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**Clean your Mouth from the Inside Out**  
**Ephesians 4:29**

I remember one time when I was about 13 years old my mother thought she heard me say an unwholesome word when I was wrestling with my brothers in the front lawn and she grabbed me by the arm and marched me inside the house and took that big bar of Ivory soap and jammed it into my mouth. I can still taste the bits of soap that scraped off on my teeth and the multiple water rinsings needed to get all the soap out. Now to this day mom the word I really did say was “shoot”, but she probably picked up on some attitudes and casualness with language and disrespect that she didn’t appreciate. She knew that a bar of soap was not going to be able to get down far enough in me to clean up the real problem....but she wanted to teach me a lesson about how important it was to keep control of your mouth and be very careful what I allow to come out of it. She took that soap to try and clean up every part she could, but she knew only God can clean up the heart.

Anybody here ever struggle with the kinds of words that come out of your mouth knowing that some of the words you use at work, or at home or at school would not be words that you would use in the lobby after church service? And I’m not just talking about coarse words. I’m talking about unkind, cutting, harsh, hurtful, destructive, innuendo, deceitful, gossip type words as well. It’s very, very difficult to tame the tongue because it so blatantly reveals what is inside the heart. James 3 talks about how difficult it is. Let me read James 3:2-10. James describes what an incredible influence the tongue is and how incredibly difficult it is to control. It is so very strange that one minute we can use our mouths to sing glory and praise and honor to God and speak words of kindness and love to those we love and then just an hour later out of

our mouth can come some of the most vial and hurtful and destructive things. Controlling our mouths is a very difficult challenge...but its some thing that must be done and the cleaning must begin from the inside out.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4. The book of Ephesians breaks down neatly into two basic sections. The first three chapters deal with doctrine and the second three deal with practice. We are first taught the reason, the position we have in Christ and the resource we have in Christ...before we are challenge to do. The being always proceeds the doing. Because of this, who we in Christ, then we are challenged to live like this. And in chapter 4 we have been lingering in an intensely practical portion of scripture. Paul has been reminding us that we are no longer who we used to be. We were once dead in our trespasses, our missteps and sin but now we have been made alive in Christ. We are Children of the king of the universe chosen and forgiven and filled with grace, the unmerited favor not only for salvation but also for resource and power. We then with the help of God put off the old clothes, the old baggage, the old sinful self and put on the new clothes of righteous living. We must stop listening to the corrupting lusts of deceit v. 22 whispered in our ears by the father of lies. But we need to begin listening to, and following, the one who is the way the truth and the life. We need to have a renewal happen in the spirit of our minds. Renewal must come from the inside out and your mother as much as she would like can't reach down inside that far and clean us up. Only the spirit of God can reach down inside and clean the heart. For Jesus said in Matthew 12:34 "It's out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." In Ephesians 4 we are called to put off the worn out clothes of lies and put on truth, be real and genuine. Put off the worn out clothes of sinful anger and instead be angry for the right reasons in the right way and keep the anger short. Put off the sin-filled clothes of stealing and

instead work with the purpose that you could be a blessing to someone else. Don't steal or work to have, work to be a giver.

So we come to Ephesians 4v.29 (READ) That word unwholesome is the Greek word Sapro. It has been used to describe spoiled fish or rotten fruit or a stale bundle of hay that is corrupt and decayed. That kind of speech is part of our self, the dirty old sin clothes that we used to wear. This morning I want to expose our rotten words and then open up our eyes to what drives or motivates that rotten speech, the lies we believe and then apply the truth of God's word that will motivate us to put on the righteous clothes of new man living.

First lets talk about the rotten words we use. The obvious words that are rotten are those coarse vulgar words that come out, the swearing, taking the Lords name in vain. I remember a conversation with a guy who had recently come to Christ and had just caught himself from using a choice expletive, 'he commented that coming to Christ sure does limit your vocabulary." And indeed a change on the inside ought to have a profound affect on what comes out of our mouths.

