The Tale of the Tongue

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[0:00] If you would open with me to James chapter 3. Words that stick, words that shape, words that impact, opening lines of stories or movies shape the course of the story.

They shape the course of the speech. And in the case of a speech or a sermon, opening words determine whether the listener will still continue to be a listener.
If they'll continue to engage with what's being said. And I'm sure you can think of a great movie that you love. You know the opening line of it if it's a good one.
Or a book that you've read that has an iconic opening line. And there are a few of those that come to mind. I haven't read all of these, but A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens.
You'll be familiar with the opening line. It was the best of times and it was the worst of times. Or C.S. Lewis' Voyage of the Dawn Shredder opening line is, There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb and he almost deserved it.
[1:30] That's iconic. Or Pride and Prejudice. Haven't read the book? Watched the movie? It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

I've seen the movie multiple times with my wife, Lacey. I used to pretend that I didn't like it. Like first time she was like, let's watch this. I'm like, this is a chick flick, whatever. I was like, oh, that was kind of good. But I can't let her know that I thought it was good or else we'll watch it all the time.
And I'm over that now. I love it. It's a great movie. So I'm not a marriage expert, not a dating expert. But if you tried suggesting watching Pride and Prejudice, maybe. Who knows? Opening words set the tone for the story.
And they land with great weight because they've been carefully thought through and carefully chosen. And we can feel the impact that they make. But there are words that are more weighty than the opening lines of a good story.
There are words that are more important and more impactful than the words of our favorite movie. The words that pass over our tongue every single day have both temporal and eternal consequences for our lives and for the lives of those around us.
[2:49] Careless words we speak. Words we say in an unplanned way. Words we say without thought. Words we say that are funny. Words we say that are mean. Harsh words.

Joking words. Sinful words. Sarcastic words. Every word we speak is full of weight and importance. And as Proverbs 18.21 says that death and life are in the power of the tongue.
And we recognize that that's true because we know how bad it hurts when someone speaks against us. We know how awful it feels when someone talks bad about us and we hear about it.
But if we're honest with ourselves, we've also, on many occasions, spoken mean words about other people. We've also spoken unkind words about others behind their backs.
And so you're probably taught as a kid, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. It's not true. It's a lie. I'm not calling your parents liars, but whoever taught you that, you know, it's not true. And we know it's not true because we have wounds that won't heal that were caused by words.
[3:59] Wounds that are deep and lasting. And it's easy to recognize words that are hurtful towards us. It's easy to recognize when someone sins against us, but it's much more difficult to realize when we have sinned against someone else with our words.

The harsh words we speak against other people just kind of fly off our tongues and we don't give them a second thought. But words spoken against us stick with us and land with a lot of weight. James is talking about these things in the first half of chapter 3.

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And so our title tonight is The Tale of the Tongue. And James is going to be talking all about our speech. And so I just want to read verses 1 through 12 for us to begin our time together.
So James chapter 3 beginning with verse 1. Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers. For you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.
For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man. Able also to bridle his whole body.
[5:06] If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also. Though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder.

Wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire.
And the tongue is a fire. A world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body. Setting on fire the entire course of life.
And set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no human being can tame the tongue.
It is a restless evil full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father. And with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.
[6:13] My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives? Or a grapevine produce figs?

Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. Last week we saw that James talked about the danger of a faith that says but does not do.
A faith that claims Christ but does not obey Christ. But here in this passage we see that what we say is still incredibly important. What we say defines who we are.
And so tonight we'll see three things that the tongue does to our life. Number one, the tongue controls life. Or you could say our speech controls life.
And we see this in verses one through the first part of verse five. And so as we've read this passage you see that James is launching a broad discussion about how all of these Christians use their words.
[7:15] How all of these Christians use their speech. But he begins this section with a very narrow focus on pastors. On teachers in the church.

And why is that? Why does he begin here by talking about those who teach God's word? Why does he give a warning to people who teach? Well the preacher or the teacher's primary job is to use their words to explain what God is like.
To explain his word. And as you can see our speech is very easily sinful. And so if a teacher's primary task is to use their words and our words so often go wrong.
You see that being a teacher is not necessarily safe. And so James gives a warning here. Evidently this church just had a bunch of people trying to be teachers.
A bunch of people trying to be Sunday school teachers or pastors. And James doesn't want to completely shut them down. But he wants them to pause and think before they jump in. So he says, Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers.
[8:20] For you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. Standing up in front of God's people and speaking for God to his people has great consequences both for good or for bad.

