

Whosoever Will 10-18-26

Well, good morning. We're going to be looking at James chapter three today, the chapter everybody has been waiting for. We're going to get to the tongue today, that one thing that we seem to have so much difficulty getting control over. James has already talked to us about our attitude, attitude towards suffering. He's talked to us about our obedience to God's word, but now he's going to tackle the subject of our speech. This lesson is entitled. The power of words, and I think we sometimes forget how very powerful our words can be. We see and we hear so many words every day that we sometimes lose the wonder of them, the power that they have, the power that they have to touch, to heal, to help. When God gave man the ability to speak, He gave us a tool that we could use to build up, or of course, it can be used as a weapon to destroy.

Tongue itself is a very favorite word in the Bible. It appears about 129 times in the King James version, and most of those 129 times are actually in the book of Proverbs. The Jews called it their book of wisdom, and the Jews put very great value on wisdom. That's why they revered Solomon so much, was because of the wisdom that God granted him, and it was just that it was godly wisdom. It was Usable wisdom. It was practical wisdom, and then he put it down into a book. Many people consider James to be a book of wisdom. When you look at the New Testament, that the Old Testament had the book of Proverbs, the New Testament has the book of James as our contemporary book of wisdom. Real faith and a reckless tongue are incompatible. We've talked for a couple of weeks about how incompatible.

Faith with a lack of works is incompatible, and the same is true about the tongue. That in real faith you will have the ability to control your tongue, your reckless tongue. We talked earlier about having two ears and one tongue, but when you think about it, we also have two hands, we have two feet, we have two eyes, and we have two ears, but we have only one tongue. So perhaps. The tongue is intended to be used to help our fellow man. We can, with our feet, go where we need to go. With our eyes, we can observe what's going on around us. We can identify needs. With our ears, we can listen to what is being said to us. And maybe we need to do these things twice as much as we speak. Maybe we should go. We should help. We should observe more than we speak.

In chapter one, James has already briefly touched on this. He touched on the idea of being swift to hear, but slow to speak; to measure your words; to think carefully before you use them. He begins in verse one of chapter three and says, "Do not become teachers in large numbers, my brothers, since you know that we who are teachers will incur a stricter judgment."

Apparently there were rivalries going on in this church. We're going to talk a little bit about it when we get to chapter four. There were people that wanted to be in charge. There were people that wanted to teach that possibly were not qualified to teach. They just were not ready. They were not prepared. But they saw the reverence that the people gave to the teachers, the authority that they had when they spoke the word of God, and they wanted that without. The ability to do it. Not too long ago on Sunday morning, Trey warned us about people who come to you having received a fresh word from God. That there is no such thing as that. That God simply does not work in that way in this day. James reminds us that there are higher standards for teachers. You aren't just asking for a position when you ask to teach.

But you're asking also for closer scrutiny from God. You're asking for a more severe judgment from God. What based on what He says here in verse one, Hebrews 13 reminds us of a similar thing: that to whom much is given, much is required. If you want the responsibility of being a spokesperson for God, then you need to take the responsibility that goes along with it. There is a world of difference. Between saying something and having something to say, many people would like to have a platform and a microphone, but lack the desire to teach God's word, to teach it faithfully, to teach it truthfully.

There are those who want to teach it so they can give you their interpretation of the Bible, so they can tell you what they think the Bible should say. So all of these are things that would be disqualifying for a teacher.

A true teacher probably ought to follow the example of John the Baptist. If you remember when he came, many people were asking him the question, "Are you the Messiah? Are you the one that we have been looking for?" And very humbly, John's response always was, "No, I have come to point the way to the Messiah, to point the way to the Savior, not to myself. I am not worthy, but in Him, I am pointing the way to salvation." And sometimes our lives are like teachers; they tend to be more about us than they tend to be about God. Verse two: James goes on and says, "For we all stumble in many ways. That's something any of us would acknowledge. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man and able to rein in the whole body as well." So James goes back to one of his favorite themes here, and that's the mature Christian. He's.

Talked two or three times about maturity. He's talked about perfection, not sinless perfection, but the perfection of continuously growing as a Christian. As Christians, we never are too old to grow. We're never too old to learn as we go along. And he says here that one of the most valuable tools that we can have as we grow, as we mature, is to be able to control the tongue. Because if we can control the tongue, then there are so many other areas of our lives that we can control also. He's kind of already brought this up in chapter one, verse twenty-six. He says, "Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless." And we talked within the last couple of weeks about just exactly what is religion, and for most people, religion boils down to basically idolatry. It is worshiping something other than the true and living God.

