

From Rotten Words to Wholesome Words

Ephesians 4:29-30

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Introduction:

Today, we continue our study in Ephesians where we have been looking at specific ways that the Lord calls us to change once we have been brought into His family.

- The Ephesians to whom Paul writes were mostly pagans who had worshipped idols.
 - They had been dead in trespasses and sins, as we all are by nature until Christ gives us new life.
 - But the Lord had sent His gospel to them,
 - promising them salvation through faith in Jesus Christ...
 - and such salvation that would bring them forgiveness of sin and eternal life.
- And this eternal life is not just life that lasts forever,
 - It is a whole new life...
 - It is life in communion with God,
 - Life as His very own children in His very own household!
 - If you are looking to Jesus Christ for salvation,
 - God is graciously working in you to make you into all He wants you to be as His children.
 - He is preparing you to live in full, open communion with Him as your Father, with Jesus His Son, and with the Holy Spirit.
 - You are destined to gaze upon Him in all His glory and to live in the fullness of His love—
 - not only being loved by Him,
 - but also loving Him and loving your neighbour with love like His love.
 - That is your calling as a Christian!
 - That is the calling Paul is referring to when he begins chapter 4 with the words:
 - Eph 4:1: "I beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called..."
 - In verse 17, he explains that this means that you are to no longer walk in ignorance of the true God.
 - All of life is to be lived with reference to Him...
 - as one forgiven by Him...

- as one brought into His family...
 - as one being created to live according to God in true righteousness and holiness.
- In verse 25, Paul begins to speak of specific changes that we need to be making...
 - We are to be active about making these changes.
 - The fact that God is working in us does not mean we are to be passive and just wait for these changes to come...
 - No—not at all.
 - The Lord calls us here to make these changes...
 - The grace of God is that which *enables* you to make these changes—
 - They are changes you are to make by the grace of God.
 - That is what is so marvellous about God’s work in us...
 - It is not that He obeys for us, or loves for us...
 - but rather that He actually changes us so that we love and we obey.
 - When my children bring a jar to me that is too hard for them to open, I don’t have the ability to as God does when we go to Him for help...
 - I cannot strengthen them so that they can open it...
 - All I can do is open it for them...
 - But when you come to God’s Spirit and ask Him to help you to stop lying and start telling the truth, He strengthens you so that you become a truth teller.
 - So far the changes we have seen that are called for are:
 - vs. 25: to replace lying with speaking the truth...
 - vs. 26-27: to replace sinful anger with holy anger...
 - vs. 28: to replace stealing with hard work and giving.
 - And today we come to verse 29 & 30 which calls us to replace rotten words with wholesome words.

TRANS> I want to begin today by pointing out to you from our text that:

I. The words you use are very important.

A. This is something we do not always take as seriously as we ought to today...

1. There is a tendency for people to say,
 - “It’s only words”

- Or to repeat the little chant,
 - “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”

TRANS> This is not true at all, but it is a very prevalent way of thinking among us.

2. There is, in fact, an attack on words in much theology and philosophy of our day.
 - a. Karl Barth, the founder of neo-orthodoxy, taught that words are inadequate to convey God’s Word to us.
 - Instead of calling the Bible the Word of God, he called it a **witness** to the Word of God.
 - He emphasised that the words themselves are simply the writings of men who had experience with God...
 - and while these words of men can foster a true experience in us too...
 - the words themselves are not to be taken at face value as God’s Holy Word.
 - For example, when the Bible says that Jesus rose from the dead,
 - it doesn’t matter (as far as Barth and his disciples are concerned) if a man named Jesus Christ actually came out of the grave on the third day.
 - You can believe that if you want, but it doesn’t matter whether you believe it...
 - What matters is that you believe that God’s kingdom arises out of the ruins of sin when we start loving each other and living righteous lives.
 - The same could be said of Christ’s second coming...
 - We just need to realise that we are accountable for what we do—we don’t necessarily need to believe that Jesus will actually come again.
 - A similar approach is taken toward God’s law...
 - It is to be interpreted according to the way love is defined in our society...
 - While chastity was important to the ancients, modern disciples can show Christian love in sexual relations outside the bonds of traditional marriage.
 - I am not saying that Barth taught all these particulars, but he is the one who laid the foundations for this kind of approach to the words of scripture—and really to all words.

