

Taming the Powerful Tongue

Spiritual Maturity

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James chapter 3 is the scripture reading this evening. Last week, we looked at James 3 verses 1 through 5, and this evening we continue, and the text is verses 3 through 12. We overlap a few verses. The text is verses 3 through 12. We will not be rereading that passage because of the length of it. Let's read the chapter in its entirety. James chapter 3.

1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. 2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Now the words of the text,

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth [or wants]. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. 11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

That's the end of the text.

13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. 14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word. We are going to be walking through these verses, verses 3 through 12, so it will be profitable to keep our Bibles open to this passage of scripture this evening.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, few passages in scripture are as graphic and as relentless in making a point as this passage here in James chapter 3, and when it comes specifically to the use of the tongue and the use of our speech, there is perhaps no passage in all of literature as penetrating and as convicting as this one. This is the passage, the go-to passage when we want to talk about the tongue and especially the power and the destructive power of the tongue. Clearly, James is concerned with how the Christians in his day were using their tongues. This obviously was a problem that needed a sober and thorough and powerful treatment. And really, it's not just chapter 3, but all five chapters in this short letter make reference to our speech in one way or another and when you tie it all into the theme of the letter as a whole, you get a very clear message: as believers, we must be those who are controlling our tongues. We must be guarding our speech. If you have a true and living faith, this is a basic area where that faith will show itself in a life of good works in how you use your tongue. That's the significance of this section. That's the point James is driving home. We may not, as believers, be careless with our words. On the contrary, we must be vigilant, super vigilant with our words. This is an area in which we must be pursuing spiritual maturity.

Well, this is an area of concern for all of us today too, isn't it? It's a sobering thing when you have young people telling their parents and telling adults, as I've experienced, that this is a serious problem in their circles. And today with all the social media, with the texting apps out there, the Facebook groups, and I'm going to mention that once or twice and I kind of smile because Facebook is probably old school for the younger generation. That's my generation. But whatever social media you're using, whatever it may be, you can be sure that this is a bigger problem than we all realize because how many of us just don't even realize what's out there as far as the apps and the social media? Gossiping on family text threads, being sinfully critical of others on Facebook, making rash judgments when the fact is you've barely heard even one side of the story, and we're making all kinds of unloving judgments, sinful boasting, putting others down, yelling, abusive language behind closed doors, deriding and mocking others with our words, and then even blaspheming God's name. It's a serious problem. The church today is no different than the church of James's day. As believers, we are those who have been begotten with the word of truth. As believers, we've been made new creations. We have the new man in

us. Therefore, as believers, we are both equipped and obliged to exercise control of our tongues. Well, may the sermon tonight encourage us in this vitally important aspect of our Christian living, as James certainly wanted this to encourage the saints to whom he was writing in his day, too, and as this is timeless and it's written for God's people in every day. We take as our theme tonight, "Taming the Powerful Tongue." We look at three things. First, we look at the tongue's destructive power. Second, we look at the tongue's unruly character. And third, we look at the Christian's heavenly hope.

Well, we began looking at it a little bit last week, verses 3 and 4. The tongue is an extremely powerful little thing. That's where James starts off in verses 3 and 4, "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body." Beloved, a horse is a very powerful creature. My family and I had the privilege just a few weeks ago to get up close to a horse that was right on the other side of the fence and it was just standing there, and its muscles were bulging out from underneath its coat of hair. A horse is so powerful that even today we still refer to horsepower when we talk about cars and engines. A horse is a picture of strength and yet you place a little bit, a little piece of metal in a horse's mouth and you put a hundred pound woman on top of that horse who knows what she's doing and that woman can control that horse so well with that bit that that horse can even be made to dance on its back feet. That's the power of a horse's bit.

James goes on, "Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm," or a wheel, "whithersoever the governor listeth." Ships are huge. Maybe you've seen a cruise ship before or a huge cargo ship. They're huge and yet when the captain wants to steer that ship into port, all he has to do is turn a little wheel, maybe press a few buttons today, and he gets that ship exactly lined up where he wants it to go so he doesn't even hit the edge of the coast or the dock. That's the power of the wheel, the helm, and the rudder. And now James says, that's just how it is with the tongue.

