



Message **Transcript**

Talk Your Walk

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor, and praise. And Lord, we're excited here this morning, because Lord, we believe, as a church, that every time that your Word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that you speak, and you speak directly to any heart that's willing to hear and receive what you have to say. So our prayer this morning, Lord, is speak, we're ready to hear you, Lord. And so now for every person who has gathered who wants to hear the Lord speak directly to you, who'll believe what Jesus says, and who will, by faith, put into practice what He shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. In this series in James, we've been talking about how to walk your talk, and what it looks like not only just to hear the gospel and receive the gospel, but if Christ is in you, how do we walk this gospel out? And we've talked about how to endure trials, and how to overcome temptation, and how to receive the Word, and how to not show partiality, and all these different things, and how to have faith that has works that accompany that. Everything that we've been reading about has been super challenging. But if you ever wanted to know if there was just one area of your Christian life you could work on that would guarantee future growth, sometimes as young Christians we say, "Well, if I just knew what to do, there's so many things out there, if I

could just focus on one area, that would just be great." I have that one area for you today, and it's the tongue. The tongue.

The Bible tells us that if we work on the tongue, we get to control all of it, and God wants to talk about us, how to tame the tongue, and so that we're not only talking about how to walk our talk, but we're talking about how to talk our walk. How is it that our words align with our actions? How is it that we can live in such a way where what we speak and what we do is actually aligned?

Now, by God's providence, because I pulled away last week and did a sermon called What in the World is Going On? I've had two weeks to study this text, and I think it's been God's providence, as someone that speaks for a living, to take a look at what God has to say about the tongue, because He doesn't mince words. He speaks directly to us about what that looks like, and how it is that we can talk our walk, how it is that we can tame the tongue. And if you want to know how to grow in your spiritual life, God has a Word for you this morning. God has a Word for each and every person that's listening, because this is an area where we all come up a little short.

And to do that this morning, we're going to be in James 3, James 3, the first 12 verses. I'd like to read them to you, and then I'd like to give you some handles that you can hold onto for how it is that you, as a Christian, can talk your walk. Listen to the Word of the Lord. He says, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Now, if we put the bits into horses' mouths so that they will

obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are all so great and driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things."

"See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world 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, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 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. Does a fountain send out water from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh."

And packed in these verses, God is sharing with us exactly how it is that He desires us to speak. If we're going to walk our talk, our speech is really important as to how we're going to do it. And the reason that this is such an important topic as to how we should speak is that the Bible is replete with information about the tongue. There are so many different ways that we can sin with our tongue. Here's just a few. This is not an exhaustive list, but lies, deceit, boasting, malice, slander, gossip, complaining, cursing, coarse joking, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. The

tongue can be used for great amounts of harm.

And as you read through this text, these first 12 verses, it's almost like, "Don't do this, and don't do that, and the tongue's evil, and it's poison, and it's deadly, and it's untameable." Every time I read through these 12 verses over the last two weeks, I'm like, "Jeff, just don't speak ever again. It'll be okay." But I believe that God has a Word for us, and what He wants to teach us is how it is that we should speak. So I'm using the text this morning to show us how it is that we should speak, so that we have handles on how God wants us to grow with Him. So I'm going to give you five handles this morning as to how you can talk your walk.

And the first is this. God wants us to speak with responsibility, realizing words have consequences. Speak with responsibility, realizing words have consequences. Notice what He says. "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment." He says, when it comes to teaching, especially those who are going to teach in the church, let not many of you presume that "I'll just teach." Because if you're going to speak in this place, you're speaking on behalf of God. And anytime we speak on behalf of God, there's a stricter judgment. Why? Because we're telling God's people this is what God's saying; we better be sure that this is what God's saying. That's why I do my best to be faithful and accurate with what the Word says. And I've told you, and I'll tell you again, if the Word says something contrary to what I say, believe the Word! I'll do my best to present the Word, but I'm fallible, I'm human. God's Word is what we want to listen to.

That's why, when God called the prophet Ezekiel, do you remember what He said to him in chapter three? In different places? He said this. He's like, "When I call you to my people, and I tell you calamity is coming, if you don't tell them that calamity is coming and calamity comes, their blood will be on your head. But if you tell them calamity is coming, and they refuse to listen, then their blood's on their own head." He says, "You, as a prophet, have a responsibility to tell people what I want them to hear." Modern day translation? As a pastor, preach the Word. Tell people the whole counsel of God. If you're in a church, or you ever end up in a different city and you're looking for a church, and they don't open the Bible, and they don't preach the Bible, get out of that church. Don't be in that church. How are pastors going to be judged on Judgment Day? For how faithfully and accurately they proclaimed God's Word. Right?