TRANS> The idea is that all words are relative—

- They cannot convey eternal truth directly, but only reflectively—only as a witness so deeper underlying realities.
- b. Post modernism has a similar approach...and so does the emergent theology that follows it...
- The idea is that God cannot be known through words...only through experience...
 - In fact, in post modernism, words are almost entirely devoid of any real meaning.
 - This is why creeds or definitions or lists of commandments are looked at as somewhat barbaric.
 - The goal is to experience God contextually—from our context of life—rather than to have Him speak into our lives from scripture.
 - Rather than approaching Him on the terms He has set forth in His word,
 - The emergent worshipper approaches Him with reference to his felt needs and desires.
3. The great error at the foundation of this theology is it's denial of the fact that language is God-given.
- a. The faulty idea is the language arose when Og and Bog began to learn how to make different kinds of grunts to describe different things.
- “Uh”—meant “girl,”
 - and “Ooh Uh” meant “pretty girl”
 - And then over time, the grunts became more and more sophisticated until at last we were able to talk about God and the notion that we cannot know Him through language!

TRANS> No, no, that's not the way it was at all.

- b. The Bible pictures language as the gift of God which He gave man from the very moment we were created.
- 1) Adam is not presented to us as a man of limited IQ grunting at Eve.
- He is presented as a man who was capable of classifying all the animals (to name them was to give them meaningful names),
 - of understanding God's will and of worshipping God,
 - of receiving the doctrine of marriage and labour.
 - God created Him with the ability to speak.

- Just because we all had to learn to speak from our infancy is not reason to suppose that Adam had to do this.
 - There is no such limitation with the true and living God,
 - only with the limited God that rebellious men have made up in their own minds in their efforts to avoid the true God.
- 2) We need to understand that from the beginning, God used language as the way by which He reveals Himself to us.
- Certainly, He is revealed by His acts (even His act of creation)
 - but the primary and deepest revelation of Himself to us is by means of words.
 - Jesus could even come and live among us and die on the cross for our sins,
 - but we do not know God through these actions apart from the words that explain to us that He was the Son of God and that He died to take away our sins...
 - Words are what connect us to this great act of mercy!
 - That is why I have often said to you that you know Christ better through the scriptures than if you had been an eyewitness of His death and resurrection...
 - You know the meaning of these great acts because God has explained them to you in His word.
 - And you must realise that the main reason God gave us language in the first place was so that we might know Him...
 - As those made in His image, He made us capable of receiving revelation of Himself.
 - And His chosen method for that revelation is His Word.
- 3) To say that words are inadequate for revealing God and His will to man is to say that the Lord failed to provide a sufficient way to make Himself known to us...
- I am not saying we can know all that there is to know about God—
 - We will never be able to do that—He is too great for us to know Him exhaustively...
 - It is not His will to reveal Himself to us exhaustively...
 - But I am saying that we can know Him in truth and we can know Him adequately through His Word.

TRANS> You can surely see then that words are very important!

- And if words are important, then the words you use are also very important.

B. You can see that your words are important by what Paul says in Eph 4:29-30.

1. First, see how he describes the tremendous effect our words have on each other.

- He contrasts the effect of corrupt words with words that are good...
 - and these are poles apart!

a. Corrupt words are literally rotten words!

1) The word in the original is *saprov*.

- This word is commonly used to refer to rotten fruit or spoiled meat.
 - And you know what this is like!
 - It smells bad.
 - It tastes bad.
 - And it makes you sick.
- Rotten words, like rotten foods,
 - are both unpleasant and harmful!

2) Isn't this true of words?

- Of course it's true!

a) I would confidently assert that you have all been hurt by rotten words more than by anything else.

(i) Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the garden by use of rotten words.

- The result is that the whole human race fell under the wrath and curse of God.

(ii) And not only that, but in the course of your lives, you have been hurt by words...

- Most children would rather be beaten by their parents than told by their parents that they wish they had never been born.

b) Listen to a few of the destructive things words do, according to the Bible:

(i) Proverbs 11:9 says that words destroy people.