There's a lot of good that can come from a faithful pastor explaining God's word. There's a lot of bad that can come from someone misrepresenting God. Or someone living a hypocritical or double life who claims to speak for God.
And so I, as a pastor, will have a stricter and more rigorous judgment before Christ than you will. And that should keep me honest. That should keep all of our pastors honest.
Recognizing that we will give an account to God for every word we've spoken to you. From the pulpit or just in personal conversation. And so being a pastor isn't something that you just kind of walk into saying, Well, I'm not really good at anything else.
So I'll just be a pastor. It comes with a stricter, more rigorous judgment when teacher of God's word stands before Christ. Again, I said a couple of weeks ago, don't show favoritism to pastors.

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[9:32] I think we should be thankful for good pastors. They can be a gift from the Lord in our lives. But everything I say should be examined in light of what God has already said in his word.

That's going to be what I'm judged by. And so evaluate me now. Don't be like, I don't really see that, but you know, I like Joey, so it's fine. Don't let me do that. Hold me to the standard of God's word. Don't show favoritism toward pastors. And James gives a sober warning here. I just heard a story on Sunday. There's a young man in our church who's in elementary still.
And he was going to a birthday party over the weekend. And before he went to this birthday party, his mom was like, Okay, don't do bad stuff. Like always obey God. Always obey your parents. You know, listen to what we say.
Hey, if there's someone there who tries to tempt you to disobey us or to go against what God has said, don't do it. If there's an adult there that tries to get you to do something wrong, don't do it.
[10:32] I don't know what kind of birthday party this was. And she was like, you know what? For that matter, if a pastor tells you to do something wrong, don't do it. And he goes, I know who you're talking about. And she's like, well, no, I'm not talking about our old church.

I'm not talking about anyone in particular. Like, I'm just saying, in general, if there's a pastor that tells you to do something wrong, don't do it. And he's like, yeah, I know who you're talking about. She's like, who do you think I'm talking about? And he goes, Joey. And she was like, well, what do you think Joey would try to get you to do that was wrong?
He's like, I don't know, something criminal. So watch out for me, okay? So you never know. So anyway, verse 2, James says, for we all stumble in many ways.
And James kind of humbly includes himself in those who stumble. He says, all of us as human beings stumble in many ways. And I don't think the emphasis is on how many sins we commit.
I think the emphasis here is on the variety of sins we commit, okay? So there may be one or two sins that we as individuals struggle with. But James is focusing here on the variety, the different kinds of sins that we commit.
[11:42] There are so many ways in which we are sinful. You can be sinful by being angry. You can be sinful by being prideful or lustful or jealous or lazy or idolatrous.

The list goes on and on of different ways that you can be sinful. And James just summarizes it by saying, we all stumble in many ways. And so for those who want to enter into pastoral ministry, they need to take care and do that slowly because all of us stumble in a lot of ways.
And James says, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man. Able also to bridle his whole body.
If someone is able to be perfect in their speech, then they're going to be able to resist every other temptation as well, is what James is saying. Our speech directly reflects what's in our heart.
And so James is saying, if your speech is perfectly pure, that means your heart is perfectly pure.
And so if your speech and your heart are perfectly pure, your whole life is going to be sinless.
[12:55] But James says, we all stumble in many ways. Jesus says in Matthew 12, 34, out of the abundance or out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

And so if we could perfectly control our tongues, if we could perfectly control the words we say, we would be perfect people, able to be sinless. Now why does James spend so much time talking about speech here?
Why is he going to spend 12 verses talking about it? In fact, he mentions words that we say in every single chapter of this short letter. Why is this such an important topic for James to cover?
Well, he's going to use nature to show us some pictures of how damaging our speech can actually be. How destructive our speech can truly be.
The words that we speak possess a terrifying power to create chaos and unleash hell on earth. We don't usually think about our words possessing that kind of power.
[14:03] But James wants to wake us up and help us recognize how powerful our words can be in destroying things that are good.