But some of you may say, "Well, I'm not a pastor. Praise the Lord, that doesn't apply to me." If you're a Christian, speak responsibly. Speak with responsibility. Your words have consequences. Your words have consequences. Notice what the Lord says in verse two. He says this. He says, "For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man." If you don't stumble in what you say, you're perfect in all that you do. "He's a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well." In other words, if you can control the tongue, you can control it all. Now, just by show of hands, just so we know, the Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God", help me out this morning. Is there anybody here, at any time in their life, wishes they could have some words back that they spoke? Anybody at all? Okay.

The Bible says, "Where there are many words, sin is not absent, so he who guards his lips is wise." That's Proverbs 10:19. If you speak for a living, you're going to sin. If you're a parent, and you're talking to your kids, you're going to sin. If you're a husband, you're going to sin. If you're a wife, you're going to sin. If you're a child, you're going to sin. If you work for a boss, you're going to sin. If you're a boss, you're going to sin. If you open your mouth, you're going to sin. Because the Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." And if you could control everything, then you'd be perfect. And the Bible says no one's perfect, so we've all sinned. And our words? They have consequences, don't they? They have consequences in this life, and they also have consequences in what's coming in the next life. "So watch what you say," He says. Speak responsibly. It means to think about what you're going to say.

Jesus says in Matthew 15:19, "For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." Now, the interesting thing about the tongue is you can't control the tongue. And the reason you can't control the tongue is because everything in our body is connected. You know that song, the ankle bone's connected to the leg bone, leg bone to the knee bone, et cetera? The tongue's connected to the heart. It's out of the heart that the mouth speaks. Who or what you worship comes out of your mouth by what your heart is set on. What you say, the tone you say it with, the way in which you communicate it, is all about what's going on inside of you. And the Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and who can understand it?" We don't have the ability by ourselves to control our heart.

That's why if you go out and just try to control your tongue, you can't do it. That's

why if you talk to a non-Christian and they have filthy language, they can try not to have filthy language, they can't help it, because it's what's going on inside of their heart that is causing them to speak. Watch what you say. Be careful about what you say. Be responsible with what you say. What's coming out of your mouth is an indication as to what's going on in your heart, and you'll be held accountable for it. You'll be held accountable for it for how you treat other people, you'll be held accountable for it for eternity. Now, as I've said before, I'm so grateful that I did not grow up in an era with social media. I'm so thankful, to this day, you can't look up posts that I made when I was in high school or college. I'm grateful for that. But it's interesting to me that our God knows every single word that I've said, and has not forgotten any of them. He knows it, and I'm accountable to it.

Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 12. Matthew 12:36-37. Here's what He says. He says it like this, "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for in the day of judgment." Every careless word you and I have ever spoken about, said, wish we hadn't have said, we'll give an accounting for. "For by your words you'll be justified, and by your words you'll be condemned." What does that mean? It means when you become a Christian, God takes over your heart, and your language begins to change. And who you speak about and what you speak about is progressively different than what it was before. And by your words, you'll be judged. "By your words you'll be condemned." "By your words, you will be justified." Right? It's what you say. What you say is an indication of what's going on inside of here.

Now, let me be clear. The gospel is this. The gospel is that God so loved the world that He sent Jesus Christ to the world, who is a perfect man, who died on a cross in our place for all our sin because He knew we couldn't get this right. He was raised from the dead three days later, He offers life to all who will repent of their sins and trust in Him. And if you've done that, the Bible says you are born again. But if you are born again, one of the evidences that you're born again is that your tongue will start to be tamed. One of the evidences that you're born again is that you will begin to speak differently than how you spoke before you were saved. And that's what He's telling us this morning. He says, when we speak, speak responsibly, for our words have consequences. We need to be accountable for what we say. We need to be accountable for what we say.

It breaks my heart as a pastor, and I'm not going to spend time this morning going through a list and litany of people that I've watched in our generation that have left the preaching of the Word and are now preaching a different gospel, but let me just tell you what the apostle Paul says, and I agree with him.