(ii) Proverbs 11:11 says that words overthrow cities

(iii) Proverbs 15:1 says that harsh words stir up anger

- (iv) Proverbs 15:4 says that perverseness in the tongue breaks the spirit of man.
- (v) Listen to James 3:5-8: The tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

TRANS> Churches, families, and lives are constantly torn apart by rotten words...

- 3) Is it any wonder that Paul's prohibition of such words is absolute?
 - a) He says "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth."
 - There is to be no compromise here!
 - The goal is that not one rotten word—not one inappropriate or idle word is to come forth!
 - Such words cause so much damage, they are to be entirely eliminated from the Christian's life!
 - b) Paul speaks here as one who know our hearts...
 - Notice that he says not to let rotten words proceed...
 - He seems to be speaking with reference to the fact that rotten words well up from our sinful selfish hearts...
 - And he sees them coming into our mouth—ready to be released...
 - and he says, "Don't do it!"
 - "Don't let it out!"
 - The ugly rotten smelly word is there and is very anxious to come spewing out all over the room...
 - One of the puritan writers pointed out that civility teaches us to contain our bad breath and not let it out into the room when others are present—
 - He was talking about the breath that comes out of the back side.
 - Brothers and sisters, the Lord is calling you to exercise self-control about what you say!
 - Proverbs 29:11 says,

- A fool vents all his feelings, But a wise *man* holds them back.
- Words are so destructive—
 - To let out rotten words is to release poison into a room—or to let a hungry lion out of a cage.
 - Only with words, it is poison that infects the soul and a lion that devours the spirit.

TRANS> But now for the positive side of all this!

- Yes, words are so powerful that they can cause tremendous destruction, but
- b. Words are also capable of bringing tremendous benefit to others!
- 1) You see here that Paul describes “good words” as those words that impart grace to the hearers!
 - a) That is the effect they have.
 - What does it mean, though, to impart grace?
 - It means that words help...
 - The word grace as it is used here means “help”
 - God words help people!
 - b) And you are told how they help—
 - They provide necessary edification!
 - Edification means building—
 - Words then, are said to build people up according to the need of the moment.
 - That is what good words do.
 - 2) This concept of building up the saints is often grossly perverted in the modern church.
 - a) It is often supposed that the primary thought here is building up people’s self-esteem—
 - building them up so they will have confidence and know how useful they are in God’s service.
 - But we need to get our definition of edification not from modern psychology, but from the Bible...
 - And the Bible’s definition of edification can be seen right in the book of Ephesians—
 - just a couple of chapters back.

- b) Look at Ephesians 2:19-22 and see how Paul defines edification.
- (i) He is not speaking about self esteem!
 - The Bible never tells us to build up people’s self esteem...
 - It rather warns us to be careful that we do not esteem ourselves more highly than we ought!
 - Our religion is not self-esteem, but God-esteem.
 - (ii) Let me just read Ephesians 2:19-22 and then make a few comments to show you what necessary edification is:
 - Eph 2:19-22: “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”
 - (a) The first thing you see is that the edification the Bible talks about does not begin with us and our worth...
 - We are not to be built on ourselves but on the foundation of Jesus Christ as He is revealed to us by the apostles and prophets and gave us scripture.
 - You cannot begin to grow into what God wants you to be until you have first come to Jesus Christ.
 - The Bible constantly teaches you to give up on yourself and what you can do and find everything in Christ.
 - He is the starting point—He is the foundation of it all!
 - (b) The second thing you see about this edification is that it is a building up of us into a holy habitation for God.
 - God is at work to shape us and fit us into His family—
 - to set us in His household as a holy people in a holy fellowship who love as Christ loves and are perfect as our Father is perfect.

TRANS> That is the edification that Paul is talking about...

- 3) Now returning to our text, you see that Paul says that this building up is done with good words!
- a) That is amazing, isn’t it?

- We are actually able to cause others to grow in holiness simply by speaking!
 - Words are so powerful that they can, by the grace of God, transform ruined sinners to become like Jesus Christ!
- b) God actually uses your words to impart new life to His people...
- That means, when you speak to your neighbour, you should be looking to impart life to him.
 - It doesn't mean that you don't ever speak about mundane things—things having to do with our daily lives...
 - But it means that the orientation of all your words should be to promote godliness!
 - To point others to Him!