And there must have been some very interesting meetings going on in this church that James initially wrote this letter to. In James 4:1, he says, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" There were people that wanted to teach that were not qualified. There were people that were arguing with those who were teaching, those who were presenting, wanting their view. Published and not the others. So apparently they had some quarrels, some fights, and they were happening very publicly within the worship services. And James says this is just abhorrent to God. Verse three, he says, "Now if we put bits into a horse's mouth so that they will obey us, and we direct the whole body as well, he said, 'Look at ships, though they are so large, they are and are driven by strong winds, they are nevertheless directed.'"

By a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot determines. He starts off with now if he's basically saying, well, isn't it logical, or doesn't it make sense to you that if we could control a horse or a great ship with a very small thing, then why can't we control the tongue and make our lives better? He says the power of the tongue is disproportionate. To its size, it's one of the smallest members of the body, but yet one of the most damaging. Sometimes, he uses horses and ships here. He says a 1,500-pound horse can be controlled by a bit that only weighs about two pounds. A cruise ship, the rudder is less than one percent of the ship's total weight, and yet without it, the ship cannot operate. So, like a bit, like a rudder.

The words that we choose, the words that we use, can determine the direction in which our lives go. A wild, untamed horse can cause a lot of damage. A ship without a rudder can cause a shipwreck, and so the same is with our tongues. They can cause great damage, and it's not just the damage physically, but also spiritually, of hurting someone, of causing them to stumble as a Christian because of something you have said. Causing them not to grow as they should because of things that they hear and possibly interpret incorrectly based on your tone of voice or your attitude towards them. And it's not just towards individuals, as James is indicating here about this church to whom he is writing. It could infect the entire church that there are those that are speaking out of turn and it's causing damage so much so that James has heard about it. No telling how many miles away from where.

This church was. First part of verse five says, "So also the tongue, is a small part of the body." There was a popular saying in World War II. Everybody's probably heard it: "Loose lips sink ships. Be careful what you say." The tongue may be the smallest of the body parts, but it is also one of the most powerful. Never underestimate the words that you use. There are words that you speak, but then there are words that are unspoken. They are your tone of voice. They are the intent. Sometimes even the volume of your voice can affect how people interpret the words that you are speaking. James is warning here about idle words, unplanned words, words that just come bursting forth when you are squeezed or when you are backed into a corner, when you are angry or when you are frustrated.

That these idle words just spill out before you can stop them, and what great damage, what great harm, they can do. The latter part of verse five goes on and says, "Yet it, the tongue, boasts of great things. See how great a forest fire is set aflame by such a small fire. And the tongue is a fire, the very word of iniquity. The tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body." And sets on fire the course of our life. It is set on fire by hell. Fire, kind of like the tongue or the word, is again a very interesting word. It's used a lot of times as a metaphor in the Bible for something else. One of the first times we encounter fire in the Bible is Moses and the burning bush, when God spoke to him from the bush that burned but was not consumed. A little bit later, the children of Israel had a pillar of fire.

That guided them through the wilderness. Abraham was willing to offer Isaac on a fire of wood on top of Mount Moriah. Recently, in Matthew, we studied Peter's denial of Jesus, and it happened three times in one evening, and each time it happened around a fire. But then, for Peter's good luck, Jesus restored him a little bit later. Again, it was done around a fire. So, fire is always an important thing in the Bible. Words can start a mighty fire. They can inflame a situation. It can get out of hand before you realize it. Things heat up. Hot words come out. That's actually where the word "hot-headed" came from. It's talking about people who just fly off the handle and come out with hot words, words that they regret later.

Your tongue can be set on fire, and it can be set on fire by heaven, or it can be set on fire by hell. It just depends on the choices that you make. Set on fire by heaven. You remember on the day of Pentecost, what did God use to signify the coming of the Holy Spirit? He used tongues of fire, something very visible, something that people recognized, something that people understood was very important was happening there. But it can also be set on fire by hell, by the devil. The word he uses here is Gehenna. It was a place where pagan kings sacrificed their children by fire. It was the name of the trash dump outside of Jerusalem, most likely. On the day of the crucifixion, the bodies of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus probably ended up on the burn pile in Gehenna. The.

