

Eph 4:25-5:2

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 February 2017

Preacher: Evan Parke

- [0:00] Let us pray. Holy God, we thank you so much for this time. Thank you so much for your favor, your grace, your power, your mercy, your might.
- Holy God, we ask tonight that you would send your Holy Spirit, that your word would be elevated by the power of your Holy Spirit, that I would decrease and you would increase.
- That you would prepare the hearts of your people to hear whatever you have to say. Lord, may the word of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight. My rock and my redeemer, in Christ's name we pray, amen.
- Reading from Ephesians 4, verse 25 and 29. Oh, in your pew Bibles, it is page, it is nine what?
- Nine, seven, eight. Thank you. Praise nine, seven, eight. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.
- [1:18] Verse 29. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.
- That it may give grace to those who hear. There's a television show on Netflix called House of Cards.
- I think it's an intriguing show. I've been watching it now for about two years. Well, not two years. I'm on the second season. The story follows the lives of a politician named Frank Underwood and his wife, Claire, played by actors Kevin Spacey and Robin Wright, respectively.
- What happens in the story is you see them ruthlessly or ascend or rise through the ranks of government to ultimately, or seeking to become ultimately the president and the first lady of the United States.
- The title of the show is a metaphor or a figure of speech. This figure of speech, House of Cards, highlights the arc or the overall theme and the story of the television series.
- [2:39] So that what we are observing when we watch this show are thoughts, actions, and characteristics that define the culture or the atmosphere of what can be considered to be a house of cards.
- To put it more plainly, the definition of a house of cards is an organization or a plan that is very weak and can easily be destroyed.
- So what we are witnessing in this television world is a house, a political house, being constructed. This house, so to speak, is a house being built by Frank and Claire Underwood and their associates in the world of politics and government.
- And we are being led to believe that when it is finally finished, it will bear the mark or the distinction of being what a house of cards is, which is fragile and vulnerable and ultimately destined to fall apart.
- Which begs us to ask the question. Once we start to understand what's being built in this imaginary world, what then makes up the foundation of such a house?

[3:51] This house of cards. Well, if we observe the narrative and the story of Frank and Claire, some of you may be familiar with the story, but we can see quite clearly what this house of cards is built upon.

It's built upon lies, deception, pride, lack of genuine grace. In other words, I'll do for you, but you got to do something for me or else. Mindset.

It is also built upon mercilessness and even murder. In Ephesians 4, 25 and 29, and really throughout the letter of Ephesians, instructions are given to the house of God or to the ecclesia or to the church.

God's people. We are the audience of Ephesians. We who follow Jesus are who the writer is talking to. And contrary to being a house of cards, we are set up to be just the opposite.

We are a house or a church built on a firm foundation. And this foundation is Jesus Christ, who John's gospel declares is full of grace and full of truth.

[5:03] And it is worth noting that here in this text that we're going to read today, that we're looking at today, actually, both words, truth and grace, are referenced when describing what should come out of our mouths as members of Christ's body, as members of this house and the universal house.

These are also characteristics that should define the church in relation to the world. The first characteristic is truth or what is real and not false. The second is talk that builds up and that is full of grace, as opposed to talk that tears down.

First, let's look at truth. Ephesians 4, 25 starts off, therefore, having put away falsehood.

Now, falsehood is a fancy word for lying. Just like any other way to say, another way to say therefore is for this reason. So for this reason, having put away falsehood, or as a result, having put away falsehood.

Now, we can infer or we can gather from this language, therefore, or for this reason, that we, you and I, have been given something that gives us the power or the access to the power that we need to put aside such behavior.

[6:28] It also assumes that something about practicing falsehood was customary to our way of life before we had access to this power. Some clues are given earlier in this chapter to what this power is.

First of all, Ephesians points out that as followers of Christ, Christ, as a church, we are not ignorant anymore. Or our understanding is no longer darkened because we are not alienated from the life of God as we used to be.

Or we did not know Christ. So given what God has done, we are now hyper-aware of sin in our lives, as sin, because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in a way that we had not been before.

Because of the life of God that we have been exposed to in our relationship with Christ. This is because of that. We are not ignorant anymore. So, for instance, since we're talking about falsehood, where a little white lie was considered okay or customary if no one got hurt, so to speak.

Now, for us at least, it's no longer okay. Next, Ephesians tells us here in verse 21 that being in Christ and being taught in him exposes us to the truth that is also in Jesus.

[7:59] So then as the body of Christ or the church, that truth is then an essential element of who we are. because Christ was and continues to be full of truth.

As is himself, and he is himself our essential element in whom we live and move and have our being. What is an essential element?

Really, what is that? And what does it have to do with Ephesians? Let me tell you where I get it from. Essential element is a phrase used in film finance.