Certainly our words have an equal power to build someone up, to encourage someone. But James here is focused on the negative. And so it's likely this church was not using their words in a glorifying, in a God glorifying way.
And James is going to start with two images from nature, two images from life to demonstrate the power of the tongue. He's going to point us to horses and he's going to point us to cruise ships, basically.

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Big boats. And the point in both of these pictures is the same. That there is a small piece of both of those things that determines the entire direction that they take.
And so look with me at verse 3. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.
[15:10] And so if you've seen a horse, it'll usually have a bridle kind of on its face and on its head. And there's going to be a metal piece in its mouth. That part is called the bit. And basically it's connected to the reins.

And so if the person riding the horse pulls back on the reins, if they pull back really hard, the horse will completely stop. If they just kind of gently pull back a little bit, the horse will slow down. If they pull the reins right or left, it determines which way the horse turns and how intense his speed is. And so that little piece of metal during the Kentucky Derby can determine where a thoroughbred goes. And how intense his speed is.
And so the power of a large horse is harnessed and controlled by its mouth. Its mouth determines the direction of its action.
And James says in verse 4, Look at the ships also. Though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.
[16:12] And so I haven't been on a cruise, but I've seen pictures of cruise ships and they are huge. They are enormous. And what determines the direction that that cruise ship takes?

Well, it's a rudder that in proportion to the rest of the ship is very small. And it's connected to a steering wheel that the pilot directs. And the steering wheel is likewise small, but the whole direction, the whole course of that ship is determined by something that in proportion is very small. Or if you think about your car or your parents' car. Your car probably weighs two tons. On average, that's what a car weighs. And what determines the direction that your car takes?
The steering wheel weighs like five pounds. But that little thing determines where all the weight of your car is going to go. That's James' point in these two images.
And he says in verse 5, So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. In the exact same way.
[17:18] The tongue is a small body part, but it shapes the course of your entire life. And not just the course of your earthly life, even the course of your eternal destiny.

Your tongue will reveal where you will go when you die, because it exposes what's in your heart. It reveals where your heart is. And so just like the opening lines of a great story or a great movie shape the direction of that entire story.
The opening line is written in light of the whole story. And so it sets the trajectory for the whole story. Your words set the trajectory for your life.
And so what does your speech say about you? What does your speech say about your heart? Where is your life heading?
And I can tell you the world doesn't need more people who gossip or complain or cut down or critique or backstab or belittle.
[18:22] There are plenty of people like that. So if you want to be a good church member, if you want to serve the Lord, if you want to be a good employee, if you want to be a good brother or sister or a good friend, watch your mouth.

Examine what comes out of your mouth. Because the tongue controls life. But we see secondly that the tongue destroys life.
The tongue destroys life. And we see this at the end of verse 5 and in verse 6. James says, How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire.
And the idea here is that a great forest fire starts with just a little spark. Just a little fire that starts in the brush or in the undergrowth of the forest. Forest fires are always started by a small spark or a small fire.
Fire. And when you think about fire, fire is unique in all of the world. And it has an unbelievable ability to never stop growing.
[19:25] As long as it has enough fuel and oxygen. As long as there's those things, the fire will never stop growing until it's put out or until it runs out of fuel or oxygen.

It's unique in that way. If you went outside to, we've got some dead grass out here because it's a super hot summer. Talk to Mike Christie about it. But we've got some dead grass out here. If you go outside and pour a water bottle out, it's never going to turn into a flood.

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No one's going to be like, oh hey, what's going on? It's never going to turn into a flood. It's just going to sit there. But if you go out into some dry grass and just light a match and flick it, in just a matter of time, that fire is going to consume acres and acres of land and houses and life.
And that fire will not be contained until it's done great damage. James says in verse 6, the tongue is a fire.
Words that are spoken carelessly are like flicking lit matches into a dry forest. And James says it's a world, the tongue is a world of unrighteousness.
[20:34] What does he mean by saying it's a world of unrighteousness? I think what he means is that every sin we see out in the world, every sin we see people committing, is a sin that we also see people's speech committing as well.