He says in Galatians 1:6 and following, he says, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel, which really is not another, only that there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As I have said before, so I now say, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to

what you have received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."

Here's what he's saying. "I'm going to preach the Word. If I was trying to receive kudos and get everybody to like me, I would not preach the Word, because there is so much in the pages of this book that go counter to every single culture in every single generation from the time of Christ." But what's he saying? It's the Word. That's why he wants it to be clear that not many of you should become teachers. When you're going to teach, you're teaching for God; when you're going to parent, you're parenting for God; when you're going to lead in your business, you're leading for God. Speak responsibly, because you're speaking on behalf of God. That's what he says.

And in Luke 9:26, Jesus said, "Whoever's ashamed of me and my words, I will be ashamed of him when I come." When I hear people say, "Well, that's a part of the Bible, I just don't totally agree with that." That's as much Jesus as any other part of the Bible, so I totally agree with all of it. And anybody that starts messing around with God's Word, you need to get out of that church. And that's about all I'm going to say about that today, because I get irritated, and then I get angry, and then I get saddened, and then I start to think you have no idea how big our God is. If you really knew God, you would not talk like that, you would not speak like that. You would speak in humility, and you would prepare God's people for all that is coming.

Speak responsibly, because your words have consequences. Young men who are called to be pastors, don't pastor just to get a congregation to show up. Don't

pastor just to attract people. Preach the Word, because God is listening and will hold you accountable to what you do. Amen? So, speak responsibly, realizing that your words have consequences. They have consequences in this life and in the life to come.

Number two is this. Speak with intentionality. Speak with intentionality, knowing you set direction. Speak with intentionality, knowing you set direction. He said, "Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires." He talks about two different analogies.

One is a horse. He said we put a bit into a horse's mouth. Even though the horse is bigger, the horse is faster, the horse is broader, with this little bit, you can control the direction of that horse. You can steer where it's going to go, you can get it to stop or speed up just with this little thing. In the same way, a ship, huge ship at the sea, being tossed around by all the wind, is controlled by a little rudder in the back wherever the pilot wants it to go. He says, in the same way, that's what the tongue does. The tongue gives direction to life. The tongue gives direction to your life and the tongue gives direction to the lives of those around you. It sets in course what goes on.

Now, I want to be clear from the start, I'm not talking about the law of attraction, I'm not talking about name it and claim it, I'm not talking about, "If you speak this, then you get that". That's not what I'm talking about. I'm saying that words matter, and when you're intentional about the words, it sets direction for the people that you're

talking to. Let me just ask you this question. How many can think of something hurtful that's been said to you in your life? Why is it you still remember it? Because it set direction.

All of us have things that go on that, in our lives, where somebody at some time, knowingly or unknowingly, spoke words into our life that were not the words of the Lord. And they stuck, and they hurt, and they were wounding. And they usually come in those times where we don't even expect it. But isn't it interesting? You can go back to that spot, even if it's been a decade ago, two decades ago, 50 years ago, and you can remember exactly who said it, when they said it, where you were standing, how you felt, right? Because words matter. Now, finish this sentence with me. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will...

Congregation:

Never hurt me.

Pastor Jeff:

They'll totally hurt you! My mom used to say that to me growing up, right? She was wrong, and she's watching, and she knows she's wrong. Words hurt worse than about anything else, don't they? Words get deep down, and that's why, when we hear those negative words, we have to go before the Lord, and we have to spend time with the Lord, because we have to forgive people that say things to us or about us. When I talk to young pastors, when I train young pastors, one of the things I train them in is you need to have really thick skin, and keep a really tender heart, because you're

going to be amazed at the things that people say about you that are so hurtful when all you're trying to do is help them. Thick skin, tender heart. You have to forgive, you have to move on. You have to allow that, you have to be ready for that. And that's the stuff that they don't teach you in seminary or in school to prepare yourself for, right?

Speak responsibly, because words set direction. Some of you heard these words growing up, and it set a direction in your life where you thought you were less than, or no good, or unworthy, or fat, or stupid, or dumb, or lazy, or whatever, that started to take you down a path that you really didn't want to go. But isn't the other just as true? Aren't there ways that people have spoken positive things over you that have changed the direction or course of your life? I remember when I played Little League as an eight year old, I was on a team with eight, nine, and 10 year olds. And when I played on that team, I was the youngest kid, I was the worst kid. And I knew where I batted in the order based upon the number of people that showed up. If nine people showed up, I batted ninth. If 14 kids showed up, I batted 14th. I struck out every single at-bat as an eight year old. Every single one. Didn't even walk.

