice good speech and not explain what the good is. He has given many criteria for good speech in the Scriptures. I would suggest that you start with Proverbs. Or read the proof texts that the Westminster Larger Catechism gave for their exposition of the third and ninth commandments.

But, if you are not going to let one bad word out of your mouth and only good words, it means that you have to stop and evaluate whether you should say the juicy zinger that comes to your mind. Proverbs 29:20 says, **"Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool**



**than for him." James 1:19 tells us, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath...**

**b) Sensitive to the circumstance (Greek of  
“necessary” = “as fits the occasion” [ESV] or  
“according to the need of the moment” [NASB])**

The second word that characterizes the new habit of speech that we should develop is that it should be sensitive to the circumstances that we are in. In our version it is translated as **necessary**. The dictionary gives two basic definitions: 1) what is needed, required or necessary for the situation or 2) the business or circumstances at hand. Both of them have the idea that you need to think about your situation and try to see what word would best fit that situation. The NASB translates it “according to the need of the moment.” The Amplified Bible has, “as is fitting to the need and the occasion.” The ESV has, “as fits the occasion.”

Let me illustrate how this might work. Proverbs 27:14 tells us, **"He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, It will be counted a curse to him."** Blessing your friend is a good thing. Blessing him with a loud voice can even occasionally be a good thing. But blessing him with a loud voice at 3 in the morning would not be appreciated. That's obvious, right? But there are many times where we mess up on this sensitivity to what “the occasion demands.” Paul told Timothy not to rebuke an older person, but to entreat him. He could rebuke a younger person, but an older one needed to be entreated. Proverbs 15:1 tells us that **a soft answer turns away wrath**. There are circumstances when you can be blunt, and other circumstances when it is better to be gentle.

When I was in my last year of Bible School back in 1978 I was good at logically approaching problems, but my mother helped me to evaluate the circumstances surrounding a problem as well. I was entirely mystified as to why I could talk logically with my sister on some days, and on other days found my "bottom line" approach - step one, two, three, conclusion to get my sister mad. It never dawned on me that it was during my sister's time of month that she did not like my logic. My mother didn't tell me to ignore the problem, but to use a different approach that was sensitive to her emotionally frayed state. The end result was the same - we solved our problem, but my speech began to be sensitive to the occasion.

Sometimes the situation is that the person already knows from his failure what is wrong, and I don't need to tell him. Lecturing a person who has already learned his lesson doesn't go over well. There's a saying – “If a

thing will go without saying – then let it go.” So point 1 is that we must have the right standard for speech. Point 2 is that we must be sensitive to the circumstances.

### **c) Builds up (“edification”)**

The third rule is that our speech should have the right goal. Our goal should be to build up the other person. That’s the meaning of the word **edification**. It is literally a word used for building a house brick upon brick. So when our speech has the goal of tearing people down, it is bad; when it builds people up, it is good. That doesn’t mean that our speech can’t correct or tear down destructive behavior. Listen to the call God gave to Jeremiah.

**See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms,  
To root out and to pull down,  
To destroy and to throw down,  
To build and to plant.”**

Before he could build up (or edify) and plant he had to tear down the things that stood in the way of edification and planting. But his goal was to build and to plant. So it doesn’t necessarily rule out negative words. But our words should always have the ultimate goal of building up this person and making him better, not just tearing down for the sake of tearing down.

Some people engage in gossip, thinking that they really are concerned for the other person’s welfare. They *look* so concerned: “Did you hear that so and so is involved in sin x,y,z?” And the answer should be, “No I didn’t. And if *you* did, you are responsible to go to them. In fact, now that I’m involved, maybe the both of us should go to him together.” Boy, that will cut off gossip pretty quickly, because more often than not these guys don’t really want to do something about it. They would be scared to death to go to that person. They don’t want to follow Matthew 18 which says that they should go alone and try to resolve the problem. Gossip doesn’t build up because it isn’t truly trying to solve the problem.

So what is building up? Verses 11-16 use this word two times to indicate that building up involves the giving of truth, doctrine, warnings, love and concern for the other’s welfare. 1 Corinthians 11:12-14 uses this term several times to indicate that we should be serving people with our words, and helping people to understand. If they don’t understand what we are saying, it doesn’t edify. That’s why he said that tongues don’t edify if the other person doesn’t understand them. Edification always involves understanding.

2 Corinthians 13:10 indicates that edifying can sometimes involve sharp words of rebuke, not for destruction, but to help the people get right with God. Romans 14:19 rules out saying even lawful things if we are simply saying them selfishly. That whole chapter is ruling out selfishness. So that adds another dimension to our understanding: edifying is thinking of the other person's interests ahead of our own.

Kathy had a friend in College who was so good at this. Her conversations were always asking questions about your needs, interests and concerns. It was hard to get the conversation onto her because she was so genuinely interested in you and your welfare.

