

Gracious Speech

by Alan Martin

Alan Martin's sermon emphasizes the importance of gracious speech and the power of words to build up or tear down relationships.

Scripture: Romans 15:1-4, James 1:26, James 3:2, James 3:6

Topics: "Speech"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power of the tongue and the impact our words can have. He shares a personal experience of how a small spark from his mouth caused fires that are still burning today. The speaker highlights the need for a change of heart in order to have a change of mouth, emphasizing the importance of speaking the truth in love. He references Romans 15 and James 1 and 3 to support his points and encourages the audience to seek wisdom and to use their words to build up and edify others.

Transcript

When we come to understand the power we wield in a tongue with our words, we will begin to show some wisdom. Let's turn there to James chapter 1. We're going to be in James chapter 1 a little bit and James chapter 3 a little bit. I'm going to read something to you as you turn to James chapter 1. I'm going to read something to you from Isaiah.

I'll tell you where it is a little bit later. How many of you, just hold your finger there in James chapter 1 and find James chapter 3 near there. How many of you would like your light to rise in the darkness? How many of you would like to see your night become like the noon day? To see the Lord guide you always, to satisfy your needs even in the sun scorched land.

How many of you would like to see your frame strengthened so that you're like a well-watered garden? So you are like a spring whose waters never fail. I think all of us want that. Well, listen to the conditions for this.

And it's not there in James. I'll tell you where I'm reading from a little bit. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger, and malicious talk.

Now what is malicious talk? I want to give you a definition for malicious talk from the Septuagint. The Greek word, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, is gagusu. And here's what it means.

It means to speak privately in a low voice. To utter secret and sullen discontent. Now where would we speak privately with in a low voice more than likely? Our friend, our spouse.

And we just quietly rip someone. We just quietly, in a low voice, rip. Destroy a man's reputation.

You know how we do it? By just repeating the truth. Just stating the facts. That's all you have to do to be destructive.

You don't have to make up things. It doesn't take lies to destroy a man. You can destroy a man just by repeating what they've done.

The Bible says, he who covers over an offense does what? Promotes love. And he who repeats the matter does what? Separates close friends. Separates.

The reason this is quite important to me is because I fear. Because I fear God. Men are going to give an account on the day of judgment for every unprofitable word they speak.

Now most of us have heard it translated idle. Idle just means unproductive. You know one of the most unproductive things ever said was a completely true statement in the Bible.

And it was given by a group of men who were sent out to search out the land of Canaan. And they came back and they brought. Does anybody know what God called the report they brought? An evil report.

Now what did these men say to make this report evil? What did they say? They said there's giants in the land. Was that a lie? No there were giants in the land. They said the cities there are large and strong.

Is that true? They said the descendants of Anak are there. Is that true? They said they're so big we look like grasshoppers in their eyes. Was that true? And God called a completely true report evil.

Because you know what it did to the people? It caused them to do that Greek word that I just described. It caused them to begin to mutter in a low, disquieted, you know what? This isn't going to work. We need to find another leader.

And they just began to slowly, quietly among themselves just speak despairingly. And this happens in churches, in families, in neighborhoods, on the jobs. And what's happening is the tongue is destroying lives, bringing death.

Now if you're right there in James chapter 1, you can understand why those full of the Holy Spirit and used of God to speak to others made this statement. James chapter 1. Someone read it for me. I think you know where we're going.

Hmm? Someone read it. I won't even have to tell you the verse. You probably know where it's there.

Okay, maybe not. Verse 26. It's a long chapter.

Someone read 26. If anyone considers himself religious, and yet I like the way the NIV translates it, keeps a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself. Any person here or anywhere else that speaks their mind without a bridle on it is a fool.

The fool utters folly. The wise man uses words with restraint. The fool lets his mind be known, but a wise man keeps his knowledge to himself.

Brothers and sisters, what you think about some other brother or sister may be right, but you'll be smart to keep it inside. And you'll be wise to consider whether it's accurate or not. Is it faith filled? Is it full of faith? Maybe you see the situation clearly, but are you leaving room for repentance? Are you leaving room for grace? Are you leaving room for God to work? Because an accurate report without hope and faith can come under the same term as is used for Satan in Revelation.

Satan in the book of Revelation is called the accuser of the brethren. Now the Greek word for accuser comes from the word katagoras. Katagoras.

We use this word in our language. It's come right into English. What word is it in our language? Categorize.