Bible says the fire never went out there. It was a metaphor for the lake of fire that's going to burn for all eternity, where Satan and his followers will spend all of eternity. And we we read about forest fires here, particularly in the Western United States, and how often they're started by a discarded cigarette or by a tiny little electrical spark, something you would consider to be absolutely insignificant, and yet thousands of homes can be destroyed, hundreds and hundreds of lives can be ruined. By something so tiny and so insignificant, and Jesus of all people understood the power of hurtful words. Because remember all of the hurtful things that his enemies said about him. They said that he was demon possessed. They said he was out of his mind. Some called him a drunkard and a glutton. One person mentioned that he was a wine bibber.

That he was the friend of tax collectors, that he sat down and he ate with sinners and with despicable people. And just recently, right at the end of the Gospel of John, we studied all the hateful words that were hurled on him at the cross. You know, if you're the son of God, save yourself. Come down from the cross. Do another miracle. If you are who you say you are. The bad part about words is, of course, they cannot be taken back. They cannot be unsaid. And even more, unfortunately, in this

electronic age that we live in, they're never going to go away. Time will not erase them. You can watch the news any one day of the week, and when somebody has said they will never, ever, ever do something, immediately the very video of them saying that very thing that they said they would never do pops up, and it can be a video from 20 years ago. It has not gone away. They may have long forgotten what they said.

But the electronic age will never forget. So often, like a fire, too, not only do they ignite the situation, but they can cause it to spread. It goes on and on and on. It does not stop just at the point of origin. In 1925, Adolf Hitler penned the book *Mein Kampf*. By the end of 1925, 12 million copies had already been sold. It has been estimated that during World War II, 125 people died for every word that was written in that book—a astronomical number. You cannot imagine that 125 people for each of the words that Hitler penned, and they were words of hate. They were words that were indeed penned from the fires of hell. Verse seven: For every species of beast and birds, of reptiles and of creatures of the sea.

Is tamed and has been tamed by the human race—a paradox, if you will, to think about it. That of all of God's creation, every animal, to some degree, has been trained. Whether it's a bird, a sea creature, a land creature, whatever it is, they have all been tamed. But unfortunately, we cannot tame the human tongue. It can be tamed, but it's a difficult process. We cannot do it on our own. It is a feat that only God can accomplish in and through us. Many years ago, we had a friend in church, and she did love a good juicy story about somebody else. And she would often say, "You know, I I know I shouldn't do this. I I know it's bad." She says, "I I need to go and lay my tongue on the altar." And then she would think a minute and say, "Well, can't do it. I don't think the altar is long enough." So.

It is something that only God can perform for us, is to take that tongue and tame it. Verse eight. But no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. He says the tongue can actually be like poison; it can be lethal. God wants us to have tongues that heal, not hurt; tongues that build up and not tear down. In James one eight, we were reminded about that double-minded man, and James is kind of going back to that same theme here. It's the idea of.

Talking out of both sides of your man, your mouth. He uses the word here that means *duplicatus* or two-faced. Saying fake evil words with a smiling face is what he's basically describing here. You're acting friendly, but you're speaking hurtfully. He says those who bless God and yet curse their fellow man, who is made in God's image, is just something that is. He could not reconcile that in his mind. There's an old story that goes around about the little boy who was cussing, and one of his little friends said to him, "You kiss your mama with that same mouth." And that's the idea here—that good and bad seem to be coming out of the same mouth. Verse 11, he goes on with his examples and says, "Does a fountain send out the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives or a vine?"

Produce figs, nor salt water produce fresh. A lot of comparisons here, and again, he always likes agriculture. It's a thing that everybody understood. He talks about fountains of water. He talks about figs here. Water, such a great example. It should be life-giving, but an uncontrolled tongue is like salt water. It is useless. It can even be harmful to humans. He says only figs grow. On victories, God ordained that at creation, that each thing He created was after its own kind, and so it is with mankind. The tongue will manifest what is within the heart. We've quoted Dr. Jerry Vines many times in here, and he used to have a quote talking about these verses in James that says that when you shake a glass of water, what comes out? Obviously, water comes out.