Now I need to be careful not to give you the wrong idea here. This does not mean that the Bible is the only topic of our conversations, but it does mean that the Bible will guide all our conversations. So don't go home today and feel that the only way you can be romantic is that you gaze into your wife's eyes and say, "Your eyes remind me of Zedekiah 3:17." And certainly don't be always trying to bring the subject back from football or the Middle East to the Hypostatic union of Christ to try to be more spiritual. You see, the Scripture does address all of life, and all that we do should be interpreted through a Scriptural grid. When we tell our children, "It's bedtime kids," you don't have to give the Scripture and verse every time for them to know that God wants them to enjoy rest and that He is the giver of rest. Even though no Scripture is mentioned, your evident concern for their health is obviously guided by the Scripture. But, when any questions come up, yeah, they can be instructed in the Scripture's worldview so that at all times they are thinking Christianly about rest, sleep, entertainment and work.

#### d) Imparts grace

The last phrase in verse 29 is, "**that it may impart grace to the hearers.**" I think it is so cool that our words are even *used* by God to impart grace. God is the source of grace, and grace is His means of helping other people grow in sanctification. So what Paul is saying is that God wants to use what James calls the most untamable member of our body *to manifest His grace*. This is incredible! James says that the tongue is set on fire by hell itself, and yet by God's grace our tongues can bring forth good. For you to get a grasp for how amazing this transformation is, let me read from Romans 3:13-14. This is a passage that describes the natural man apart from the grace of God. "**Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.**" Apart from God's restraining

grace in our lives, that is what our tongues will produce. They are not vehicles of grace. Even at their best, apart from God's grace they are simply instruments of the flesh.

Yet Colossians 4:6 says "**Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.**" Three things that I would have you notice about that parallel text. First, the rule is absolute – **always**. Second, grace is not the subject of our speech, but what controls our speech. He says, "with grace... with salt." You can talk about sports, math, mowing the yard, but all our speech must be so devoted to God, that God's grace accompanies it. Third, the speech must be seasoned with salt. Some people think that the only thing these passages allow us to talk about is theology. But our speech is not a steady diet of salt. The sky is the limit of the things we can talk about, but every subject must be seasoned with salt.

Now that is still a tall order to fulfill. And apart from God's help we cannot do it. James says that no man can tame the tongue. And maybe you have felt the impossibility of putting off some of your sinful language. You hear vile language at work and when you hit your thumb with a hammer you are tempted to swear. You are tempted to tell dirty jokes. You may catch yourself singing a nasty song that you learned in your pre-Christian days without even thinking. You are tempted to bite someone's head off when they get in your way. You are tempted with gossip. You find these minced oaths coming out of your lips. You have tried over and over to be rid of such sin and yet you find yourself falling flat on your face once again. Should you just give up and acknowledge that until the second coming we will have this problem? James gives a big "No!" He asks instead, "How is it possible for unwholesome words to come out of someone who has the grace of God in his life?" That is as inconsistent as a fig tree bearing olives or a grape vine bearing figs. Paul here takes as strong a stance as James. You cannot excuse your sin. You must put off your old habit and put on your new habit. And I would urge you to read last week's sermon to review some of the specifics. But I am going to end with three motivations given in verse 30 that can help us to stop.

**e) Consistent with our state of being sealed by the Spirit (v. 30)**

**3. Three things that can motivate us to have pure lips (v. 30)**

**a) The Spirit cares about what we say (“grieve”)**

The first motivation is the realization that the Holy Spirit cares about what we say. There is a current theology of grace out there nowadays that makes people think that once you are saved, God doesn't really mind what you do. As one author said, “God is fond of you just the way you are.” False. Verse 30 says, **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God...** This is an incredibly strong word. And let me assure you that it does not mean “He is fond of you just the way you are.” The word for "grieve" here is a word that refers to deep sorrow and psychological pain in other passages of the New Testament. My main dictionary defines this as, “to cause severe mental or emotional distress, vex, irritate, offend, insult.” (BAGD) This is the word that was used to describe Christ's distress in the Garden of Gethsemane when He prayed in an agony of spirit knowing that He would soon be bearing the sins of His elect. He said, **"I am exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."** His moral separation from sin (which is found in the word “holy”) made the presence of sin an excruciating agony for Him. It was distressing.

Now we could easily chalk that up to His manhood. But how many of us experience that degree of sorrow over sin? It was Christ's perfect holiness that made this deep sorrow and psychological pain so great. So I find it absolutely remarkable that the same grief that Jesus had, the Spirit of God has. By indwelling us He is in the closest possible contact with sin without sinning Himself. We are His temple and it grieves Him to see it polluted. We are the ones who are supposed to be ambassadors representing Him by our speech, and it grieves Him to see us saying things that would disparage His reputation. No wonder James 4:5 says, **"The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously."** If we are to take this word seriously, in some sense our sinful words torment Him, cause severe distress or grieve Him. When I meditate on that, it is a tremendous motivation to change my speech. I don't want to grieve Him. I want to please Him.