Verse 5, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." The tongue is so small, such a small part of our human bodies, and yet its ability to control is massive. The tongue can boast great things, beloved. Listen to these words from the Book of Proverbs. Proverbs 18, verse 21, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Proverbs 25 verse 15, "A soft tongue breaketh the bone." Your tongue can break bones. Lives have been elevated and lives have been cast down by the use of this little member of our body. Nations have risen. Nations have fallen because of how people have spoken. Like the horse's bit, like the ship's helm, so the tongue, such a little member, such a little thing, has such power to control.

We must never underestimate the power of the tongue and I think that's very clear also when you look at Jesus. Just think of Jesus. I'm thinking of the book of Revelation, where the Apostle John sees that vision of Jesus on the horse, riding out of heaven with his angels on the clouds of glory, and do you remember what John sees in the mouth of Jesus? "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the

nations." That's the power of the tongue. Of course, that's the power of Jesus' tongue, to smite the nations.

That's the power of the word of Jesus. That's the power of the spoken word. And for us too, the tongue is very powerful. But that's just the power of the tongue. What James goes on to emphasize in verses 5 and 6 is not just the power of the tongue, but the destructive power of the tongue. The tongue is not just powerful, but powerful to destroy. So in the middle of verse 5, James moves on to another figure, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" And then he says, "And the tongue is a fire." We know just how a little spark can set off a huge forest fire, millions and millions of acres being burned just because of a little spark. Last summer, if you remember, there were forest fires in Canada, in Quebec, and here in West Michigan we were having air advisories for the quality of air. Forest fires can be so big that they can change weather patterns. Maybe some of you have heard of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. On October 8, 1871, at 8:30 p.m., a tiny spark started a fire in Mrs. O'Leary's barn and before it was put out, three and a half miles of the city of Chicago had burned to the ground. Over 17,000 buildings were burned to the ground, and over 250 people died. This kind of thing happened in biblical times as well, in Psalm 83 verse 14, which we already sang, you can read of how a flame can set the mountains on fire.

"Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" And then James writes, "And the tongue is a fire." That's the destructive power of the tongue. Proverbs 16 verse 27, "An ungodly man diggeth up evil and in his lips there is as a burning fire." Proverbs 26 verse 21, "As coals are to burning coals and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife." Just by his contentious speaking, he stokes a fire. Words, arguments, name calling, rash judgments, speculative comments, gossip, backbiting, it's a fire. And I don't know about you, but I teach my children never play with fire. I even remember learning that as a little child from my parents very distinctly, "Don't play with fire." Even when you go camping, how careful you have to be with fires. You can get fined. People even have gone to jail because of how careless they were with fire. How careful, then, must we be with our words because the tongue is a fire.

And then James goes on in verse 6 and says some very powerful things, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature." Let's make sure we appreciate that language. First, James writes, the tongue is a world of iniquity and I think the simplest way to explain that language is by putting it like this: the tongue is a microcosm of evil, a cosmos, a micro world, a small world in and of itself of evil. So think of it this way, you have your whole body but right there in that one little member, right there in the tongue, you have a whole world, a whole microcosm, a whole little world of evil in and of itself, just in the tongue. All the sins that you can commit in your body, well, all those sins, as it were, can be found right there in the tongue. It's a world of sin in and of itself. The tongue is party to every evil there is. Every one of the Ten Commandments, you can break them all with just the tongue. It's a whole world of iniquity even when you separate it from the rest of the body. The tongue is a microcosm of evil.

Then James goes on and writes, "so is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body." The tongue has such power for destruction that it defiles, it pollutes the whole body. It has such power, such control that the way you talk guides the rest of your body. The tongue is like that bit in the horse's mouth so that the way that you use your tongue, that's the way that you're actually directing your whole body. A filthy tongue results in a filthy person. As Jesus said, that which comes out of a person's mouth is what defiles him. And isn't it the case that you might think something, right, we all have these thoughts that come in our minds but isn't it the case that when you actually vocalize it, when you actually say it, it's like your thoughts are even more firmly established just by the fact that you said it, you spoke it. Well, how careful, then, must we be with how we talk. How we talk defiles our whole person and that's what the word body there refers to, it defiles the whole body. It's just not talking about your physical body, it's talking about your whole person outside and inside.