But I remember my coach, Jerry [inaudible 00:19:17], he'd put his arm around me and be like, "Hey Jeff, you're just one of the young guys, keep at it. You're going to be one of our best players someday." Two years hence, when I was 10 years old, I made the all-star team. I started the all-star game as a pitcher. I was the best player in the league. What happened? His words mattered, because what I was going to do is quit. I was like, "I'm no good, I know I'm no good. Everybody in the stands knows I'm no good. My parents know I'm no good." And he would put his arm around me and say,

"Yeah, but you can do this."

I had a similar experience when I was going to school at Dallas Theological Seminary. I taught a small group, with a group of 11 guys, and Howard Hendricks was in that group and he told us, "When you lead, if you want feedback to how you lead, set up an appointment and come meet with me." So I set up an appointment to meet with Howard Hendricks. And I remember I went in to see him after I taught on the Great Commission in our group. And he was taking feverish notes on a yellow tablet. And I remember thinking while I was teaching, "I'm not teaching him anything that he doesn't already know. I don't know why he's taking notes, he's probably just judging me, grading me, and telling me how terrible I am." And I remember going into his office, and I was just sitting down, and he looked at me, he said, "Jeff," he goes, "has anybody told you how incredibly gifted you are for this kind of work?" And I was thinking, "No, but why don't you tell me some more about that?"

When we have people that speak into our lives positively, it sets direction too. And what does God want us to use our tongue for? To set direction towards Him. What we realize is that God created all people, and even non-Christians have intrinsic value, because God created them. And if you can be the one, through your tongue, to point out what God placed in them, God can use your tongue to benefit other people. Non-Christians are sometimes encouraging. Non-Christians are sometimes helpful. Non-Christians are sometimes administrative. So if you can point out intrinsic value that God has placed in them, and highlight that, and affirm that, and encourage that, your tongue matters.

So not only are we called to speak responsibly, but we're called to speak intentionally. And intentionality doesn't mean that you can't say true things. We just are called to speak the truth in love. It's not necessarily wrong to tell somebody that they have bad breath, because you care about them enough that you don't want them to hurt other people too. But it's how you're intentional, and how you're doing that, and are you doing it for the betterment of others, or are you doing it to put other people down? And that's where you have to check your own heart. What's your purpose in meeting? What's your purpose in speaking? Are you being intentional to help set the direction for where God wants them to be? Speak responsibly, speak with responsibility. Your words have consequences. Speak with intentionality, knowing that you set direction.

Think about it with your kids. Think about the direction you set with them. Think about the things that you speak over them, and say to them, and encourage them with. Think about the times you wish you could have words back for what you said and you wish you hadn't have said it. And isn't it interesting what words we remember? You could have a hundred words spoken over you that are great, and one negative word, and chances are you remember the one negative word. Isn't that true? That's why we need the grace of God to continue to grow us in this, as we speak with responsibility and we speak with intentionality.

Let me give you a third. He tells us this. Speak with humility. Speak with humility by elevating God and others. Speak with humility by elevating God and others. Notice

what He says, He says, "So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts great things." Just like the rudder of a ship is small, just like the bit in a horse's mouth is small, and that small bit in a horse's mouth controls the whole horse, and tiny little rudder on the ship controls the whole thing, that tiny muscle in your mouth controls everything about who you are, and it boasts great things.

He says, "See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!" It only takes a small spark, and you can set a whole forest on fire. You can set all the trees up in Boulder on fire. It only takes a small little spark to get out of control. He says, here's what the tongue's like. The tongue's like a fire. "The very world of iniquity," or sin, "the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body." The tongue is what you have to control, "and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell." What does the devil go after in your life? What does He want to use? Your tongue. Your mouth.

And even for those of you who are introverts here and say, "Praise the Lord, this sermon isn't for me. I just think these thoughts, I never speak them." Right? It's for you too, because it's the attitude of your heart before it even comes out of your mouth, before you even speak it. Think about all the ways in which you're tempted to speak negative things about God or people, right? God wants us to be humble. God wants us to be humble. God wants us to elevate Him. He wants us to elevate others. Now, here's how we stay humble. Here's how we stay humble. Remember this: God made you. You didn't make yourself.