Maybe other places too, but here's how it works from a film finance perspective. If you and I want to put together a movie, and some of you may know that I'm used to, well, I'm still in the movie business, so this is what I'm saying is credible in terms of essential element.

Now, essential element is a phrase used in the film finance business. Now, if you want to put together a movie, right, you need insurance for the production in case anything goes wrong.

[9:12] Now, there is insurance that for everything from the equipment to the actors because if something unfortunate occurs, and we call it Murphy's Law in film, the insurance is in place to cover any losses.

Now, apart from the regular insurance, there is a special insurance that covers what is designated or identified to be the essential element of that production, and this insurance is called essential element insurance.

So this is a special insurance that typically covers an actor, an actor specifically, who because of his or her presence in the film, this allows the film to be more sellable or bankable in the marketplace in an almost guaranteed sort of way, although nothing is guaranteed, in an almost guaranteed sort of way.

So when the film is completed, because this individual has a strong built-in audience or out there or they are just a movie star, pretty much, this essential element insurance covers them.

Now, if anything happens to this person, then the production will shut down and it will cease to be a production. And it will not matter if anything or anyone else is insured.

[10:28] So let's say you're trying to put together a movie with me, Pastor Nick, and Denzel Washington. Who do you think will be considered the essential element?

You are absolutely, 100% correct, Denzel Washington. So anyone who is considered worthy of being the essential element in a film then is critical to the life of the film from start to finish.

In a similar way, Jesus Christ, who is full of truth, is critical to the life of the church and therefore truth and speaking truth is and should be an essential characteristic extending from Christ our essential element that is practiced in the life of the church.

Why? The first answer is truth is part of Christ's character. He's overflowing with it. And we no longer are alienated from the life of God because our connection with him.

But another reason is that we need to speak truth to one another for the sake of unity. The writer of Ephesians, speaking to the church, tells us that after we put away falsehood, then our next step is to speak the truth to our neighbor.

[11:56] Our neighbor being referenced here are our fellow believers. Well, how do you know? Because we are told that the people who are speaking, we are speaking truth to our members one to another. Members of the same body, the church.

unity of the church is strengthened by truth because on the contrary, as one commentator explains, falsehood, lying, can cause dissension and alienation within the body as one commentator explains.

Now, so, we can see that there is dissension and alienation that causes distrust and fear, pride, lack of grace or genuine grace.

All this because lying works against the spirit of unity. And if there's anywhere in the world that we need to hear the truth about something, then it should be the church.

We owe it to one another to tell the truth. And people should trust what we say as Christians. And putting away falsehood is something that requires practice because we will play how we practice.

[13:13] It has to be our practice to one another. Now, putting away a falsehood and speaking truth is not easy sometimes. I can admit that.

If we're honest. Because speaking or even hearing the truth can at times be inconvenient. Especially when hearing it about ourselves.

This is where you and I most likely have the biggest problems with truth. When it is directed at us personally to correct us. Even if we accept that what is being said is true.

Because although truth is a blessing it can be an inconvenience but in its inconvenience it can be a powerful and life changing blessing.

Try to imagine when you've heard an inconvenient truth from someone you know who loves you or at least cares about your well-being. a loving parent a loving spouse a close friend a sibling someone who loves you or at least likes you.

[14:25] A brother or sister in Christ who is trying to look out for us because we are members one to another. We tend to receive truth much better from those kind of folks in our lives because we know that somehow such culprits of even inconvenient truth spoke it to help us to make us better to keep us moving forward something in a something healthy and in a way that's towards something healthy and away from anything that would be unhealthy and unity is essential to keeping the church healthy.

So putting away falsehood fosters a healthy church that is continually nurtured and cultivated by this truth telling not only operating on one accord in unity but also powerfully operating in our calling and responsibility as a church of the living God who Paul when writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3.15 designates to be a pillar and buttress of truth in the world.

A pillar is a firm upright support for a superstructure a buttress likewise an architectural structure which serves to support or reinforce a wall and in order to be a pillar and buttress of truth we have to be practicing truth with one another and in any aspect of our lives individually so the church can be unified and healthy totally unlike a house of cards that's built upon deception we have another responsibility in the house of God verse 29 warns us keep away from corrupting talk one translator says unwholesome talk another expands on the word and its meaning and calls it worthless talk another goes even more in with the word and writes let no evil talk come out of your mouths this is not just cussing or saying a cuss word it goes much deeper than that the word use word use sorry of corrupting here is interesting because the same idea is used earlier in scripture to describe decaying trees that produce rotten fruit it can also describe withered flowers or rancid fish rancid meaning unpleasant or distasteful it depicts a certain kind of speaking that goes beyond hurting someone's feelings it is speaking that can literally destroy something or in this case destroy someone from the inside out but not only that it can produce rotten fruit in their lives and I don't know anyone who likes loves or enjoys being around rotten fruit except for fruit flies and no one likes to be around fruit fries or rancid fish or anything that's rotten if you ever smelled rancid or rotten fish you get the idea and what is really interesting is that the writer of Ephesians is not referencing the speech of unbelievers he is talking to what my pastor in