And then James writes, "so is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body," and then this, "and setteth on fire the course of nature." What does that mean? Well, the language that James uses would have been easily understood by the people of his day. In our day, it's a little bit challenging, but we can understand what James is saying. What James really is saying is this, the tongue sets on fire the whole machinery of your life. That's the idea. The whole direction of your life, the whole shape of your life, the ups and downs of your life, the trajectory of your life, the tongue sets it on fire. And we should understand what James is doing here, the language is expansive. First he starts with the tongue, the tongue is a world of iniquity, in and of itself, a microcosm of evil. And then he expands on that a little bit and he says, not just the tongue, but it defiles your whole body, so that your whole body becomes polluted by it. And then he expands even more and says, not just your body, not just your person, but your whole life. The tongue sets it on fire. Not just my body, but my whole world is defiled and polluted and set on fire by the sinful use of the tongue. A few taps on my smartphone, a few taps on the keyboard, and it sets the direction of my life, and it sets it on fire.

The tongue influences everything. That's the point. You can't compartmentalize what you do with your tongue because it affects everything. It's like this, have you ever seen maybe an investigator's office where they have one wall that's completely covered with information on an investigation case. Maybe they have a picture of a suspect, or maybe they have a newspaper clipping here, and another person's name here, and another piece of information there and then there's all kinds of string that's connecting all the information so that it's all kind of a web of connections. And then maybe at the center of all those connections, it leads back to one person, right? Suspect number one. Well, that's exactly how it is with the tongue. All the different parts of your life, all the different happenings of your life, they're all connected to the use of the tongue.

And then what does James write? And it is set on fire, and the idea is this, the tongue is set on fire from hell itself. That little fire is continually being lit by the fires of hell itself. When you speak that gossip, when you make that rash judgment, when you backbite and slander and verbally abuse and assault and tear down and blaspheme, it's hell itself that's lighting the fire right under your tongue. That's powerful stuff, beloved. This is how close

hell is to us. When we gossip, when we tear down, hell is right there under the tongue lighting the match. And as John Calvin says, the tongue is not only lit from hell, but the tongue is an instrument for catching, encouraging, and fanning the flames of hell. And I think that if we've been on the receiving end of slander, or we've been on the receiving end of a rash judgment, or if we've been on the receiving end of gossip or a verbal attack, then we get it and then we say, this is evil, this is an evil spirit. And what can you do in the face of that kind of thing? It's a fire and it burns and it kills and sometimes it seems when the tongue is being used that way, that all you can do is stand back and just watch as the tongue burns and sets things on fire in the world around you. It's devastating.

Let me ask you, beloved, do you know the devastating power of the tongue? Let's start with the Bible. Children, you know Joseph. Think of what Joseph went through. Remember when Potiphar's wife spoke all kinds of lies about how he wanted to hurt her? And it was all a lie, and Joseph couldn't do anything and there he goes, sentenced to prison, perhaps for the rest of his life, and he's only a 17-year-old lad. That's the destructive power of the tongue. Think of what King Ahab and Jezebel were up to when they made up that story, that godly Naboth took the name of the Lord in vain. And Naboth couldn't do anything. He's stoned to death. His children evidently are cast out of their inheritance in the land. It's devastating. Think of what David went through when his own son Absalom spoke sweet, nice words to the people and he used his words to stir up a rebellion within the church against his own father, who was a picture of Christ. Remember on the day of Jesus' crucifixion, how the leader stirred up the people's hearts, so that there you hear the mob chanting, "Crucify him! Crucify him! His blood be on us and our children!"