TRANS> We are going to look at specific ways of doing this in a moment,

- but for now I just want you to see that our words have the ability to either destroy the work of God in our neighbour or to promote it.
 - Surely this shows you how important the words you speak really are!
 - Words are not matters of indifference—not at all!
 - But Paul goes on to show a second way that your words are important...
 - Having seen the powerful effect they have on others,
2. See secondly how Paul describes the effect of our words on the Holy Spirit!
- In verse 30 he says:
 - Eph 4:30: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”
 - a. Your words can actually cause grief to the Holy Spirit...
 - Think about this...
 - 1) What is the Spirit's role in the life of the church?
 - Well, it is to sanctify the church—to make it holy and blameless.
 - The Spirit is working in us to bring about the edification we have just been talking about...
 - To make us into that holy household in which God dwells.
 - The Spirit is already in us doing this work.

- 2) Now we have just seen that our words are capable of building up that holy house—or of tearing it down!
 - That means that whenever you speak rotten words,
 - you are working against the very thing the Spirit is among us to do!
 - You are doing what destroys that which the Spirit is building up!
 - 3) This grieves the Spirit of God.
 - This does not mean that the Spirit is subject to shifting emotions as we are, for God does not change—
 - He sees the end from the beginning...
 - But it means that as He interacts with us in our history,
 - He is highly displeased with us because we are working against His loving purpose for the church.
- b. This is a very heart stirring appeal!
- 1) The Spirit loves us so much that He is working to make us into a holy community of people who are all like Jesus...
 - And His primary way of working is to use us in each others lives—and above all, to use our words!
 - He is the One who gave us the word, but He did it through the agency of men who were moved by Him to give us the scriptures.
 - 2) Paul reminds us that the Spirit has sealed us until the day of redemption...
 - In other words,
 - He is going to stick with us until the work is complete.
 - He is absolutely committed to us to bring us to the day of redemption when everything will be accomplished...
 - He is sealed us until that day.
 - The seal is like a pledge or a deposit that He will see this work through to the end... no matter what!
 - This, of course, is not talking about mere church members...
 - Those He has sealed are those He has imparted new life to—
 - those who have been transformed within so that they delight in the Law of God.
 - those who are circumcised not in the flesh, but in the heart.

- He loves us so much that He stays with us until the work is complete...

3) So what an affront it is to Him when we,

- who are called to speak words of edification that will make each other more holy,
- are found spewing out vile words that corrupt the body and tear it down as far as we are able!
- Here is the blessed Spirit who is committed to making you and your brothers and sisters into a holy temple—
 - and you are working in opposition to Him!
 - You grieve Him!
 - What ingratitude this is!
 - What wickedness!
- You can be sure that you will know His chastisement—
 - You will find confusion and frustration—
 - you will find sorry and loss of assurance—
 - you will be afflicted by the hand of God until you repent.
 - But above all,
 - You ought to be ashamed of yourself!
 - You are grieving the One who loves you so well...
 - You are befouling what is so lovingly sanctifying.

TRANS> So you see, brethren, how important your words are!

- They are able to either promote or detract from the work of God...
 - See to it then, that you work in concert with the Spirit in all your speaking lest you grieve Him by your rotten words...
- As with all the changes that are called for in Ephesians,
 - Walking worthy of your calling involves more than just ceasing to do evil...
 - it includes learning to do well.
 - The rotten words must be replaced with good words that edify and impart grace to the hearers!
 - It is good to evaluate your words—to ask yourself...

- “Are the words I speak words that will build up the house of God, or words that tear it down?”
- Ask this to yourself and ask of your children...
 - Evaluate the words that you use.
- Let me take a little time to help you do that....