Psalm 139 tells us that you were formed in your mother's womb by God, and that

you are "fearfully and wonderfully made". God put you together just the way you are, God gave you your DNA, God's the one that breathed life into you, God's the one that gave you everything, and God has ordained all of your days before one of them even came to be. The fact you were born to the parents that you were born to, in the era that you were born in, and have the amount of days that you have? God already constructed that, and let me tell you what that means. You had nothing to do with it. So, no need to brag about how you got to planet Earth and what you're going to do.

Number two, not only did God made you, if you're a Christian, God's the one who saved you. God's the one who saved you. Titus 3:5 says this, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." So, not only did God place you here, not only did God design you, not only did God bring you into this world, if you're a believer, God did all that too. God sent His Son, Jesus. Jesus is the one who died for you. Jesus is the one who rose for you. God's the one who awakened your eyes to knowing that Jesus is the Christ, and God is the one, through His Holy Spirit, that saved you, and that had nothing to do with you either. So don't brag about why you're so spiritual, because God did all that.

Number three, God's the one who's destined you. Not only did He make you, not only did He save you, He's the one who destined you. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For it's by grace you've been saved through faith. It's not your own doing, it's a gift of God, so that no one should boast." But then what's it say in the next verse? "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which He prepared beforehand

so that we would walk in them." So you can't even pat yourself on the back for good works, because any good work that you do, that Christ does through you, He already designed all those good works for you before you were even created! So, He gets credit for all that too. In other words, what are you going to brag about? What are you going to talk about? You can't talk about you, because you aren't anything apart from God. God's the one who's done it all. I think it's 1 Timothy 6:7 says, "For you brought nothing into this world and you can take nothing out of it." It has nothing to do with us.

Now, how many times have you been in a conversation where people are name-dropping, or bragging, or talking about where their kids go to school, or what grades they got, or all these different things, or who they hang out with, or what their influence is, or what their bank account looks like, or... Why? Don't you just kind of want to say sometimes, "Bro, you're nothing. You didn't come into this world. God's the one that's going to take you out. Why are you talking about you? You're the only one that cares!" And here's what happens. If we're not firmly rooted in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we will find insecurities, and prides, and things, and comparisons that spring up where we feel less than, and we want other people to know that we're special. And what comes out of our mouth is, "Don't you recognize me?"

And it comes up in the weirdest times and places too, right? It could be that you're at a restaurant, and you're getting terrible service, and you're wanting to tell the people why it's so terrible. Now, why do you do that? Because in your heart, you want them to know that you're really special, and they need to be taking extra time with you,

because if they knew who you were, they'd be waiting on you hand and foot. Not that that's ever happened to me, but I've heard about that with other people.

But let's be real here. Just think about how many times these things spring up in your heart, where you want to be recognized, and you want to be known, and you wish that, "If only they could..." And, "How come they don't treat me the..." Who cares? If you don't care about outcome, if all you do is care that God gets honored and people get preference, then it works. And isn't that what Jesus taught us? Didn't Jesus tell us to love our neighbor, even as He loved us? Didn't Jesus tell us in Matthew 22:37-40, "here's the greatest commandment, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself"?

Here's how you can speak with humility. When you're speaking in such a way to honor the Lord in everything that you say, as if Jesus is standing right there with you, or working in and through you, and giving preference to what you're saying, and agreeing with what you're saying, so you're honoring Him, and you're preferencing others, you're putting other people ahead of you every single time, then that's how you're living in humility. I want to make sure God gets honored and they get preference. That's all I care about.

Now, if that's really all we ever cared about, and we already read that none of us is perfect, so that's not all we care about, but if that's all we cared about, we could live with humility. As long as God's getting honored today and other people are getting preference, I'm good. In my marriage, as long as God's getting honored and my spouse is getting preference, it's all good. With my kids, as long as God's getting

honored and they're getting preference, it's all good. In my job, as long as God's getting honored and my employees or employer is getting preference, it's all good. Do you see how hard it is to live with humility? Because there's something that goes off in our heart where we get tempted and say, "Well, recognize me, and know who I am, and believe that I'm special. Make sure you're giving me kudos and make sure..." And that doesn't come from God.