But there is a second thing about that phrase that motivates me: grieving the Spirit guarantees discipline. Commentators believe that Paul likely had Isaiah 63:9-10 in mind. That passage speaks not only of God's deep love for His people but also the fact that He is grieved when they rebel

against Him. That passage says,

**Isaiah 63:9 In all their affliction He was afflicted** [that shows how closely identified God is with them – He’s afflicted],

**And the Angel of His Presence saved them;  
In His love and in His pity He redeemed them;  
And He bore them and carried them  
All the days of old.**

**Isaiah 63:10 But they rebelled and *grieved His Holy Spirit*;  
So He turned Himself against them as an enemy,  
*And He fought against them.***

These are saved people that He is talking about. This is guaranteeing that those who grieve the Spirit will be disciplined. Many modern expositions of grace leave God’s disciplines completely out of the equation. But if you read Hebrews 12 you will see that our God has not changed. He’s the same yesterday, today and forever. That whole chapter warns us that we need to take His calls to holiness seriously. It tells us that without holiness no one will see the Lord (12:14). And I would definitely encourage you to read Hebrews chapter 12. It says that everyone whom He loves He chastens, and if you are without chastening, you are illegitimate and not sons. He points to Esau who could not be restored to repentance. But then let me read His conclusion.

**Hebrews 12:18 ¶ For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest,**

**Hebrews 12:19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard *it* begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.**

**Hebrews 12:20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: “*And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.*”**

**Hebrews 12:21 And so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, “*I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.*”)**

**Hebrews 12:22 ¶ But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,**

**Hebrews 12:23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,**

**Hebrews 12:24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of* Abel.**

**Hebrews 12:25** ¶ See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, **Hebrews 12:26** whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “*Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.*”

**Hebrews 12:27** Now this, “*Yet once more,*” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

**Hebrews 12:28** ¶ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

**Hebrews 12:29** For our God is a consuming fire.

I am motivated not only by His love, and by the fact that I want to please Him, not grieve Him, but I am also motivated by the fact that He is a God of discipline, and you will not get away with ungodliness.

It is sometimes difficult for us to appreciate how much sin disturbs a holy being since we are not perfectly holy. But God has given to us many illustrations in the Bible to try to communicate with us how distasteful sin is to Him. He likens the sin of His people to

1) the scum of a boiling pot in which a rotting carcass is being cooked (Ezek. 24:10-12)

2) the stench of a grave that has been dug up (Rom. 3:13)

3) the vomit of a dog (2 Pet. 2:22)

4) petrifying, oozing, pussy sores (Is. 1:5-6)

and several others which are even grosser. Just describing these things can make some people queasy, but if you imagine what close contact with those things is like, you will have a very mild picture for the distaste and distress that the Spirit of God has when He indwells you and hears your unholy speech. Don't take this sermon lightly.

### **b) We are loved, owned and empowered by the Spirit (“sealed”)**

Another thing that motivates me to holiness is that we are loved, owned and empowered by the Spirit. Verse 30 goes on to say, **the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed...** A seal had four functions. First, it was a certification of authenticity. By indwelling us, the Spirit is certifying our authenticity as saints. Can you see the tension? Second, a seal marked a document as belonging to someone. It marked ownership by a Holy God. What kind of a testimony do we give to this God who owns us?

Third, a seal protected against tampering. That's why Jesus tomb was sealed. In Revelation a seal was put on the heads of believers to protect them from demonic attack. But when we willfully break God's laws we are giving place to the devil; we are giving him legal ground. Fourth, a seal was a guarantee of payment, just like a modern credit card would be. A person would imprint his seal on a contract which was just like a signature on a credit card. And the Spirit is the guarantee of our final salvation on judgment day.

When you see what is involved in sealing, you begin to realize what a contradiction in terms it must be for us to be acting like pagans when we are sealed as sons. But it is also an encouragement that we *can* change. The sealing of the Holy Spirit is His guarantee that He will indeed finish the good work that He has begun in us. It is the expression of His love for us. By the Spirit we have access to a power for holiness we could not have on our own. So this takes us back to His loving, gracious provisions and steps for holiness that we looked at last week.

### c) **The Spirit is moving us to perfection (v. 30).**

The third motivation to holiness is to consider where we are headed. Verse 30 continues, **by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.** According to Romans 8:23, the day of redemption is resurrection day. That is the day when God will complete the full work that He has begun in us. So the third motivation is that we are on a one way trip to holiness. The beginning is a call to holiness and the end of the trip is the accomplishment of holiness. Everything about the journey that we are on indicates that we should leave sin and pursue holiness. He has promised to give us everything we need for life and godliness. It's up to us to apply and use God's provisions. May we do so in the area of speech. Amen.