

Undivided Speech

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Date: 21 October 2018

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[0 : 00] Good morning brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's come to the Lord in prayer. Father God, as we open up your word, speak to us.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our heart be pleasing in your sight. O Lord, our God. Amen. There was a man. He has got a sore throat. Stubborn sore throat for quite some time. His voice was hoarse. So he was very worried. Because the newspapers were full of reports about cancer and smoking. So he was very worried. He went to see a throat specialist.

The specialist examined him for 30 minutes. After the 30 minutes examination, the doctor told the patient, told him, You come back next day. Go home first, come back next day. I want to check again.

So he was very worried. He was full of fears. And he could not sleep that night. Next day, he went back to see the doctor. The doctor gave him a long examination.

[1 : 17] This man cannot tahan anymore. So long examination. So he blurted out. He exclaimed, Doctor, tell me. Tell me what my problem is. Don't worry. I have lived a full and rich life.

I can stand the truth. Just tell me what my problem is. Tell me what my problem is. Doctor, what's wrong with me? The doctor looked at him and said, You know what your problem is?

You know what your problem is? You talk too much. Is that your problem too? Talking too much? It's my problem.

My wife said so. My wife said that I talk too much because I have no brain. If I use my brain more, I'll talk less. God has given us many abilities.

And one of the most powerful ability is the ability to speak. The power of speech is one of the greatest power God has given to us.

[2 : 16] With the tongue, man can praise God. Man can preach the word of God. Man can lead people to Christ. What a privilege. But at the same time, with the same tongue, man can destroy a person's reputation or break a person's heart.

The ability to speak is the ability to influence and accomplish great tasks. In order to impress on us the importance of controlling our tongue and the consequences of our words, Pastor James uses four pictures, at least four pictures of the tongue to describe the tongue.

The beat, the rudder, poison and also fire. Verses 1 to 4. Xiang Ying, verses 1 to 4.

Second slide. The controlled tongue. Is it working? Wait a minute. I want the verse.

The controlled tongue. The beat and the rudder. Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers. Because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways.

[3 : 41] Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect. Able to keep their whole body in check. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.

Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Apparently, Pastor James wrote this letter.

When Pastor James wrote this letter, Too many people, too many men wanted to become teachers of God's word. Too many men wanted to become teachers. So James had to warn them, Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers.

Why do you think? Why do they want to become teachers? Why do they want to become teachers?

Perhaps they were impressed by the authority. They were impressed by the prestige of a teacher.

People tend to look up to the teachers at that time. But teaching comes with tremendous responsibility.

[4 : 51] Teaching comes with tremendous accountability. Those who teach the word of God face stricter judgment. Teachers must use their tongue to teach God's word.

And it is easy to commit sins of the tongue. Furthermore, teachers must practice what they teach. Otherwise, their teaching is hypocrisy.

Think of the damage that can be done by a teacher who is unprepared. Whose life, whose spiritual life is not up to par. Whose spiritual life is not up to standard.

Here I want to ask, Who do you think are the teachers of God's word? Who do you think? Many assume that the teachers of God's words are people like pastors or Pastor Brian.

Or the preachers here teaching the word of God. But the teachers of God's words also include Bible study leaders. And also Sunday school teachers.

[6 : 01] So Bible study leaders and Sunday school teachers should not take these responsibilities lightly. If you are leading a Bible study, if you are teaching children God's word, you take this just as seriously.

You prepare yourself thoroughly and carefully. I know what some of you are thinking.

Good that I am not a teacher of God's word. What a relief. I'm spared. I'm spared from stricter judgment. Let others teach the word of God.

I will remain as a student all my life. And let the teaching be done by others. We use verse 1 as an excuse of not wanting to be a teacher of God's word.

I will say, if James were to write this letter today, if he were to write this letter today to our church, he will say, many of you should become teachers of God's word.

[7 : 13] Why? Why do I say so? Because there are just too few, too few teachers of God's word. We prefer to be teachers of mathematics, teachers of science, teachers of English, rather than to be teachers of God's word.

Yes, the responsibility is heavy. The responsibility is huge. You will be judged more severely, but God will help you.

It is an honor and privilege to teach God's word, to serve God in this capacity. As you teach, you will grow in the Lord. Usually, those who teach God's word, grow more than those who have been taught.

Then, what is the correct attitude towards this ministry of teaching? Should you ever desire to teach, to be a teacher of God's word? The correct attitude is found in 1 Peter 4, verse 10 to 11. Verse 10 to 11. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God.

[8 : 32] If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things, God may be praised through Jesus Christ. If God has given you a teaching gift, then use this gift to teach God's word.

Why? Why? So that God, according to this verse, so that God may be praised through Jesus Christ. God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

Now we come to James 3, verse 2. We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

The New Living Translation says this, Indeed, we all make many mistakes, for if we could control our tongue, we will be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.