So that's why He tells us the tongue loves to make great boasts, and it always comes through those things that are insecure in our life. So speak with responsibility, speak with intentionality, and speak with humility. Those are three handles. We could even stop right there and be like, "That's enough to work on for a while. Wow." But He goes on. God gives us even more. He tells us number four, He tells us to speak with dependency, trusting God to change your heart. Notice what He says.

He says, "For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race." Every animal's tameable. He says this, "But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil full of deadly poison." Now, you think about all the wild animals out there, they're all tameable. You can go to the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo and see creatures you would never want to meet personally. You can see a mountain lion, you can see chimpanzees, you can see hippopotamus, you can see elephant, you can see all these different creatures, and they've all been tamed. They're all in a manmade environment, they're told when they're going to eat, how they're going to eat. Tigers, lions, bears, they're all there, it's all good. Fun to go see them. But if I woke up tomorrow morning and there was a

Komodo dragon in my bedroom, I wouldn't be thinking, "Oh, I can tame all the animals." I would run.

And here's what it says. God is telling you, you can tame every animal, even the wildest of animals can be tamed, but you cannot tame the tongue. There's an impossibility of taming this muscle in your mouth. Unless what? Unless you've been born again. Unless you're depending upon the Lord. Because the gospel makes clear that the gospel is Christ in you, the hope of glory. One of the evidences Christ is in you is that your speech will begin to change. Why? Because God is going to continue to work on your heart. That's what He does.

And how do we grow? Because you can't try to change your tongue. I get introduced to people sometimes as their pastor, and usually it goes something like this. If I'm out playing golf or doing something else, it's usually on the back end of somebody saying a bad word, or I'm coaching and somebody says a bad word, and then somebody mentions, "Oh, this guy over here, he's a pastor." And then what happens is what? "Oh, I'm so sorry!" And I've said this before, but I don't always say it, but sometimes I'll say, "Don't worry about it, you can't help it anyway." And what I mean by that is if you don't have Christ on the inside, nothing's going to change on the outside. You can't help yourself! It's just who you are, it's just your nature. Only Christ can tame your tongue, because only Christ can change your heart. You have to lean in and depend upon the Lord.

When's the last time the Lord's convicted you about something that you said?

Say, well, it's been a while. Well then, you haven't been depending upon the Lord. Because chances are if you search the Lord, and you go into time of prayer with Him and say, "Lord, search me and try me, see if there's any offensive ways or any way I've spoken. Is there any tone I've used? Is there any relationship I had? Is there anything I've said to anybody that would be displeasing to you?" The Lord's good at pointing that out. And that's where we need to repent, and that's where we need to ask forgiveness, and where we can make changes, we need to make changes. And it's not just, "Oh, I'm sorry." But it's, "I'm sorry, and I'm going to work to be better at that, because that was wrong. And what I said was wrong, and you need to know that it was wrong, and I feel badly about that."

And then there's other times where, guess what? We need to forgive others. Because sometimes we hold other people to a higher standard than we're willing to hold for ourselves. And if people said mean or hurtful things about you, forgive them. Pray blessing over them. Ask God to change your heart towards them. That's what it means to live dependently. That's what it means to live with Christ in you, the hope of glory. And it's the only way that this works. In Galatians 2:20, Paul says it like this. He says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." I can't change my tongue, but Jesus Christ, in me, can change everything.

And I can tell you this, I am certainly not perfect. My kids weren't at the first service because of weather. I was kind of hoping, in some way, my kids and my wife

wouldn't have made it to second service, because the reality is they know me. The reality is they've seen me at my worst. The reality is they know that I'm growing progressively, but they certainly know I'm not perfect. So who am I to get up and speak about the tongue when I'm not perfect? I'm just a man of God telling you what God says, and this is the truth. I'm not perfect, but I'm increasingly growing in it. And that's what God wants us to see.

I remember being in college when I played football, and I had grown up using colorful language when I played. I was very good at it, using different words in different ways, very commonly. And I remember after becoming a Christian when I was in college, I had a guy that was in our Bible study, and he asked me, "Why do you speak like that?" He's like, "Because you call yourself a Christian but you talk like that, that's not congruent." And I said, "What do I do?" And he's like, "We should pray about it." And God began to change my tongue, where I didn't talk the same way anymore, and I knew it wasn't me because I could feel the restraining power of the Spirit when there were words wanting to come out of my mouth that were just natural that didn't come out of my mouth anymore.