II. Consider what is needed if you are to speak words that are helpful

A. First of all, you need to be sure you have a gospel perspective.

1. By that, I mean that you need to be a person who is clear about God’s saving work in the world and in you.
 - a. You have to see that Jesus came to take away our sins through His suffering on the cross...
 - b. And that God is indeed at work in those who are redeemed to make us holy and blameless before Him.
 - c. You have to embrace this glorious salvation by trusting in Jesus Christ to do this great work in you and in His church.
2. It is then, and only then, that you will be able to replace rotten words with edifying words...
 - a. That makes sense, doesn’t it?
 - If you are going to speak words that promote the building up of the body of Christ,
 - you have to first be committed to that work.
 - You have to be in love with it—to delight in it above everything else!
 - You have to be a true Christian.
 - b. And you have to know that it is God’s work in Christ that brings it all about...
 - Then you yourself will be looking to Him for grace to put off your old way of speaking and to put on the new way that helps people grow in Christ...
 - And you will be constantly encouraging them by your example as well as by your words to grow into that holy family that God calls us to be...
 - You will be promoting salvation by the grace of God with your words.

B. So from that perspective, let’s look at some the specific ways you need to replace rotten words with wholesome words.

1. First, your words need to promote purity rather than corruption.

- a. The book of Proverbs describes two women, and both of them are full of enticements...
- 1) One of them is the seductress.
 - She works really hard at trying to make sin look as attractive and appealing as she possibly can.
 - She makes it look like marvellous freedom if you will abandon God to come and do your own thing!
 - She flatters, she makes promises, she uses smooth words—
 - she does everything she can get you to break away from the oppressive restrictions that God has placed on you.
 - She is very attractive!
 - 2) The other woman is lady wisdom—
 - She also works hard to attract you, but in the opposite direction from the seductress...
 - She shows you how shallow the way of the seductress is and how it ends in death.
 - Yes, it looks delightful, but see where it leads—to death and destruction.
 - She shows you that true and lasting happiness—rich and full holiness—is found in the Lord.
- b. Now my friends, whenever you encourage someone to follow the Lord,
- you are (in Christ) lady wisdom,
 - but when you encourage them to go some other way, you are the seductress!
- 1) Children, if your friend tells you that his parents have told him not to play with a certain toy,
 - and you get out the toy and say, “Oh it won’t matter—how will they know?”
 - Those are rotten words that lead to corruption!
 - You are trying to make your friend think it is good for him to disobey his parents!
 - 2) And you young people... what about sexual purity?
 - Do you lead others toward purity,
 - or do you encourage them to forget about what God has said?

- Do you promote the idea that God has reserved sexual relations for only that relationship in which a man and woman are committed to each other for life?
 - or do you promote the idea that sex is casual and cheap?
 - Do you encourage suggestive talk, or do you oppose it?
 - Do you laugh at impure jokes, or do you oppose them?
- 3) And what about in business dealings?
- I had a man offer to send me a package from the US as a gift this week so that I wouldn't have to pay the taxes I owe...
 - It was a real temptation—about a \$55 temptation...
 - His words were rotten words promoting corruption.
 - I had a choice to respond with my own rotten words promoting this corruption further or with words promoting purity.
 - It is really no choice at all, is it?
 - Saving \$55.00 that God can easily provide a thousand times over and grieving the Spirit,
 - or keeping covenant with my God.
 - I chose to keep covenant with God.

TRANS> See that your words promote purity instead of corruption

2. Secondly, your words need to promote unity rather than discord.
- a. It is so easy to slip into gossip that tears people apart...
- 1) Those little detracting statements seem to find their way so easily to our tongue.
- And though we may think we are only telling the other person what he already knows,
 - in fact we are strengthening his negative thoughts toward his neighbour.
- 2) There many reasons we are so inclined to gossip and slander and none of them are good...
- a) Often, gossip is bred of envy—we want to pull down our neighbour because we think he is more highly thought of than we are...
- This is the same sin—this envy—that led the Pharisees to pick fault with Christ even when there was none...
 - Let us rather promote our brother for the honour of Christ.