The tongue is the most obvious member of the body to sin. And it is also the most difficult one to control. Imagine, what if a person really could control his tongue, control the most difficult member of his body?

[9 : 49] He would use his words of persuasion to convince others, to convince them the beauty and the truth of the gospel. He would use his words of humor to bring cheer to someone, to bring encouragement, to bring comfort to people.

But, this is easier said than done. It is easy. It is easier to use his words of persuasion for his own selfish agenda.

It is easier to use his words of humor to humiliate other people, to insult people, or to tear someone down. It is easier to say negative.

It is easier to say negative things than positive ones. The person who is able to discipline his tongue is indeed a mature person.

This is the meaning of the word perfect here. Perfect. It means mature. And he is also able to control himself in every other way.

[10:54] Now we come to the first two pictures James used to describe the tongue. In using the pictures of bead and rudder, James presented two items.

Two items. They are small, small in themselves, yet exercise great power, just like the tongue. A small bead enables the rider to control a huge horse.

And a small rudder enables the pilot to steer a big ship. The tongue is a small member of the body. And yet, he has a power to accomplish great things.

The bead and rudder have the power to direct. The bead directs the horse. The rudder directs the ship. Which means they can affect the lives of others.

Our words can give guidance to people. Never underestimate the guidance you give by the words you speak. Remember Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4.

[12:05] Jesus spoke to a woman at a well and her life and the lives of her neighbours were transformed. Remember Peter and the 3,000. Peter preached at Pentecost and 3,000 adults came to salvation to believe in Jesus.

The tongue has a power to direct others to make the right decision. The best way to use our tongue is to direct someone to Christ.

We are here today because someone used his tongue to tell us about Jesus. Jesus. They used their tongue to direct us to Jesus.

Thank God for these souls. I've got a hairdresser who is very talkative. What does she talk about? Most of the time when I was there when she talked she talked about Jesus.

When a client comes in who is a non-believer she would encourage him or her to believe in Jesus while doing their hair one day I was sitting one time I went to her shop and then I was sitting not very far away from her.

[13:23] She told her client about me. She said look at this brother this man he is also a Christian he believes in Jesus so it's good to believe in Jesus. So I will chip in I will tell her customer I said good to believe in Jesus.

James is saying never underestimate the power of the tongue it is so so small but so powerful. Yes the tongue is like a bead and rudder it has a power to direct how important it is that our tongues direct people to the right way and the ultimate right way is the way of Jesus.

Yes use our tongue to direct others to Jesus. Now I want you to think for a moment about some words you have heard that have encouraged you.

Some words that have a positive impact on your life. Write it down somewhere if you're prepared.

Write it down somewhere. I suggest that during coffee time share these encouraging words.

Words that have encouraged you. Words that have impacted you. I know most of us talk about weather and all this but talk something else. Talk this day. So you can use me as an excuse.

[14:44] Now the speaker say we want to say something encouraging words. Say one thing before you start talking about weather. Or you can share with your family members on your way home.

Tell each other what are the positive words that have impacted your lives. It can be some words from sermons by pastor. I'm sure you've learned many things from the sermons of pastors these past few months.

Something positive impacted your lives. Verses 5-8 now. To lose tongue, fire, and poison.

Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a forest, great forest, is set on fire by a small spark.

The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

[15:47] All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and sea creatures have been tamed and have been tamed by mankind. But no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil full of deadly poison.

The destructive potential of the tongue is graphically pictured by a forest fire. Most forest fires begin with a single match.

Thousands of trees are destroyed by the spark of a tiny little splinter of wood. Just a few words, just a spark can cause years of heartache.

I am sure many of you can remember one sentence or one word someone uttered a long time ago can still hurt you. Even now, after 40 years, after 50 years, that word can still bring memories, bad

memories.

In verses 5 to 8, James uses certain words to describe the destructive power of the tongue. I've underlined all these, all the words there. The tongue is a world of evil, a restless evil, and a deadly poison.

[17 : 05] All these words tell us that the tongue has the power to destroy and to cause a lot of damage. You may think only words spoken in anger can destroy.

No. No. There's a proverb that speaks of the danger of words spoken as a joke, as gossip, and spoken by quarrelsome men.

Proverbs 26, verses 18 to 21. Like a maniac shooting flaming arrows of death is one who deceives their neighbor and says, I was only joking.

Without wood, a fire goes out. Without gossip, a quarrel dies down. As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife.

The proverb describes three different types of men in this passage, and they are all bad. First, there's a practical joker.

[18 : 15] He tells a lie and causes discomfort and embarrassment and then says, it's okay, it's okay, I was only joking. Next is the gossip.

He continues to backbite. He continues to add wood to the fire and he will never let anything die down. Finally, it's a quarrelsome man.