What destructive power is in the use of the tongue? But then we need to apply it to ourselves. Think of gossip and slander. A person's whole business can be ruined by slander. A person's whole life can be ruined by these kinds of things. You know it. Now, on the one hand, I'm not saying we should avoid speaking the truth when the truth needs to be spoken. That's good use of the tongue. But even there, we are so prone even to use that idea as an excuse to speak slander and gossip, right? "Did you hear about So-and-so? Did you hear about that? Keep this to yourself, but let me tell you this." You know, some people even talk this way, "I just need to tell you this. I just need to get this off my chest." And all it is is a juicy piece of gossip, and there's just no self-control to handle it. And you have your people, right, we have our people that we can gossip with, and they can gossip with, and we know we're going to overlook these sins. We're not going to call each other out on these things. These are my safe people with whom I can commit this sin. We've got to ask ourselves, is that what love looks like? Is that what love for the neighbor looks like?

It can happen on the phone. It can happen in a text. It can happen on social media. And I think what's really scary about all of it is that with all the gossip and with all the loose words and the rash judgments, it defiles the whole body as James writes, so that what you see is not just words being spoken, but if you're analyzing it with sanctified wisdom, you start to see hate-filled attitudes, judgmental spirits, bitterness, discontentment that's consuming a person. It's on fire. Right? It's like a fire. It's like an infection. And it

spreads. And it kills. And it's killing the person. And it's killing families. And it's killing churches. And it severely harms the body of Christ. And it messes people up and I don't mean just the people against whom someone is speaking with their gossip or rash judgments, I'm talking about the people themselves who are participating in these things. It messes them up. It's a fire of discontentment, hopelessness, bitterness, sin that consumes a person. Some can't even talk to family members because the bitterness just eats them up and in my mind, that's the influence of hell. This is devilish. It's a poison and it's killing the person who keeps drinking it.

Two weeks ago, I talked about pornography. Pornography is like a drug. It is a drug. It messes you up. It's toxic so that to get out of it, you almost need to go through detox. It's a poison. Well, it's the same thing with these sins of the tongue. It's a drug. People get their kicks off of it, and they're feeding themselves with it. They keep feeding themselves with it, and they're not feeding the new man in Christ, but the old man of sin keeps getting fed, keeps getting fed. And when you come across it, you can almost see it start to consume a person, just like a drug, just like alcohol or pornography starts to consume a person's life. They're not even talking straight anymore and that's not reason for gossiping about them now. It's reason for compassion, it's reason for prayer, but then it's also a reason to be alert and to be sober ourselves. These people are playing with fire and I exhort all of us, for the love of your own soul, stay away from it. Stay away from this fire. Don't have friends who all they do is gossip. Don't have friends like that. It's going to feed a judgmental, bitter spirit, and it's going to lead you in a bad direction. It's going to set on fire the whole course, the whole machinery of your life.

When I think about not just the people committing the sin, but also the people being hurt by this kind of behavior, how you talk about someone can change the very fabric of their lives. Think of the boy or the girl who is being bullied at school, taunted and mocked and laughed at. It is devastating. It makes you weep because it's the last thing you would ever want to have happen to your own child, but it's happening and it's a fire. And what can you do about it? Well, there are things we can do about it, but it's a fire. Think of a child who has been verbally attacked by a cruel parent. A parent just lets loose on their child. You can be sure that's leaving its mark, its scar on that child. Think of a spiritually beautiful woman. I take this from Hanco's commentary on the book of James. Think of a spiritually beautiful woman who is constantly verbally attacked by her husband so that she eventually turns into a mouse of a person. Or maybe she gets so hurt, she turns in another direction and she starts hurting herself in different ways. And that can happen the other way around as well, where a woman maybe does this kind of thing to her husband. And it's destroying people. Think of innuendo, using words to entice people, right? Leading that conversation, leading with your words to go in a bad direction with your thoughts and actions. Think of flattery, think of rash judgments, and then worst of all, think of blasphemy. When a person calls good evil, and they call evil good, when a person is saying something evil about God himself, what wickedness.