You think about lying. That's obviously a sin of the speech. But you think about adultery. Where does that start? Well, it starts in the heart. But what initiates things like that are flirtatious comments. What about stealing?
Well, there's some plotting that goes on. There's some planning that takes place with speech. There's some coveting that takes place in the heart. But it comes out in speech saying, I want what they have.
Words have an incomprehensible capacity to cause chaos in our world. The tongue is a fire. And James says the tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life and set on fire by hell.
The tongue determines what the entire course of your life looks like. Your speech will control your life and even destroy your life.
[21:47] It will turn you down the road of life like a bit in a horse's mouth or like the rudder of a ship. And your tongue can ruin your life. I have a friend I was talking to recently.

He was telling me a story about one of his friends. This is a friend of a friend that these things happen to. But he was about my age, so early 30s. Had a great job.
Was making six figures. Reputable company. Stable job market. Family was good and healthy. In many ways, he was living the dream. He had, I mean, it was set up for him to be successful.
Well, this guy was playing online chess. And he made a comment there that we'll just say was racially insensitive.
Okay? It wasn't like crazy, crazy, but it was racially insensitive. Now, his username on the online chess world had no connection to who he was or where he lived or anything like that.
[22:47] Well, the person he said the comment to and against did some research, did some digging, found out who he was, found out where he worked, sent the comment he made to his bosses, and he was fired.

Lost his job. His speech destroyed his life. And that's a little bit of an extreme example, but it's not any more extreme than what James says here, that the tongue has destructive power.
And it's just a reminder that sin can't be compartmentalized in our life. It's easy for us to say, like, well, yeah, I sinned, but no one saw it. Or I sinned, but yeah, that was at school. I wasn't at church, so it doesn't really matter.
Sin is like a wildfire. Fire just consumes everything around it. It can't be contained. And where does this fire come from? Where does this sinful speech come from? James says it's set on fire by hell.
That's a little bit of an alarming statement, but you think about Peter in Matthew 16. He confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus praises Peter and says, flesh and blood hasn't revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven has.
[24:01] And then Jesus goes on to predict his death and resurrection. And when he talks about his death, Peter pulls him aside and says, hey, no, no, no. You're not going to die. And what does Jesus say to them?

He says, get behind me, Satan. Peter, I think, is a believer at this point. He knows who Christ is, and yet the words he was speaking were, he was reflecting the agenda of Satan himself.
He was speaking the words from the pit of hell, trying to prevent Christ from dying and paying for the sins of his people. And so James is graphically saying that our sinful speech ultimately belongs in hell.
That's where our sinful speech belongs. And sinful speech comes from creatures like the devil. We are responsible for the words we speak, but James is speaking very directly and very plainly here that we resemble Satan more than Christ when we use our words to destroy.

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One sinful comment, one lie, one flirtatious remark can lead to more lying, can lead to anger, can lead to hatred. And trying to contain the effects of our sinful speech is more difficult than trying to control a wildfire.
[25:15] If you remember with the hot summer we had, there were several wildfires that broke out kind of around where we live and maybe very close to where you live depending on where your house is.

But there would be updates on the news. Firefighters would go out there, they'd be responding to these, and they'd give updates on the news. This fire has consumed this many acres, and it's 20% contained. This fire is now 40% contained.
And what's happening is that fire is just causing damage, and it's consuming everything it comes in contact with. And the firefighters are doing their best to contain it, to try to restrain it so it stops.
But they can't undo the damage it's already done. They can stop it from doing further damage, they can slow it down, but they can't restore what the fire has burned. You can't just undo the damage that's caused by fire, and you can't undo the damage that your words have caused.
Once you've spoken harmful words, once you've spoken hateful words, you can't put them back in the box. And thirdly, James says, the tongue curses life.
[26:21] The tongue curses life. We see this in verses 7 through 12. James says, every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

And so James categorizes animals into four different kinds or four different types here. This is very much like Genesis 1. There's beasts of the field, birds of the heavens, things that creep on the ground are reptiles, and then sea creatures.
Animals from all four of these categories have been tamed by mankind. You can go to the zoo and see all kinds of them. You can go to SeaWorld, see other kinds of sea creatures that have been tamed.
And you can see all different kinds of animals, cattle and eagles and snakes and dolphins, all under the dominion and control of man. And in some sense, these animals are more reasonable than our speech, because they can be controlled, they can be tamed.
James says in verse 8, but no human being can tame the tongue. Our speech, in some ways, is untameable.
[27:35] It's uncontrollable. It's wild. It's savage. And if you think James is exaggerating here, then try to go one week without saying something sinful. Good luck.