He seems to enjoy arguments and strife. I'm sure you have met all these three men. These three men are very different from one another. But they all have one thing in common.

What is it? What is it that's in common? They misuse their tongue. I want to describe to you a person now and you tell me his name.

Next slide, Siang Ying. Tell me his name. I have no respect for justice. I maim without killing. I break hearts and ruin life.

[19 : 20] I'm cunning and malicious and gather strength with age. The more I'm quoted, the more I'm believed. I flourish at every level of society. My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name and no face.

Next one. To track me down is impossible. The harder you try, the more elusive I become. I'm nobody's friend. Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same.

I topple governments and ruin marriages. I ruin careers and cause sleepless nights, heartache and indigestion. I spawn suspicion and generate grief. I make innocent people cry in their pillows.

Even my name hisses. Now tell me what is my name? Yes?

You want to guess? Make intelligent guess? My name is? Yes, Siang Ying. Gossip! Pastor Swindoll has this advice for us.

[20 : 31] Next slide, please, Siang Ying. Perhaps like me, you have received a phone call from someone who says, I want to tell you about so and so.

And I'll say, wait a minute, may I quote you on that? That's usually a long pause. And then, they say, well, I'm not sure that's such a good idea.

Invariably, my answer will be, then, I'm not interested in hearing what you have to say. If you're not interested in putting your name on it, if you're not interested in being there when we confront the individual, I'm not interested in listening to what you have to say.

Advice from Pastor Swindoll. We must never underestimate the power of the tongue to do harm. Ask God to help you guard what you say.

David pray in Psalms 141, verse 3. Set a guard over my mouth, Lord. Keep watch over the door of my lips. The Lord can give you the power to control your tongue.

[21 : 46] Verses 9 to 12. The inconsistent tongue, blessing and cursing. With the tongue, we praise our Lord and Father. And we will be cursed human beings who have been made in God's likeness.

Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives or a grapevine bear figs?

Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. When you come into church today, now, you sing praises to the Lord and you pray to Him.

You are using your tongue to bless His name. And when you leave this place and get into your car and you are driving on the road and someone cut you off and nearly crashed into you, you will find

another use of your tongue.

Inside this place, we bless the Lord. Outside this place, we curse others. These are inconsistent, inconsistent with each other.

[22 : 57] There's a principle here. It is a principle of sanctification. When you came to Christ in faith and you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, something extraordinary happened to you.

You enter into a process known as sanctification. It's a big word but it means you begin to be set apart from the world and dedicated to the Lord for a special purpose.

That is the meaning of sanctification. Meaning of sanctification. It's quite a big word, quite difficult to pronounce sometimes. Sanctification, set apart from the world and dedicated to the Lord.

Your hands are no longer just your hands. They are also God's hands. Also belong to him, belong to God. They are his hands. Your tongue is no longer just your tongue.

It belongs to him. The tongue that has been dedicated to the worship of the Lord should not be used in cursing God's creation.

[24 : 08] If you are a Christian, your tongue has been dedicated to the Lord to worship him. To use your tongue for any purpose that does not honor him, that does not honor the Lord is inconsistent.

The problem is, of course, the problem, of course, is not with the tongue. The problem is with the heart. It is easy to have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in the heart.

Matthew 15, verse 18. Matthew 15, verse 18 says, But the things that come out of a person's mouth, this is Jesus speaking, our Lord Jesus speaking, but the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart and this defiles them, this makes them unclean.

Here's the point. You cannot tame the tongue because the tongue merely reflects what is inside your heart. Only God can tame the tongue because he does that by working from the inside out.

So, you want to tame your tongue. You go to the Lord. Go to the Lord and ask him to change you from the inside out and he will do it for you.

[25 : 29] As we fill our heart with God's word, as we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, he can use our tongue to bless others. Verses 13 to 18.

The wise tongue, heavenly and worldly, who is wise and understanding among you. Let me show it by the good life, by this done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from heaven by earthly unspiritual demonic.

For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you'll find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. We tend to think of wisdom in terms of what we know.

[26 : 38] James defines wisdom in terms of what you do with what you know. Not just what you know, what you do with what you know. It is not enough to have knowledge.

We need wisdom to use our knowledge correctly. James is still speaking to the people who want to be teachers of God's word.

James chapter 3 verse 13 says, who is wise? Who is wise and understanding among you? The word wise, James used the word wise. This wise, in Greek is sophos, was a technical term among the Jews for a teacher.

The teachers are considered to be wise people. So he is still speaking to the teachers, to the people who want to be teachers of God's word. So a wise teacher is wise in his speech, wise in his conduct.

James is contrasting true wisdom and false wisdom in two different aspects. Firstly, contrast in origins.

[27 : 47] Next slide please. True wisdom comes from above and false wisdom comes from below. So there's heavenly wisdom and there's worldly wisdom.

