

“THE ART OF #@\$%!@#”
by Rom A. Pegram (7/26/20)

Good morning to all ... and welcome back to our current worship series “The Power of Words.” And they certainly do have power, don’t they? There’s the power to tear down ... or the power to build up. Which do we choose?

I want to forewarn you that parts of today’s message will be rated PG-13—just so you know. But, it shouldn’t be too bad—nothing you can’t explain to the kids when you get home... □ So, let’s look, for just a moment, at 2 different scenarios in your life:

- Scenario One: You’re hanging pictures in your home. You’re putting the picture up there, you’ve got the nail in place, and you draw back the hammer to hit the nail and drive it into the wall. But instead of hitting the nail on the head, your hammer falls squarely on your thumb. And BAM! What do you say under your breath? (Don’t say it outloud...)
- Scenario Two: You’re down in Milwaukee, about to cross a very busy street, the crosswalk is clearly in your favor—all clear, but you walk across the street and some car doesn’t see you. They turn in front of you; you’re just standing there. They slam on the brakes and yell out, “You number one!” And then they yell and tell you to “Go find yourself!” What do you say in response to that?

From time to time, we’ve all been in those situations, haven’t we? We want to say a few choice words. We want to practice ‘the art of cursing’... And an interesting thing is, they’re generally not premeditated. They just seem to come out under pressure...

I want to begin today with a key verse for this series: Proverbs 18:21a: “The tongue has the power of life and death.” So far, in this series, we’ve focused on the first part of this verse—the power of life, to encourage or build up. Today, we’re going to look at the flip side of this verse—the tongue has the power of ... death, the power of decay, or the power of destruction. And all of you know this is true. If you haven’t been the recipient of such words, you know someone who has. **The bottom line? We can use our words to bless others ... or we can use your words to curse others.**

So, let me ask you: *Where do curse words come from anyway?* (I know, some of you are thinking Grandpa, but it’s bigger than that.) You go home and Google curse words to your heart’s content or watch George Carlin’s routine on curse words on YouTube. But, today, I’m going to give you the big picture history of curse words. Are you ready? How did curse words come to be curse words?

What we need to understand is this: *We need to understand the curse behind curse words.* Does that make sense? You see, curse words are curse words because the implication is that someone is going to be cursed. I could give you the Hebrew and Greek words for curse and that history, but I’m going to spare you today and just refer you to ... Genesis 3. This is the Garden of Eden. There is Adam and Eve and who? Satan, right ... in the form of a serpent/snake. Satan was tempting Adam and Eve, being unfaithful to God, and leading God’s highest creation off track ... so GOD CURSED HIM! This was the very first curse I know of. And this is extremely important for the course of this message; you have to understand that it was God who originally put a curse on everything that was sinful, so all sin is cursed. Anyone who chose to

follow Satan was cursed. Or, to say it in a more contemporary way, '*anyone who chooses to willfully sin is cursed.*' Adam and Eve in Genesis 3; Cain in Genesis 4, etc.

Now, follow me with this: In I Kings 8 (all in your notes), we learn that curses are completely under God's control. In other words, no person (i.e. witches, etc.) can put a curse on you. God is the only one who is in control of curses; so, all curses that come from humans are irrelevant—you know, that guy who cut you off in traffic ... *irrelevant!* And in I Samuel 14, we see that a curse cannot be placed on an *innocent* person; curses are linked to unfaithfulness—the source of all curses. Then, faithfulness to God (Deuteronomy 33) removes the curse...

It's kind of like a rain cloud. Anyone under a curse, like Satan and his minions, Adam and Eve, and all of us fallen people throughout the ages, we're all walking under this cloud. We're there because we are prone to unfaithfulness in our lives...

But, as we learn in Deuteronomy 33, faithfulness to God removes the curse—gets us out from under the cloud... The curse of SIN is the worst kind of curse. And the cure for the curse of SIN is the cross of Jesus. (I'll talk more about that as I close today.) Now, with all this as a foundation, let me ask you this: ***How do you turn cursing into blessing?*** That's what we're after today, and I want to give you four steps to that end—*4 biblical steps to turn cursing into blessing.* Are you ready?

BE AWARE OF THE TRUTH ABOUT CURSING. Folks, if we're going to turn cursing into blessing, we have to know what a curse word is...

A few weeks ago, I said *the best thing to do—for followers of Christ—is to remove all curse words from our vocabulary.* That'd be the best for all. And, I will admit, my first life was not that of a pastor. Was I a Christian? Yes. But a very flawed one ('still am). I worked with truckers, on freight docks and in freight offices, and the language wasn't always what you'd bring home to Mom, if you know what I mean. But removing them from your vocabulary is probably the best goal for all of us, as followers of Christ—upping our integrity just a bit there...

Here's another truth about cursing you need to know: *Curse words are human attempts to play God!* This is what curse words are. It's our attempt to do something that only God can do. I Kings 8 says cursing is something that's under God's (and only God's) complete control!

So, folks, what are we doing? Here's the truth—from God's word: What we are trying to do when we curse (or damn) others is we're trying to say 'Look, I'm God!' Does anything about that sound right to you? Listen to what the Apostle James says (3:8-10):

...but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹

Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. ¹⁰ And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right!

So, are you feeling uncomfortable right now? Good... Let me give this to you straight: Here's...

- What you should curse: By this, I mean the things that are already under God's curse and you should avoid them at all cost, etc. Injustice. Prejudice. Abuse. Oppression. Blasphemy. Gossip (ouch!). False teaching (and false teachers). These are all things under God's curse already...
- What you should *not* curse: The first is in Exodus 20—the Ten Commandments; *never curse God*. Never use God's name in vain (Jesus = God). And a second thing you should never curse is God's creation, which means *people*.