When you shake something, whatever is on the inside is what's going to spill out of it. So, the what comes out of the mouth is a good indication of what is in the heart. Is what James is saying here in

Proverbs eighteen twenty one. Solomon said, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue. It can be helpful. It can be hurtful. And those who love it will eat its fruit. When you want to say something hurtful," It comes out so easily. It's so much harder to restrain your tongue than it is to turn it loose. He uses the expression here: "eats its fruit." You are going to have to give an account for your words, is what he's saying here. That one day we will have to stand before God, and every hurtful word will be accounted for. Every evil thing that we said will be accounted for. We will eat the fruits of what we have done with the tongue.

But we've spent most of our time talking about how bad words can be, the harm that words can cause. But there are twelve words here that are words to live by. These are good words. These are words that can help. These are words that can build up. You can never go wrong when you use some of these twelve words. The first are please and thank you. Treat people. Like they have value. God created each person uniquely. Each person is different. Show appreciation. Show gratitude when someone does something for you. Be kind. Be thankful for it. When you see somebody doing a good deed, comment on it. Tell them, "I know what you did, and that was so kind of you to do that. It was something possibly you could not have done, or you would not have noticed, but they did."

Next, we have "I'm sorry." That one can really break down walls. It can build bridges. But we said earlier that a lot of times the tone of voice has so much to do with how people interpret what you say. The intent. You may say one thing, but your tone makes it sound like you meant to say something else. When you apologize, be sincere. Act like you mean it. Don't treat it flippantly. How many words have you ever said that you wish you could take back? Words simply cannot be unsaid. And then there comes, what about "I love you"? Not romantic love. That word is eros. The word here is philo. It's brotherly love. Say it not only to your Christian brothers and sisters. That's easy to do. Say it to your enemy.

Say it to those who do not look like us, smell like us, act like us. It is not just for our Christian brothers and sisters. The Bible says in Romans, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head. Romans twelve twenty. We talked about this when we studied in the book of Romans that to do kind deed for your enemy is like heaping burning coals on their head. In the day in which Paul was writing, people sometimes would show true repentance by wearing a pan of burning coals on their head to show that they were repentant for what they had done. So to do a kindness for an enemy is like heaping burning coals on their head. Instead of seeking revenge, show love. Show.

Love such that your enemy may feel remorse or shame, maybe even have a change of heart. Maybe that enemy might become a friend one day. Another really good one that we use a lot. Sometimes I think we use it flippantly, but we need to be more careful about that. What about "I am praying for you"? When you say that to someone, stop that very moment and do it. Pray for them right. Then Satan is the thief of our time. The moment that person walks away, Satan will steal that thought from your heart, and it will not cross your mind again, possibly ever. So when you tell somebody you're going to pray for them, do it, do it right then. Don't let Satan steal it away from you. You also have to be very careful when you tell people that you will be praying for them.

Don't make it sound like you think you are a superior Christian. Don't make it sound like your prayers are effective, and theirs are not. It's like saying, "I'm going to pray for you because my prayers are so much better than yours. I have God's ear, and you may not." So, be sincere when you say you're going to pray, but be also make it sound sincere that you're not talking down to them. You're not implying that. Their prayers are not being answered because they are ineffective prayer witnesses. The tongue we have already talked about being controlled by God by a greater power than we are. It is impossible for us in our own strength to control our tongue. When the Wright brothers made their first flight at Kitty Hawk, they did not eliminate gravity.

They overcame gravity. They used a greater power to overcome gravity, and that's the way it is with our tongue. Our greater power is the Holy Spirit. He is our conscience. When we transgress, He makes sure that we know about it. He makes sure that God touches our hearts and makes us realize we have done wrong. We need to make amends. We need to correct some words that we have said, whatever it might be. That as the Wright brothers controlled gravity with a greater power, we can control our tongue with God's greater power. Probably everybody knows who Truett Cathy is. He was the founder of Chick Fil A, and many people knew Mr. Cathy as a very great encourager to build people up. Someone once asked him how he knew when somebody needed encouraging. How did he?

Single out that person to encourage, or to build up, or to say a kind word to, to say an encouraging word. His reply was, "If they're breathing, they need encouraging." He lifted others up. In his biography, he wrote that lifting others up doesn't cost you anything, and he made it just basically the core of his daily life. The way he lived, the way he led, the way he operated his company was always the idea of being an encourager of building other people up. So we need to learn to control our tongues, and we need to understand that only God can do that. It is not something that we have the ability within ourselves to do. That we can build people up or we can tear them down simply by the words we use. And unfortunately, the choice is up to us. Of which one are we going to do?