God can change your heart. God can change your tongue. God can change your life. But it requires dependency. Yes, it's great that we gather once a month as a church to seek God in prayer. Yes, it's great, as a staff, we meet every single week and we pray. And we're all about prayer, but there needs to be individual times of prayer before the Lord too, where you're asking the Lord, "Lord, is there anything in my heart that's not right, where things are coming out of my mouth that aren't

benefiting others the way that they need to? So that all my speech would be seasoned with salt and full of grace, so it would benefit everybody who listens?"

Because we, in the church, we make up excuses for God's standards all the time. "Hey, I'm not gossiping to you, I need to tell you this so you can pray about it." No, it's gossip. If they're not there, it's gossip. "Well, I don't gossip, but I'm a very comfortable place for people that want to talk." Well, you're a gossip too. Because it takes two people to gossip; one to listen and one to speak. And it's all about the heart. And this is convicting for us as Christians because what we talk about is honoring others, and church attendance, and serving, and being in a small group, and giving, and all these different things, and God's like, "Yeah, that's all good, that's all good, that's all good. I care about your heart, and your tongue is reflective of what your heart actually believes." That's what the Lord tells us.

The Lord tells us that words indicate our worship. Whatever people talk about, whatever they're speaking on, that's what's going on in their heart. When you're around people, they speak about Jesus? When you're around people, they speak about football? When you're around people, they speak about their job, they speak about money, they speak about their kids, they speak about their spouse, they speak about their dating life? You can tell what they're worshipping just by what's coming out of their mouth. They worship their health. What is it? They worship their retirement. They worship their travel. What are they talking about?

And God tells us that we need to be dependent upon Him, because He's the only

one that can change our heart. And the good news is that He can. The good news is, as I've read this so many times this week and the last week, you think, "Okay, I'm good if I just never talk again." But God says, "No, it's not about not talking again, it's about you talking but talking responsibly, and you're talking intentionally, and you're talking with humility, and you're talking dependently, leaning on me."

And then this final one, He gives this final handle here is when you speak, speak consistently. Speak consistently, growing as a faithful witness. God wants you to speak consistently. Notice what verse nine and following says, speak consistently. He talks about the tongue, after He talks about it being evil and full of deadly poison. He says, "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, you can be in church singing hallelujah, praise the Lord, amen brother and sister, and five minutes later, ripping somebody up with your tongue and cutting them to shreds. With the same tongue that you said, "Praise the Lord", is the same tongue you're destroying the one that the Lord created. He says, how can this be? How can this be?

Here's what He's saying. Have consistency in your walk. We talk about not being a Christian chameleon, where you're with this group one way, and you're with this group over here, and you're with that group. Same is true of your speech. Can you consistently speak in all the venues that you're in, "This is what I believe, this is why I believe it, this is who I am, because that's who I am, and I'm going to speak consistently that way"? Notice what He goes on to say. He gives an analogy. He says,

"Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can saltwater produce fresh."

He said, you're either one or the other. You don't want to go to a drinking fountain and try to guess is it going to be salty or is it going to be water? Or is it going to come out a little bit of both? When you go to a drinking fountain, you want it to be fresh. When go to your refrigerator, you want it to be fresh. He says, be consistent in what you are saying. Jesus said it like this. He said, "You'll know a tree by its fruits." In Matthew 7 in the Sermon on the Mount, He says this in Matthew 7:18. He says, "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits."

Now, the reality is we can't produce fruit in our own life. I can't make myself fruitful. I can't make myself more loving or more joyous. I can bear fruit by allowing my dependency on Christ to grow me, and my consistency with Christ to complete what He has begun in my life. But make no mistake about it, if you are born again, God will begin to control your tongue. Not perfectly, but increasingly. And if you seek Him, He will show you conversations that you had that, if you can have a do-over, He will give you the opportunity. Remember when you were a kid, and you're playing sports in the backyard, and nobody can figure out what call to make? "Oh, do-over! You get a do-over, we're going to re-pitch that, it's a do-over." God can give you one better than a do-over. God's grace is better than a do-over. He can wash the slate clean from your

past, and you can start fresh from where you are right now. Isn't that good news this morning? That's what God does with the tongue.