And beloved, what's the value in going through all of this? What's the point? The point is this: we need to evaluate ourselves and see whether this is in us. We need to be aware of the danger and as believers, we need to put on the works of faith. James has a real

concern here for the saints to whom he is writing. It's a constant issue. In fact, James spends the greater part of chapter 4 talking about similar issues, we'll get to that. And the point is this, "My beloved brethren, my brethren, my brothers, those whom I love, these things ought not so to be. Don't put up with these things. Keep pursuing spiritual maturity. Honor the Lord who purchased you. Live out of the life that Jesus has given you. Walk in the freedom that Jesus has given you in his perfect law of liberty. Practice pure religion. Be humble." And now to help us all go in that direction, James writes, let's be reminded now, chapter 3 of the devastating power of the tongue, the destructive, devastating power of the tongue.

Well, as James writes, he's not done talking about the tongue. He goes on in verses 7 and 8 to speak further now about the unruly character of the tongue. Verses 7 and 8, "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea," all four categories, "is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." The tongue can no man tame. It's impossible to tame the tongue by any human power. Just look, mankind has been able to tame all kinds of creatures, beasts of the field, birds of the air, creeping things on the ground, fish in the sea. Man has been able to tame all of them and we know it. We see it. It's entertaining. Lions and elephants doing their stunts at the circus. Cheetahs being kept as people's pets. Snakes being charmed by music. Birds being trained to do all kinds of things. Even killer whales at Sea World being able to fly through the air, land on a platform, and kiss their trainer on the cheek. That's an amazing thing. This is the great power of man. He contained the creation all around him. But then you look over there and you turn your gaze once again to the tongue, that little itty bitty muscle of the body, the tongue, and there sits the tongue, an unruly evil full of deadly poison which no man can tame.

And when James writes that this is an unruly evil, what it means is that the tongue is a restless evil. It's restless. It's ceaselessly trying to work evil. No man can tame the tongue. And why is that the case? Well, it's the case because it's out of the mouth that the heart speaks. It's the heart, you see, that's holding the reins controlling the mouth. It's the heart that is the captain that is steering the wheel of the mouth. It's the heart that is controlling the tongue. And man by nature has a heart full of evil. No man can change his own heart. No man can do a heart transplant on himself. And just because of that, no man can tame the tongue. And even for us as Christians who have been given new hearts, who've been made new creations in Jesus Christ, we all know that nevertheless we still have our old man of sin, that depravity that still cleaves to us, that principle of sin that still dwells in our members and still of ourselves. We don't have the power to cast off that evil and so even for us, James goes on to make application in verses 9 through 12 for believers. He writes, "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." And yet this is so often our experience, isn't it? Sunday, we're praising God, we are honestly praising God. This is not hypocrisy. We are honestly praising God, blessing his name. This is our joy. And yet we go our way, maybe it's even on the ride home, or during the week, we're cursing men. That's part of

our misery, our wretchedness, "I want to do good out of the new man, but I find this other law in my members so that when I would do good, I still find myself doing evil."

But James' point is this, "My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Don't put up with that. You ought not to be satisfied with that kind of behavior." And then in verses 11 and 12, James goes on to show that even the natural world around you doesn't put up with it this way, even the natural world around you doesn't function the same way or this way. "Does a fountain," does a spring, "send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" No. "Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries?" No, it's a fig tree. "Either a vine, figs?" No. "So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh." The point is, even the natural world around us keeps things straight. You've been made a fountain of fresh water, so don't let the salt water pass through your speech.

And if we want to treat this passage in the light of the letter as a whole, then the point James is making is this: whatever is coming out of your mouth, whatever you type on the keyboard, whatever you press on your phone, that is revealing the fountain, that is revealing what's on the inside. You know a person by his fruit. That's chapter 2, show me thy faith without your works? No, faith is shown by its works. You will know the spring, you will know the fountain by the water it brings forth. A true faith brings forth the fruit of righteousness, obedience, and godliness. A false faith just keeps on bringing forth that rotten fruit that comes from hell.

