

Text: Ephesians 4:29

Call to Worship: Psalm 145

Scripture Reading:

Theme: You must cleanse your communication.

Introduction:

“Mrs. O’Leary claimed to be asleep on the night of Sunday, October 8, [1871,] when flames first sparked in the barn next to the family cottage on DeKoven Street. The blaze traveled in northeast, tearing through shanties and sheds and leaping across Taylor Street, the heat so fierce that fireman Charles Anderson could hold his hose to the flames only when shielded by a door. His hat curdled on his head... By early morning on Tuesday, October 10, when rain extinguished the last meekly glowing ember, the city was ravaged: \$200 million [over \$4.5 billion in today’s dollars] worth of property destroyed, 300 lives lost and 100,000 people—one third of the city’s population—left homeless.”¹ See James 3:5–6.

Your words, even unintentionally, can cause great damage like a raging fire. You must be building others up instead of tearing them down. You must cleanse your communication.

I. The Mandate for Cleansing Our Communication

A. Stop the Corruption

“The adjective is used elsewhere in the New Testament in the literal sense of ‘decayed’ trees which produce ‘rotten’ fruit (Matt. 7:17–18), and in relation to ‘rotten’ fish (~~Matt. 12:33–34~~) [Matt. 13:48].”²

I’ve think there are at least three excuses people give for using corrupt words come out of their mouths.

1. The Excuse of Humor

Ephesians 5:4; Proverbs 26:18–19

2. The Excuse of Honesty

Ephesians 4:26; Proverbs 10:19; James 1:19–20; Colossians 3:8

3. The Excuse of Helplessness

James 3:2; 1:26

B. Start the Construction

1. Godly Development

2. Good Discernment

Proverbs 15:1

3. Grace Distribution

Colossians 4:6; Proverbs 16:24

¹Abbott, Karen, “What (or Who) Caused the Great Chicago Fire?: The true story behind the myth of Mrs. O’Leary and her cow.” October 4, 2012; <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-or-who-caused-the-great-chicago-fire-61481977/> accessed March 14, 2020

² Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 344.

II. The Motive for Cleansing Our Communication

A. **Becoming Like Christ**

Colossians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Romans 8:29; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 Peter 2:21–23; Matthew 5:39

B. **Building Up Christians**

Ephesians 4:11–16, 29; 1 Corinthians 14:26; 2 Corinthians 13:10; Romans 14:19

III. The Method for Cleansing Our Communication

A. **Commences with a Clean Heart**

Matthew 12:34; Psalm 19:14

B. **Continues with Clean Mind**

Ephesians 4:22–24; Romans 12:1–2

C. **Confirmed with Clean Words**

Cleansed communication is not the starting point. You don't just wake up one day with encouraging, edifying conversations.

Matthew 15:11; Psalm 141:3; Proverbs 17:27–28

Conclusion:

“The English words ‘The pen is mightier than the sword’ were first written by novelist and playwright Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1839, in his historical play Cardinal Richelieu.”³

Your words have great power for good or for evil. You must cleanse your communication.

³Gee, Alison, “Who first said ‘The pen is mightier than the sword?’” BBC News, January 9, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30729480>, accessed March 14, 2020