When we take the name of the Lord in vain. Vain means empty, useless. When we accuse a girl of being vain we are saying that they are concerned more about their outward looks then what is on the inside is empty. When we use the word "God" or O my god, or Christ or Jesus or even gosh a slang term for God or Jeez a slang term for Jesus when we use those word when we are surprised or angry or amazed we are using God's name in a empty, useless way. We are using the Lords name in vain. The name of God is so holy and righteous and filled with the meaty substance of truth, do not ever cheapen His name by using it lightly. I would be very careful about even using words like damn and hell lightly as they are used in such a way to trivialize terrible realities like hell and damnation. People in sin really are going to hell, don't desensitize yourself to the reality of that fact. Certainly there are also rotten words that come out of mouths that make vulgar references to the human body

that God has created and the beautiful expression of marital intimacy that God has created for us to enjoy. Rotten words take good things that God has made and perverts them, distorts them, drags them through the mud. It's terrifying that a beautiful God given marital gift of intimacy can be twisted into a word meaning hate and scorn. How does that happen? You get rid of God from your heart and mind. You forget the holiness of God's creation and then replace the tenderness and intimacy of love in marriage and replace it with the force of rape. You then are left with a four-letter word that is abusive and selfish.(John Piper)

Ephesians 5:4 says, "there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks." The word for silly talk comes from the Greek words moron and word. The idea behind it seems to be Words that reflect the foolishness of the worlds wisdom. Don't use those words that reflect the priorities and desires of the worldlings. The word in my bible says "coarse jesting" is difficult to define. It seems best to refers to a clever play on words, that would include sexual innuendos, double meanings with a wink-wink of clever coarseness. Don't even wallow there. That is rotten unwholesome speech that is part of the old life.

You may have control over most of those words and feel this sermon doesn't apply to you. But I believe that there are rotten words we use that wouldn't be labeled as swear words. There are words we use that are destructive and tear down, cut down others. There are words we use to pump up our own egos. Lying words, deceitful words. There are sinfully angry words, there are harsh words and impatient words. There are selfish words. Words that speech slander and gossip. Words that exclude. Uncaring words, ungrateful words bitter words. Demanding words. But you may say, "I'm a woman who speaks her mind! Then maybe what is in your mind really isn't all that good". On an English country churchyard stands a drab, gray slate tombstone this epitaph

reads; “Beneath this stone, a lump of clay, lies Arabella Young, who on the 24<sup>th</sup> of may began to hold her tongue.”

Think about the words you have used this past week. Listen to your volume. Did it increase to rotten levels? Did it start with the intro words, “you always...” or “I can’t stand...” “Your never..You will never be....You are not a...” Would any of them be considered unwholesome, rotten? Perhaps they were words you used toward your husband, or wife. Perhaps they were words you spoke toward your parent...or child. Maybe it was some words you used to a boss or employee at work. Maybe words you spoke to a neighbor or business associate or someone at school or church. If God is reminding of words perhaps even words you didn’t mean to say but said them. Then that means you need to do something about it. You need to make it right with God and you need to make it right with that person whom you have damaged. Now most of us are thinking, I sure wish such and such a person were here they need to hear this. They sure hurt me when they said, my kid sure needs to clean up.... no you let God work on their heart. You take a look in your own heart. In order to begin to put on the new man’s clothes of righteousness we need to first put off the old man and that involves exposing the sin and confessing it, laying it bare before God and making it right. That may be a very tough application point for some of us this morning. Some may need to ask forgiveness to their families for the word they have been using, spouses, co-workers, friends. The point is do it. Don’t excuse your words, expose it and confess them.

Its often helpful once the rotten words have been exposed to try and understand what drives us to say those things. I have found we are driven to sin often because there is a lie we have believed and sometimes unknowingly embraced that drives us to the sin. So when we use rotten speech, what lies are we believing...whispered into our ears from the Father of lies, the devil?

I think one of the lies we believe is that God really isn't omnipresent. We don't think he is in the room when we yell at our husband and children. We don't think he comes to work with us. We don't think he is anywhere near the ball field. It's interesting how certain people's language cleans right up when their parents come in the room. What if we really did believe that God will never leave us nor forsake us. That God is always with us no matter where we may go. What if we really did believe that we cannot run or hide anywhere from God. Would that truth encourage us to speak only words that are wholesome and building?

I think another lie we believe is that if we don't use certain words then we won't be listened to, we won't be taken seriously, we won't be accepted in certain group, we won't be obeyed. And so the lie we believe is that we must resort to rotten speech to assert our position or authority. The truth is that God is the one who provides. God is the one who provides friends, influence. It's not up to me. I don't have to fight to get my way because the truth is God is on my side. I'm a child of the king of the universe. I have been blessed with all the resources I need to live and do what He has called me to do...so I don't need to resort to the old man's tool bag of rotten speech to get it done. It will not build what God wants, it will only continue to tear it down. It is deceitful because it looks like a cheap easy shortcut to get our own way, but it carries with it all the baggage and depression and pain and hurt of our old sinful life.