Brethren, if we are the children of God, if we know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and if we have the Holy Spirit in us, then our lives will show it. Actually, in Matthew chapter 12, Jesus says something that I think in our eyes would sound pretty provocative, and it's very striking. Listen to these words, Matthew 12, Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees who are challenging him, and Jesus says in Matthew 12, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil bringeth forth evil things." And then, Matthew 12 verse 37, Jesus says, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned." We will be justified, Jesus says, by our words or we will be condemned by our words. And what Jesus is simply saying is this, our speech, our talk is such an accurate revealer of our hearts that based on the way that we talk, our eternal destiny can be determined. The tongue provides the evidence of what your heart really is, whether it's good or evil, and if we are Christians, it's going to show up in the sanctified use of our tongues. That's why James says, "All these sins of the tongue, my brethren, these things ought not so to be."

Well, if we've been listening carefully to what James has been telling us, all of this is very concerning because as we listen to it, we all know our own sins of the tongue. We all know our own struggles and we know the truth of what James says when he says no man can tame the tongue, and yet it's exactly here that we are also directed to look away from ourselves to the Lord because we don't look to man to tame the tongue, we look to the Lord. As the church father Augustine put it, James does not say that no one can tame the tongue, but no one of man, no man can tame the tongue. So that when it is tamed, we confess that this is brought about by the pity, the help, the grace of God. We look to the Lord for the hope we have of taming the tongue. The Lord God Almighty the Lord Jesus

Christ, he who created the tongue in the beginning, he who when he came in our flesh controlled his tongue perfectly, he who on the cross bore the punishment for all our sins of the tongue, he who on the cross crushed the power of hell and the head of Satan, and he through his resurrection and by his Holy Spirit has given us new hearts, we look to him. Yes, though we still have that old man of sin in us that only speaks evil, nevertheless, by the power of God and the grace of God, we've also been given new hearts. Jesus rules in our hearts. We're actually going to look at that next week Sunday morning in the Catechism. Our old man is crucified, dead, and buried so that he no longer rules in our members. Jesus rules in our hearts and Jesus is the one who also sanctifies us and who sanctifies our members, and out of his strength, we grow in controlling the tongue, using it for good.

So what do we do, beloved? We look to the Lord. We look to the Lord for the forgiveness of our sins of the tongue. We repent of our sins with our tongues. We make full and honest confession to the Lord, and we fly to the cross of Jesus Christ for forgiveness. We ask God to cleanse our tongues, to purify our thoughts, and we discipline ourselves regarding the use of the tongue, putting away the foolish talking, putting away all crude joking which is not convenient, putting away all gossip, slander, and backbiting, putting away the social media. Honestly, if it's causing you to sin, why are you still using it? Better to enter into heaven with your hand cut off, better to enter into heaven having no social media than having all the social apps you want and being cast into hell. Put away, put away these things and put on that speech which is good for edifying others. I'm not saying put away social media apps, but if it's causing you to sin so that you can't control your gossiping tongue or the rash judgments or the the tearing down of others through speech, put it away and put on that speech which is good for edifying others so that we might minister grace to those who hear our words, and we strive to do these things always with all dependence on the Lord, constantly looking to him as the one who has the power to lead us in these paths of righteousness. He who has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ and as James will say in chapter 4, humble yourself. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up. That's where this is all going. Humble yourself, humility, humility, humility. That's going to be the theme as James proceeds into this next section of the letter.

The tongue has great power, beloved. destructive power to be sure, but also out of Christ, power for good, power for healing, power for worship, power indeed to bless, to build up, power to encourage, power to lead God's people in good ways, power to lead into spiritual prosperity. May it be so with us. May it be so with our use of the tongue that that's how I'm using it. May the Lord use this very direct and very sober passage of scripture to warn us, to sober us, and to bless us so that we might enjoy the good use of the tongue in the home, in the church, at school, on the internet, and everywhere and as James has already said, let us be doers of the word and not hearers only. Let's practice, as James says, pure religion. Amen.

Let us pray.

Our Father, help us. No man can tame the tongue but we look to thee as the Lord and Sovereign and the God of powerful grace. We look to thee. Help us. Our hope is in thee, and bless us so that we enjoy the good use of the tongue and the good power of the tongue here in our midst, in the church and in all spheres of our lives. Use this preaching powerfully to shape our hearts and to shape our lives that we might truly enjoy that pure and undefiled religion which is salvation itself. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.