James is not exaggerating here. Human speech, he says, cannot be tamed by man. He says it is a restless evil full of deadly poison.
The tongue is like a venomous snake. It is crafty and scheming and destructive and full of poison.
And I told Lee Team this on Sunday night, but I came into my office on Sunday morning, and I've got this little bug trap that sits behind my door.
It's really kind of a mousetrap, but it catches bugs. And I say catch like I collect them, like it kills them. That's what I want bugs to do. Anyway, so I noticed when I was closing my door, the bug trap was kind of scooted out from where it should have been all the way back in the corner.
And I was like, oh, that's weird. And it caught the corner of my eye, and I was like, oh, it's full of something. And it was a snake. There's a snake that had crawled into my office, and not like a little snake that looks like a worm.
[28:47] Like this was a full-blown snake that had kind of gotten caught in my little mousetrap. And I don't know how it got there. My office is very internal. If you've been to it, maybe someone put it in there.

Who knows? But anyway, snakes are crafty. They get into houses and churches, evidently, when you don't want them there. And James is comparing our speech, our tongue, to a venomous snake.
But in reality, our speech is far more dangerous than a venomous snake. Because someone's words can attack you from a distance.
A snake can really only kill one life at a time. But words won't just destroy a life. Words can rip down the fabric of society.
Careless words can lead to mass destruction. And why is our speech so untameable? Well, James points to the hypocrisy of our speech.
[29:48] You see that in verse 9. With it, with our tongue, we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. We use our words to praise God on Sunday,

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and we use our words to curse people on Monday.

We use our words to worship God at church, and we use our words to tear people down throughout the week. And we might have neat, different little ways of explaining it away.
I was just joking. I was just venting. I just had to get that off my chest. I'm just angry. It was just a joke. James speaks very directly and says, this is cursing human beings who are made in God's image.
If you brought me the worst human being on the face of the planet, I don't know how you'd quantify that, but if you brought me the worst human being on the face of the planet, we could still point to someone who's worthy of some level of honor, some level of dignity because he's made in the image of God.
And James is saying, your words against people are cursing people who are made in the likeness of God. And so this should make us very slow to speak against people.
[31:07] And James summarizes in verse 10, from the same mouth come blessing and cursing. It's not fitting that this is the case.

It's hypocritical, yet we recognize that so many times we've taken part in this hypocrisy. We have sung to the Lord on Sunday morning or Wednesday night, and then within 24 hours we've spoken bad about someone.
We've gossiped about someone. We've uttered something hateful about someone else. With the same instrument, with the same tongue, we praise God who made us, and we tear someone down that God made.
And James says this shouldn't be the case. These things ought not to be so. And then he concludes with four more images from nature to demonstrate this isn't fitting.
This isn't right. This isn't how things should be. So he says in verse 11, does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water?
[32:17] Obvious answer is no. Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Answer to both those questions is again, no.

And James says, neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. These things don't mix. They don't go together. We could ask, can Whataburger make seafood?
No. Does McDonald's make sushi? No. And if either of those fine dining establishments starts to do that, please, for the sake of our health and sewer system, stay away.
Don't go near either of those places if they start doing that. That's not what they do. That's not what they're for. And James is, that's what he's saying here. He's, look at nature.
Do you see salt water and fresh water coming from the same source? Do you see a certain type of tree producing a different kind of fruit? That's what it's like when you as a Christian speak poorly against someone else, speak sinfully against someone else.
[33:26] A clean heart, a new heart, should not produce corrupt words. So I've got five things to conclude with here, five ways to apply this.

This is very direct and very applicational, but how should we respond to these things? How should we live in light of what James has said? Number one, be careful what you say.
Be careful what you say. And that's probably the most obvious takeaway from James's little paragraph here on sins of speech. But be careful what you say because what you say really is who you are, or at the very least, it's who you're becoming.
It's who you will become. It reveals the trajectory of your life. It reveals what's in your heart. So be careful what you say. Number two, remember that your speech is a reflection of your heart.
Remember that your speech is a reflection of your heart. Whatever you say, came from your heart.
[34:47] And there are instances where you'll say something and it even kind of surprises you that you said it. Like, oh, I didn't mean that. I just kind of was speaking off the cuff. I was just, you know, I didn't mean to say that.