And by the way, this is not just being good, and being responsible, and being intentional, but all those things mean... Sometimes it means speaking up and speaking out for others that can't too. Like when we see things in our world that just aren't right, it means I'm being responsible and I'm being intentional, and I'm going to do it with humility and dependence upon the Lord, but I'm going to speak up and speak out that that's wrong. And that's loving, too. That's honoring the Lord.

If you study the ministry, Jesus' earthly ministry, you'll see everything He said was intentional, and responsible, and humble, and dependent on His Father, of, "You only see me doing what I see my Father doing." And you see complete consistency. And that's why when people read different things that He did, like when He made a cord of three strands, and drove people out of the temple, and said, "Oh, He was an angry Jesus that day. That wasn't very good." No, He was responsible, He was intentional, He was humble, He was dependent. And what was He doing? He was standing up and He was speaking out against those who were going against His Dad. And He said, "My Father's house will be called a house of prayer. You've made it a den of thieves, and I love you enough to tell you that." And He was doing it all right.

It doesn't mean that we're mundane and we just, "I'm a Christian, and here's what I think. I can't have any emotion. I have to be..." That's not what it means. It means I'm being very intentional and responsible about what I say, and how I say it,

and what I do, and what I don't do, and when I don't speak. And there's times you need to have restraint. There's times that... Don't say anything. Sometimes if you're married, don't say anything. Sometimes with your kids, don't say anything. Sometimes with your boss, don't say anything. Why? Because where there are many words, sin is not absent. Don't try to win the argument. Sometimes it's best to restrain. Extroverts, I'm talking to you, okay?

But sometimes there's those times where it's like, "I see this, I see this, I see it, but somebody's got to say something. How come nobody's saying..." Say it. Say it. Speak the truth in love, but say it. Say it. We got too many people that are hiding behind truths that aren't willing to say what God is actually saying that needs to be said. And in your sphere of influence, say it, and then grow consistently. So when people are around you, they know, "I know what she believes, I know what he believes, I know what that young boy believes, I know what that young girl believes, because every single place they are, that's who and what they're talking about. They're consistent in their walk with Jesus."

Now, these five handles are things that we can grow in. As we depend upon the Lord, we can grow in our intentionality, we can grow in our responsibility, our humility, and our consistency with the Lord so that we can speak up for Christ. Now, I know this is a convicting message, and the reason I know that is because the Lord's been speaking to me for the last two weeks specifically about all these things. But it's not to put you down or shame you, because we already said no one can keep it perfect. If you could make your tongue perfect, then everything about you would be perfect. But I

know one who is perfect, and His name is Jesus. And if you've turned from your sin and invited Christ into your life, He's in you, and He can perfect what is not perfect in you. He can make right what's been wrong, if and only if you'll get right with Him.

So, before we close today in worship, I'm going to invite you to stand. We're going to sing two different songs about the honor and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. But before we sing, I just want to lead you in a prayer of repentance, just for you before the Lord, because perhaps there's something the Lord pointed out to you today where you said, "I know that's me, and this is how I've been speaking to so-and-so. This is how I've been talking with so-and-so. I should have been doing this differently. I need a do-over here." So we're going to come before the Lord, and ask Him to give us that new heart so that we can live the way He wants us to live.

Our Father in heaven, we come before you. We give you all glory, honor, and praise. Lord, we thank you that you do better than a do-over. You gave your very life on a cross. You shed your blood to not only wash us, but to cleanse us from the inside out. Lord, your Word says if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sin, you're faithful and just to not only forgive our sins, but to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Father, we've just come before you this morning as a congregation and say, Lord, this is where my words have been wrong. You've shown me this morning. Lord, I want to turn from that. Lord, forgive me for that. I repent of that. And Lord, show me, as much as there's power in me, to make that right. Not just lip service, but speech that is backed by my actions. Father, you are holy. You'll always be holy. You'll be holy

forever. You're worthy of everything. Lord, we're going to stand before you someday. You tell us in your Word, in Romans 3, that your law will stop the mouths of those who don't know you. Father, you've convicted us this morning, but you've given us handles to go live. Father, show us how to worship you with our tongues, how to live out our lives so that our whole body can be aligned with you. We give you all the glory, honor, and praise. In Jesus' name, amen and amen and amen.

I'm going to invite some of our elders and pastors up front here during the singing of this song. If there's time of prayer that you need to have, feel free during these two songs to come forward. But let's give God praise for His Word this morning.