- b) Gossip is also bred of resentment—
 - Your neighbour has wronged you and you want to bring him down in the eyes of others so you speak rotten words about him.
 - Instead, the Bible calls you to go to him and work out the problem between you and him alone.
 - c) Gossip is also bred of our eagerness to be an interesting person—to have something interesting to say—
 - People love to hear about the faults of others—
 - Sadly, you are almost guaranteed to have an engaged audience when you tell a juicy tale about someone.
 - But I say,
 - What kind of love is it to your neighbour that rejoices to gain attention by exposing your neighbour's faults?
 - Why not instead speak about God's kingdom or work?
- b. Of course there are many other ways of sowing discord.
- 1) You can use harsh words that divide you from others...
 - Come to your wife and say, "You blew all our money on clothes."
 - or come to her and say, "We need to sit down together and work out a budget."
 - 2) To one who has wronged you, you can say,
 - "You haven't heard the end of this yet,"
 - Those are rotten words...
 - Or you can say,
 - "I hope we can settle this as soon as possible—you are my brother and I don't want there to be division between us."
 - 3) You children, when you get into a quarrel,
 - a) You can shift the blame—"Tommy hit my first."
 - b) or you can recognise your wrong first and say, "I shouldn't have smashed you over the head with my bat, will you forgive me?"
 - 4) And you parents,
 - You can have the kind of discipline that resolves problems, or the kind that stirs up bitterness between you and your children...

- Much of this has to do with the words you use and the way you use them...
 - Do you look at discipline the way Proverbs does? as jewels that you adorn your children with? as something you do *for* them?
 - Or is it, at least a lot of the time—
 - something that is done because they have irritated you and you just want to give them a peace of your mind?
 - One of the worst things you can do is use manipulating words...
 - Tell your children how they have not appreciated you even though you have loved them and done so much for them...
 - That may change their conduct, but it will breed resentment instead of love.
- c. The scripture has many great examples of those who have promoted unity—especially women...
- 1) There is Abigail (1 Sam 25) who calmed David when her husband had rudely refused hospitality to him...
 - 2) There is the woman from Abel who saved the city from Joab by delivering a fugitive who had taken refuge there...
 - 3) There is Joseph who said to his brothers who, when it was in his power to take vengeance on his them for seizing him and selling him as a slave,
 - “You meant it for evil, but God meant if for good.”
 - What gracious conciliatory words these were!
 - These are words in which the Spirit delights.

TRANS> See to it that you speak words that unify rather than divide the body.

3. Thirdly, your words need to promote encouragement rather than despair.
 - a. I suppose some of the most rotten words are those that speak and uphold the law without the promise of the gospel.
 - 1) How quickly this will discourage even the most sanguine of persons,
 - either driving them to superficially, hypocrisy, or despair.
 - 2) Sadly, this is what many parents do to their children...
 - They speak constantly about duty, but almost never about God’s grace in Christ by which we are pardoned and also enabled.
 - How much better it is to tell them constantly of the Saviour in whom we repose,

- of His death for the remission of our sins,
 - and of His gift of the Spirit to give us grace for obedience.
- 3) We need to be constantly reminding each other of the promises of God in order that we may engender hope...
- What could be more encouraging to you who believe than to be reminded in your times of greatest affliction that God uses affliction to produce patience,
 - and that patience produces proven character,
 - and that proven character produces hope because it is then that we come to know God's love in Christ like never before?
 - In Thessalonians, Paul tells us when loved ones have died in the Lord to comfort one another with the promise of the return of the Lord and the resurrection.
- b. Another form of words that engender hope are those that remind you about the past work of God in your life...
- 1) As you read the letters of Paul, you find that he frequently reminds the people how God's grace has already changed them...
- Even in this section of Ephesians that addresses our duty,
 - he speaks to them as those who have already put off the old man and put on the new man.
 - And of course earlier in the epistle, he reminds them how they have been brought from death to life.
- 2) In other letters, you find the same kind of encouragement...
- To the Thessalonians, He speaks of how they turned from idols to serve the living God, even in the midst of much persecution...
 - To the Corinthians who had all sorts of problems, he thanks God for the grace that has come to them, and how they come behind in no spiritual gift and are eager for the return of Christ.
- c. Yet another form of rotten words that lead to despair would be those words that minimise sin...
- Often, in an effort to comfort someone who is troubled by sin,
 - we will tell them that they are really not so bad as that say...
 - But they know what they are like—
 - Although people mean well when they do that, it is actually very destructive to hope...