Well, that came from your heart. It's a reflection of what truly was in your heart, what you were thinking about, what you were maybe meditating on. And it's possible for us as Christians to become kind of ingrained in the habit of speaking sinfully.
Our hearts are still sinful and so we will speak sinfully, but we can let it become a habit. We can let it become a defining part of our life. And we must remember, we can't distance ourself from our speech.

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We can't compartmentalize that part of our lives. What we say is, in a very real sense, who we are. And so if we're speaking sinfully, like James says, this should not be the case.
It shouldn't be this way. Number three, let God's word convict your heart. Let God's word convict your heart.
[35:49] You might be feeling guilty right now. And that would make sense. This is a very convicting passage to think about. I've been convicted this week as I've been studying it. And that's good.

You should feel guilty. I should feel guilty because we've sinned with the words we've said. And so let that guilt do its job. Let that guilt lead you to repentance. Turn to the Lord and ask him for forgiveness.
If you've sinned against someone else in what you've said, go to them and ask for their forgiveness. Let God's word convict your heart. Number four, don't take everything to heart.
It's a little bit confusing. I'll explain. Don't take everything to heart. And if you're taking notes, if you just want to write down Ecclesiastes 7, 21 and 22, this is Solomon's wisdom to not take everything to heart.
He says in Ecclesiastes 7, 21 and 22, do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you.
[36:58] And he says something interesting. For you yourself know that at many times you have cursed others. And so Solomon's wisdom there is that we recognize we are sinful in the way we speak.

And so when we hear someone speak sinfully against us, don't let it lodge in your heart. Don't be meditating on that comment, that rude remark that someone made to you. Remember, they're sinners, but you're a sinner too.
And at many times, in many different ways, you have spoken sinfully against others as well. And so don't take everything to heart.
You may hear that someone's spoken poorly of you. You may hear that someone has made a rude comment about you. According to Ecclesiastes 7, don't take it to heart.
Remember things like James 3. We are sinful and fundamentally broken, and that comes out in our speech. Then number five, remember God's grace.
[37:57] Remember God's grace. If you're a believer, we are all a work in progress when it comes to our speech.

We will still sin against each other. We still need to forgive each other because we will sin against each other in what we say. And look back with me at what James says in verse 8.
No human being can tame the tongue. James actually makes a very specific comment here. He could just say that no one can tame the tongue, but what he says is no human being can tame the tongue.
And so the implication is that God is the one who can help you control your speech. God is the one who can help you overcome your sinful habit of speaking sinfully. So let him work.
Let submit to the Spirit's work in your life. There's a quote from a guy named John Newton I want to read for you. John Newton famously wrote the hymn Amazing Grace.
[39:02] Before he was a Christian, he was actually involved in the slave trade of buying slaves from Africa and transporting them elsewhere in the world. He was heavily involved in that. Heard the gospel, got saved, repented of that, turned away from his life of buying and selling slaves and wrote Amazing Grace.

But he said this about God's grace. He said, I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. I am not what I someday hope to be. But by God's grace, I am not what I used to be. We are all a work in progress.
And so if God has saved you, he is making you like his son. And so let's be patient with each other as the Lord is conforming us to his son. And God is making you more like Jesus if you're a believer. And Jesus never sinned with his lips. He never sinned with his speech. He never spoke one sinful word. And so as a Christian, you should be becoming more like that.
[40:09] You should be becoming more righteous in your speech. And so the question is, have you trusted him? And does your speech make that clear?

In Ephesians 4 and Ephesians 5, Paul says, let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only as such as is good for building up that it may give grace to those who hear.

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The proper use of our speech is to glorify the Lord and praise him and tell the gospel to others as we build them up. Father, we thank you so much for our time in the word this evening.
We thank you for allowing Matt Boswell to be here with us to lead us in worship. That was such a gift. I pray now as students go to small groups that there would be edifying and helpful discussion as we think further about how we use our speech.
And it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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