We've got our America 250 this week. We've been doing people named James, but of course this is Columbus Day week, so we're going to talk about Christopher Columbus. We don't often think about Christopher Columbus. We don't think about him in terms of Christianity sometimes, but you may not know the entire story of his life. His name was Christopher Columbus, and he did indeed sail the ocean blue in 1492. He came to the Americas quite by accident. He was sailing from Spain. He was looking for direct water access to Asia, thinking that he could get straight from Spain to Asia, not realizing that the Americas were an obstacle in his way. He was after the East Indies and China for their access to a very lucrative gold industry and also a very lucrative spice market. He himself viewed himself as a divine agent.

Chosen by God to spread Christianity wherever he went to all of these pagan places across the sea, he was to spread Christianity. He had a goal in mind of these riches that he was going to find when he finally got to the East Indies and to China, that he would become a very wealthy person, and he was going to use his wealth to fund a military campaign, and he was going to retake Jerusalem. At the time, in the late 1400s, Jerusalem was under Muslim control, and so Columbus was going to take his new wealth, form an army, and he was going to go and, for God and country, take Jerusalem back from the Muslims. As he sailed, he brought Spanish missionaries with him, and wherever he landed, he claimed that land for his monarchs, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand.

He initiated basically forced conversions, and he colonized many parts of the Americas. And in so doing, he actually firmly established Christianity in the Western Hemisphere. So much so that in 1892, the Supreme Court was considering a case barring clergymen from other countries to coming to America. That they were bring false religion, that they were bring bad things with them, and so if you simply banned them from entering America, you would keep false religion and other things away. But the Chief Justice Josiah Brewer wrote an opinion that said there was nothing wrong with that; that actually it had been being done since before the Americas were founded, and he quoted from Christopher Columbus's charter that he had.

When he came to America, that basically he brought Christianity here, and there was nothing wrong with that. He was that foreign agent that they were trying to keep out. So if it was good enough for Columbus, it should be good enough for us that we should welcome clergy from other countries, and that's exactly what we have done for many centuries. In Second Chronicles, the writer wrote this for in 147: If my people, who are called by my name, Will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways. Then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin, and I will

heal their land. One of the greatest promises in God's word, a reminder to us daily to pray for our country, for our leadership, for all of those who are in charge. That we will humble ourselves, we will call upon the name of God, and He can heal our land because it definitely is in need of healing.

Let's pray, Father. Thank you for your word. Thank you for it reminds us of so many things, Lord. The things that we do that are right, but so many times it reminds us of the things that we do that are wrong, Lord. And give us the wisdom to know the difference between the two of them. That as we go this week, the things that we do, the things that we say, the places we go, would be honoring and glorifying to you. It's in your name that we pray. Amen.

James chapter three

Verses 1 – 12

The power of words

Real faith and a reckless tongue are incompatible

The mouth and the heart are inseparable

Gossip is like stirring a pot

It brings up what is on the very bottom

Warren Wiersbe says:

Gossip is something you tell to only one person - at a time !

The Bible tells us :

For the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart. (Mt 12:34b)

It is not what enters the mouth that defiles the person, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles the person. (Mt 15:11)

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,

But the mouth of the wicked conceals violence (Pv 10:11)

The heart of the wise instructs his mouth

And adds persuasiveness to his lip (Pv 16:23)

His name was Christopher Columbus and he sailed the ocean blue in 1492. He came to the Americas by accident from Spain trying to find a direct water route west across the Atlantic Ocean to Asia (the East Indies and China) to access the lucrative spice and gold trade. He viewed himself as a divine agent chosen by God to spread Christianity across the ocean, and he intended to use the riches he found to fund a new military crusade to retake Jerusalem from Muslim control. He brought Spanish missionaries with, claiming the new found lands for His monarchs (Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand). He initiated forced conversions and colonization that permanently established Christianity in the Western Hemisphere. In 1892 Supreme Court Justice David Josiah Brewer wrote an opinion that allowed clergy from foreign countries to enter America. He cited the Commission of Christopher Columbus as one of his

evidences that America was a Christian nation and as such should welcome clergy from other countries.

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

II

Chronicles 14:7

Guarding the Lips

Psalm 141:3

Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.

Psalm 34:13

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.

1 Peter 3:10

Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

Proverbs 17:27-28

The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered. Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues.

Taming the Tongue

James 1:26

Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

Proverbs 21:23

Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.

Proverbs 13:3

Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin.

Proverbs 6:2

You have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your mouth.