Los Angeles would characterize as people who are saved sanctified filled with the Holy Ghost and on their way to heaven anyhow these are Christian folks so we as Christians can be party to the production of rotten fruit in the lives of other people and Ephesians saying to you and I don't do that now I don't know if you know someone whose life has been shipwrecked by the corrupting words of a Christian devout Christians but I do sometimes it can occur or happen in a marriage situation where what's being said can be characterized as emotional abuse it is destroying something in that spouse and unfortunately in the children who would witness it I know people who've been the target of corrupting and unwholesome language by devout believers sincere believers maybe during their childhood from a

Christian parent or both parents or another relative who is also a Christian and often the trauma inflicted from such an experience if they do not seek help and in many cases professional help they can become extremely difficult to be around much like something that is rotting now like rotten fruit there is hope for their healing and restoration at the feet of Jesus there is hope but that could take some time and meanwhile life can become unnecessarily difficult for them and even for people who they may have to interact with and there are also some who because of their experience with corrupting words coming from a believer have chosen not to be involved with the Christian faith nor have anything to do with the church so in a sense unwholesome talk can and will hinder our Christian witness but here in Ephesians we are given an option in the phrase but only meaning that there is never a reason to use corrupting talk there is never a reason to tear down someone even if you and

[20:37] I feel like in a specific situation someone may quote unquote deserve it truth is they never deserve it now if you never felt this way about a situation of someone well all I can say is keep on living because you will but the Bible is telling us we should not choose this path of speaking even if provoked because that moment of irritation is never worth the long term consequences or rotten fruit that will come from damaging people with our words it's never worth that instead we ought to speak with the goal of building others up and even doing that requires wisdom because verse 29 goes on to say that whatever we say that is good ought to fit the occasion in which we say it in other words if we are given the opportunity to build someone up that we ought to have made sure that we took the time to fully assess what the need is or what is lacking that needs to be built up and often times making this assessment of need is most effective when we have taken the time to build relationships with people and in this case with other members of the body of Christ this is one of the reasons why discipleship of small groups is so important in a local church family it makes the church smaller and more personal

Christianity is not a faith that's meant to live be lived in isolation there is no such thing as a lone wolf Christian daily encouragement is needed community is essential we all need to be built up and identified by one another because it is a fight of faith that we are involved in and we need one another for this fight but the Bible says it's a good fight now often times building up that area where there is lack in someone's life that can become that one moment that could change the trajectory of that life just like corrupting speech can lead to the rottenness or rotten fruit edifying speech can lead to an individual lead an individual toward gloriously fulfilling their

God given purpose and being fruitful in the body of Christ and in the world finally we do this we do all this wholesome speaking so that grace can be given to those who hear the grace that he is given yes is a charitable act sorry and in this generous act called grace the recipient of wholesome words coming from us is enabled by and through our words to grow spiritually and in maturity it's interesting because one commentator describes the church presented in Ephesians is a growing dynamic organism the church is still a growing dynamic organism it hasn't changed in order for this growth to occur the first has to continue to be unity that contributes to the equilibrium or the health of the body and out of this unity and the truth telling that has cultivated it wholesome speech to one another should follow and be practiced and if we know that unwholesome words lead to rotten fruit or things that decay then words that are carefully expressed through discernment of an individual's need to build someone up should lead to that person's growth and therefore contribute to his growing this growing dynamic organism called the body of

Christ or the church so this grace that is passed along through speech is helping men and women to grow spiritually to mature to see themselves how God sees them but how does God see us verse Peter 2 tells us when he declares you are a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people of his own possession that you us the church may proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light in closing I declared it as Christians as a church we are citizens of an unshakable kingdom we are not a house of cards vulnerable to destruction because of falsehood and evil speaking the church is built on the firm foundation of Jesus

Christ we are required to be truth tellers to one another to be men and women whose words do not act as a decaying force but as an edifying platform of edification this has to be our practice by the power of the Holy Spirit so that by the time the world which is itself a house of cards is encountering us whether individually or as a community bearing the banner of Jesus Christ representing that unified healthy and dynamic organism called the church what they meaning the world are coming face to face with is a people who are operating or playing successfully in the field of truth and edifying speech because we have been practicing this way all along to the glory of God and when that happens lives will be changed and we will march forward as the unshakable pillar of pillar and buttress of truth that we are called to be in this world amen have done in this minute process and ask to find the team and who and even in this time have opened ray

[27 : 48] Russel and hear until Mueller Wenn worthy from other videos of for closing worship.