- The troubled sinner gets the impression that if his sin and guilt is really as bad as he thinks it is, there is no salvation for him...
 - The only encouragement people have for him is that maybe its not that bad.
 - We should rather tell such a person that his sin is a whole lot worse than he thinks it is,
 - but that Jesus is able to deal with it all and much more because He is the Son of God who died on the cross for us.
- d. One more well meaning form for rotten words that produce despair has to do with false promises that go beyond what scripture says...
- For example, there are those who promise that you will never have financial problems if you give to their ministry,
 - or those who promise physical healing of all infirmities in this life if your faith is strong enough...
 - or those who promise that you can claim spiritual perfection so that sin will be a thing of the past for you in this life.
 - No service is done by over-promising...
 - When the promise is not fulfilled, it leads to more despair than if the false promise had never been made.
 - We must be very careful then, to speak only what God has said—nothing more, nothing less.
 - We have no right to attach his name and reputation to a promise He has not made.
4. Fourthly, your words need to promote submission rather than rebellion.
- a. The Bible advocates taking vows by which we promise our fidelity to the Lord.
- You men are to speak not only for yourself, but for the families that God has given you—as Joshua did when he said,
 - “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
 - He was making a vow that he would command his household in the way of the Lord.
 - There is something about saying the words that has a very good effect on you.
 - especially if you are sincere...

- Coming to the point that you are ready to speak something shows that you really mean it.
 - This is what a man and woman are called to do when they marry...
 - To make promises before witnesses that they will be faithful to each other.

- b. Think about the submission of Jacob to God as his only Saviour when he was threatened by Esau...
 - God had promised that Jacob would live, so when Jacob sensed his danger from Esau, he wrestled with Lord and made the affirmation,
 - “I will not let you go until you bless me”
 - and he did not let go!
 - That is what you are to do with God’s promise of salvation to you and to your children...
 - Commit that you will not let go until He blesses you and your children as He has promised.

- c. Now of course you should also promote submission in others to those that God has placed over them...
 - For example, in Titus, older women are instructed to:
 - Titus 2:4-5: admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, *to be* discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.
 - If you are among the many today who oppose this in the church, then you are speaking rotten words instead of edifying words.

- 5. Fifthly, your words need to promote love for God rather than contempt of Him.
 - a. Think about this—
 - What are you doing when you go around complaining all the time?
 - Are you encouraging others to love the Lord?
 - Of course not—
 - complaining is contagious—it brings before others all that God is not doing!
 - You remember how this was the downfall of Israel in the wilderness...
 - Some complained and soon they all hated God.
 - Complaining words are rotten words that need to be put away.

- How much better it is for you to express your thanksgiving to God for all the things He has done for you!
 - For your salvation and for His grace to you and your household!
 - For His provision for you...
 - For the way He was with you to comfort you in your trials and how you came to know Him better through those trials.

- b. Another way of driving people away from God is to boast...
 - That is, to boast as if you can do what only God can do...
 - as if you can provide for yourself the things of this life...
 - and even worse, as if you can save yourself by your own goodness.

 - That is a poisonous doctrine—and it is very common both within and without the church...
 - Only Biblical Christian faith teaches that we cannot save ourselves from our sin, but must look to Christ to save us.
 - Those who teach any other doctrine always hate the real Christ—the Christ of the Bible!
 - They must hate Him because He is in direct competition with their way of salvation—
 - be they atheists or works righteousness Christians...
 - Their whole idea is that they can save themselves,
 - and though Christ may be an example and a guide,
 - they cannot bear to have Him as a full Saviour.

 - When you boast as if you are able to save yourself,
 - you drive people away from Christ and foster hatred of Him.
 - That is an awful thing to do.

Conclusion:

Oh brothers and sisters,

- You see how careful we must be with our words.
 - They have the power to destroy and the power to save.
 - How we need to look to our Lord Jesus Christ to help us put away all of our rotten words and replace them with words that edify and impart grace to the hearer!

Once again, how we marvel at the beauty of Jesus Christ with reference to His words!

- Read about Him and you will see that He never once misspeaks!

- He never says anything that is less than perfect—
- He always said just exactly what needed to be said in every occasion...
- As scripture says, “Never a man spoke like this man spoke!”

- It almost seems a greater marvel that here was a man who never spoke a careless word in all his life than that He was raised from the dead.
 - What a marvellous thing it is—perfect words for every occasion!
 - And just think, the Lord is working in you to make you just like Him!
 - May it ever be so!
 - Not only will you be raised up at the last day as He was raised up...
 - You will also speak as He speaks.