So, how do you work to turn cursing into blessing? Know the truth about cursing; only God can do that ... and we're not God! Secondly...

LEARN TO THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK. I think most of the time when we get into trouble in life, it's because in the heat of the moment we speak out without even thinking about the implications of our words. We speak when our emotions are high instead of taking a 'time out' to cool down and think about/consider what words would be best...

This reminds me of a story about a little fly who was buzzing around town one day—really hungry and looking for a good meal. Then he spotted what, for flies, was like a gourmet meal—a fresh pile of dog poop. So the fly flies down and starts eating the dog poop. He's thinking to himself: "Man, that's yummy!" Then after he'd finished, he wants to fly away, but as he tries to fly away he realizes he's eaten way too much and he's too heavy for his wings to lift him off the ground. What a dilemma...

So the fly decides he needs to crawl up on something that is high up and he could just jump off, spread his wings, and then he'd be able to fly. So the little fly looks around and sees a broom leaning up against the wall of a building. He climbs the broom, all the way up to the top of the handle. He's perched on the top of that broom handle, then he jumps off, flaps his wings, but alas he's still too heavy. SPLAT ... right on the sidewalk!

The moral of the story? **Don't fly off the handle when you know you're full of crap!** ... Folks, God's word has much better advice: Proverbs 15:23 (TEV) says, "What a joy it is to find just the right word for the right occasion!" And Psalm 19:14 should be our prayer always, especially in the heat of a conversation: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." What a great prayer for all of us! How do we turn cursing into blessing? Learn to think before we speak ... and always turn to God! Two things to remember: Never respond immediately to emotional situations (*pause*) & always ask yourself, "Would Jesus be pleased with the words I'm about to use" (*consider*)? Next:

ENCOURAGE OTHERS WITH YOUR WORDS. We all have a choice of how we're going to use our words, don't we? We can either use them as tools to build people up ... or weapons to tear people down, so the question is this: Are the words I use weapons or tools?

1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, “So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.” This is what the early Church was about; Paul is simply encouraging them to continue in this. Build one another up! Encourage one another! The word ‘encourage’ means to fill someone’s life with courage—to instill courage into their life by speaking words that motivate, compliment, or express love...

If ‘encourage’ means to fill someone’s life with courage, then ‘discourage’ means to remove courage from their life—to deflate someone. These words are destructive in their purpose ... we want to avoid that behavior like the plague! It’s not of Christ...

So, let me ask you: Would you say most of your words fill people with courage ... or discourage them? If you’re not sure, let me also mention this: GOSSIP is one of the worst sins of believers. GOSSIP is one of those things that discourages others—tears them down, intentionally. And Proverbs 18:8 (NKJV) reminds us: “The words of a gossip are self-inflicted wounds and they have gone to the inner part of the heart.” How do you turn cursing into blessing? Use your words for encouragement. Let the gossip go. Let the rumors slide. Use your words as tools to build others up. That will be a blessing for sure, and finally:

SURRENDER MY LIFE TO JESUS CHRIST. This, folks, is the ultimate way to turn cursing into blessing!

You should know that when you look at all the Bible says about curse words, only about 25% of it has to do with what we’ve been talking about today. Instead, about 75% of what the Bible says regarding ‘the curse’ ... relates to ‘the curse of sin.’ So, if we didn’t deal with ‘the curse of sin,’ we wouldn’t really be dealing with what scripture talks about completely today. So, let’s talk briefly...

‘Remember Genesis 3? Satan rebelled ... and God put a curse on him—really anyone who followed Satan in unfaithfulness to God. Adam and Eve were two of these—under the cloud. So, *here’s the really bad news...* *We’re all under that cloud!* You are cursed. I am cursed, because I’ve sinned. We’re born into it; so we are under God’s curse. And there is nothing we can do, humanly speaking, to get out from under it! You can’t earn your way out. You can’t talk your way out. You can’t try to do enough good things in your life to work your way out. So, how do we get out from under this curse?

This is where the GOOD NEWS comes in. You can’t. But God can. God had to intervene. God said to us (through his word), “I love you too much to leave you under the curse of sin. So, I’m going to do the most radical thing possible. I’m going to send a part of me—my very own Son, to die on a cross for you, and be raised from the dead, so that you will believe ... and be saved from utter destruction (the curse).” Instead, because of Jesus, you can leave the curse behind ... and begin to experience the blessing of God...

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Church at Galatia (3:10-13) explains it this way: “...those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the

commands that are written in God's Book of the Law.' ¹¹ So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, 'It is through faith that a righteous person has life.' ¹² This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, 'It is through obeying the law that a person has life.' ¹³ But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing..."

Surrendering our life to Christ is the ultimate way to turn cursing into blessing. And, folks, I don't care if you've been part of a local church your entire life; if you haven't experienced the surrendering of your life to Christ, allowing him to be Lord of your life, you haven't yet experienced God's blessing. You're still under the curse. So, don't leave here today without making a decision. It's up to you, but don't throw away God's very best for you! ... All you need to remember is this: A-B-C...

- A = Admit you've sinned; admit you've acted in an unfaithful way toward God, recognizing you are under 'the curse of sin.' (In other words, you're human!)
- B = Believe ... that God intervened where you couldn't. He sent Jesus to die on a cross for you—*his blood instead of yours*; then Jesus was raised from the dead, resurrected—that eternal life could be ours and we could know the same...
- C = Commit ... your life to following Jesus from this point on. You take those steps, and God—supernaturally, through the power of the resurrection of Jesus—removes the curse from you ... and puts you in a place where you can be blessed...

Whatever you do, don't walk away today still under 'the curse of sin.' We don't have to settle for that! Walk away today knowing that you walk away blessed by God! The choice is up to you...