This is a really hard thing to do because it's not about just getting our mouth wired shut. The battle for our mouth is fought down inside our hearts and mind. It is out of the fountain of our hearts that flow the words of our mouth. If we change our hearts then we will change our speech. It might be encouraging to some of you who are new to Christ that your language is becoming less and less rotten. That must mean that your heart is becoming more and more righteous.

We have exposed the rotten speech in our life, we have exposed some of the lies we believe that drive our rotten speech and applied the

truth we know of God. Let continue to see how God wants us put on these “new clothes” of speech back in Ephesians 4:29. “...but only such a word as is good for edification (building up). That word is used for the building of houses. One might expect that after God says here in v.29 we need to put off rotten speech he would tell us to wise up and get it right and clean it up. No God goes beyond simply cleaning up the language and stopping the rotten words, he wants us to give out words that build up and encourage and demonstrate grace to others. He wants us to have an entirely new change of heart in our attitude toward others. Especially those who make us angry and frustrated enough to use rotten, unwholesome words.

The truth is that I have been given grace and so I then must extend that grace toward others. “that it may give grace to those who hear” Colossians 4:6 says, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned as it were with salt.” Salt is a preservative. Our words ought to be so filled with grace that they move to preserve the relationship not erode and destroy it. Salt is a flavoring that brings out the very best in the food. Are my words such that they are bringing out the very best in people? And remember I am talking not just about those people we get along with easily but those people who do things, say things that anger us, frustrate us and tempt us to use rotten unwholesome words. Those people we are to be speaking words that are full of preserving, flavor enhancing words of grace. Now that is taking our speech to a whole other level. That is supernatural new man that God is calling us to be putting on. The world isn't all that impressed if we control our tongues enough to keep from using swear words or cut-downs, but when they hear good words returned for evil words. When they here words of grace, that's unmerited favor words in situations that are screaming for rotten responses. They sit up and take notice.

The words of grace are going to be building words that means I need to determine what I could say to them that would build them up. In

fact, sometimes those will be words that express the truth in love that up front might appear hurtful but in the long run your heart desire is that they are building words. They will be words spoken according to the need of the moment. That means I must be sensitive to others needs and sensitive to the timing of when they will be spoken.

When a man just comes home from a hectic day and sits down exhausted...then is not the time to slam him with the truth of problems that have been pounding down your neck all day. Be a student of your husband, your wife. He may be far more receptive after he has had some food, some down time, a little rest. Timing it so key. Proverbs 25:11 says "Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances." Pray for the just the right moment to speak the building words they need to hear.

So that it may give grace to the those who hear. That word grace implies the person you are saying these building words, timely and appropriate words to, probably doesn't deserve them. Grace is unmerited favor. God extended great grace to us and we them ought to extend that same grace toward others. That means that even if you disagree with someone, you need to make sure that they know you are for them and not against them. There will be times when people frustrate us and we don't understand them or what they are doing. There will be times we don't agree with their idea or direction and it will be tempting to shoot back and disagree with them in such a way where our words are defensive and tear down and hurt and choose sides. Make sure people know that even if you disagree with them that you are still for them. May our words demonstrate an atmosphere of grace. ((Dr. Henry Cloud, Living Hope sermon). Christians who are in Christ are called to be builders, not destroyers.

As much as we wish, It has nothing to do with the other person. We cry out, "If only my kids would stop doing those things then I wouldn't say those rotten words!" Nope. Its not about them. It's a call to

change our own heart...even when they don't change theirs. That's a call to giving grace demonstrated by your words. That a call to focus on meeting the others needs and anticipating what timing our words would be best received. It's not a change of their heart, It's a change of our own heart, for that is the only place where we can clean up our words. It must change from the inside out.

So how are we going to get started on this radical but very righteous way of speaking. It starts with getting rid of the old languages, expose it, stab the lies that drive it. Then apply the truth about what we know is true about who God is and what he has said he would do. He is always present. He will provide for all our needs. He has gifted us with great grace and so we can then extend that unmerited favor toward others.

Here is a checklist to ask yourself before you speak. What does my friend need to hear right now? Am I prepared ready to speak? Is this the right time to say them? Is this the right context to share these words? If not, pray to God for a teachable moment or holy boldness. Are these words building up words...even though they might even be hard words? Is my heart truly desiring that they be nudged closer to God? Do my words reflect grace and kindness in such a way that they know I am for them and not against them? My professor in seminary Stanley Tousaint said, "The tongue is a slave of the heart, so make sure you heart is a good master."