Our heavenly wisdom comes from God. What is the origin of man's wisdom? Verse 15 says, Such wisdom does not come from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

The Christian has three enemies. Three enemies. You can read about these three enemies in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 1 to 3. What are these three enemies? Can we read together about the three enemies?

The world, the flesh, and the devil. You can check this out. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 1 to 3. The enemies are suggested here in verse 15 by the terms earthly, the world, unspiritual, the flesh, demonic, the devil.

Do not confuse the world's knowledge with the world's wisdom.

[29 : 03] Certainly, there's a great deal of knowledge in this world, and we all benefit from all this knowledge, but there's not much wisdom. Man unlocks the secrets of the universe, but he does not know what to do with them.

Many of the discoveries and inventions are supposed to benefit us, but they have been misused by us. The smartphone is a good example.

Smartphone is supposed to help us communicate with one another, but our misuse of it has stifled communication. We don't know how to communicate with one another anymore.

One employer shared this with us. He finds that some young people are so good with their smartphone, but they cannot handle an interview. They don't know how to present themselves in an interview.

They don't know how to hold a conversation. The world, by its wisdom, do not know God, and in its wisdom, rejects the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[30 : 07] Man's wisdom comes from reason, while God's wisdom comes from revelation. Next slide, please. 1 Corinthians 1, 18-24, from the New Living Translation.

The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction, but we who have been saved know it is the very power of God. So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters?

God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God, in his wisdom, saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe.

It is foolish to the Jews who ask for signs from heaven, and it is foolish to the Greeks who seek human wisdom. So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended, and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense.

But to us, but to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. So, what is the wisdom of God?

[31 : 23] Or rather, who is the wisdom of God? You look at the last verse, okay, Colossians 323, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God. The first step, the first step toward true wisdom is the receiving of Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

Believing in the Lord Jesus is the first step toward true wisdom. You can have all the knowledge of the world, you can have all the wisdom of the world, but still lost, still be lost for all eternity.

But, if you believe in the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, you'll be saved for all eternity. So, the first step in having true wisdom is to have Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

The first contrast is contrast in origin. Now, the second contrast is the contrast in outcomes. what is the outcome? What is the outcome of false wisdom?

[32 : 32] What is the result of false wisdom? False wisdom shows itself in, I'll underline all the words there, bitter envy, selfish ambition, disorder, and every evil practice.

If you have false wisdom, your speech will be tainted with every kind of evil. Now, what is the outcome of true wisdom?

True wisdom is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy, and good fruit, impartial, and sincere.

Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. Wise people are peacemakers. they sow peace with their words and with their conduct.

And as they live out their lives in true wisdom, they will reap a harvest. What kind of harvest is that? A harvest of righteousness. It's a harvest of beauty.

[33 : 34] It's a harvest of goodness. Harvest of goodness and beauty. Living in a community that relates well with one another. Living in a community that relates well with God himself.

Now I want to speak to those who are hurt by what people say to you. Many of us are victims of wicked tongue.

We are at the receiving end of a sharp tongue. We are being hurt by a loose tongue. What can you do? You can confront the offender and have a heart to heart talk.

If this approach doesn't work for you, then I would suggest that you follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. While he was hanging on the cross, he uttered these words, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

You can say the same thing. You can say, Father, forgive them. Forgive those who say nasty words, nasty things about me.

[34 : 42] Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And help me, help me to forgive them also. If our hearts are still wounded by the loose tongue, wounded by the sharp tongues of others, we can come to the Lord for healing.

Come to the Lord for healing. God will heal your wound. He can restore to you the joy of your salvation. Do not let the careless words of others rob you of your joy of your salvation.

Rob you of your peace. Rob you of your hope that God has given you. So if you're still wounded, wounded, yeah, your wound may be still fresh, can be fresh.

Let's pray this prayer together by Debbie, crafted by Debbie McDonnell. Yeah, we can pray together. Dear God, we feel wounded, betrayed, and broken hearted.

We wonder sometimes if we can ever fully recover from the deep hurt we feel inside. Thank you that you know what we've been through and the struggles we still carry.

[35 : 57] Help us to forgive. Help us to let go. We know that we can move forward with you in peace and freedom. We pray for those who have hurt us right now and ask for your power to work mightily within their lives.

We leave them in your hands and find our comfort and strength in your spirit. Thank you that you understand all that we face. Thank you that you see and you care.

We ask that when the enemy taunts us with lies and tries to bring up the hurt of the past, you will silence his voice and allow us to walk free. We bring you all the stuff that we will use to trap us or stop us.

The pain, the past, the mistakes, the struggles and we lay it at your feet again. Thank you for your healing, for your grace, for your hope.

Thank you that you have set us free and will not waste the pain that we have carried. We look forward to the greater good purpose you will bring through this struggle. We love you Lord.

[37 : 02] We need you. We trust you. In Jesus' name. Amen.