How many of us have been foolish enough to categorize someone by saying he is a thus? If Jesus Christ were to do that to one of us, every one of us would be in hell. If He were to categorize us, you know how we'd be categorized? Sinner. If He were to categorize, you know how He'd categorize us? Wicked.

He'd categorize all of us evil. But does He categorize us that way? No, He doesn't. You know, His blood, it says, speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

What did the blood of Abel cry out for? Vengeance. Justice. What does the blood of Jesus Christ cry out for? Mercy.

Mercy. One of the worst people that lived the face of the earth were the most religious people. They were called the Pharisees.

And Jesus looked them right in the eyes and said, all your concern about everything being right, you need to go and learn first. What's the first thing He said they needed to learn? In all their great studying, most of them had memorized the first five books of the Bible word for word. And He told them, you forgot the very first thing.

What did He tell them? But first, go and learn this. I desire mercy. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain.

And we need to learn to be merciful with our speech. To be gracious with our speech. When men revile you, how are you supposed to respond? Bless them.

What does the word bless mean in the Greek? Does anybody know it? It comes from the word eulogio. Eulogio. Do we use this word in our language? Eulogy.

What is a eulogy? It is a speaking well of someone. If someone rails against you, speaks spitefully of you, the only proper answer to deal with it is you speak well. Bless and do not curse.

If they spitefully use you, you're to pray for them. If they hate you, what are you to do? You're to do good to them. And in this way, what will you be? What will you be if you do this? You'll be sons of your Father in Heaven.

Do you know how your Father in Heaven is? He is merciful. He is kind to the wicked. Now, He still calls them wicked and ungrateful.

But He's merciful. He's kind to them. Now, I want to just wrap this up.

I'm not going to speak too long today. But I want some soberness. I believe the Lord wants some soberness in our speech.

James 3. Let's spend a few minutes there. Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brethren, because you know that we who teach will be judged even more severely. We all stumble in many ways, but if any man is never at fault in what he says, what is that man? Now, if you've not been here a while, let me explain the word perfect.

Perfect means mature, complete. You are a mature man if you've learned to keep a tight rein on your tongue. You're a mature man if you don't fire off what you think inside.

Because it says, a man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and he that hath understanding is of an excellent spirit. And there is a reverence and a dignity about a man who uses his words carefully. He doesn't want to be overbearing or over-tolerant.

He uses them carefully, and he makes sure he avoids categoros, people. He avoids truth without hope. He avoids accuracy without faith.

He speaks the truth in love. Speaking the truth without love is accusation. And that's done by prosecutors.

Is Jesus the prosecutor? Or is He the advocate? Who speaks to the Father on what? On our behalf. You know what? He speaks to the Father on our behalf unless we take our brothers to court over what they've done. If we take our brothers to court over what they've done with our mouth, guess who's going to take us to court? Our advocate is going to become our prosecutor.

And we are going to be held to account on the Day of Judgment for every idle word we speak. And because of that, what does the rest of that Scripture say? Therefore, let your words be few. The more I experience life, the more it makes sense.

The more we talk, the more we sin. And the Bible says, avoid a man who talks too much. There'll be too much sin going on.

We need to learn that words have a deadly, powerful, corrupting, ungodly, wicked, evil effect. Even if they're accurate. Even if they're true.

Even if they're said quietly. Even if they're only spoken to our husband. Or only spoken to our best friend.

They're still ungodly. And we'll still give an account for them. If they're not full of faith and not ministering grace.

Let no unwholesome talk proceed out of your mouth but only what is good for what? Building up and ministering grace to the hearer. This is what the Scripture says. Alright, let's look in James 3. I think we're going to spend some time there.

We better. We need to be mature men. Verse 3, When we put bits into the mouths of horses, we make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.

Or take ships as an example. Although they're so large and driven by strong winds, they're steered by a very, very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts.

Consider what a great forest is set on fire by such a small spark. Let me tell you a sad truth. There are fires burning still today from a small spark that came from my mouth.

Did you hear me? There are fires still burning today from a small spark that came from my mouth. And all it was was a quiet word spoken to a friend. Unbelieving.

Ungracious. Without faith. Unwise.

And I repented. And God has mercy. But you know what? Can I chase the fire down? You get some fire with the wind to it, and you just better pray for rain.

Because you're not going to put a roaring fire out without the help of God. A lot of cost. And I'm just going to testify openly so that others can be spared doing what I have done.

We overcome the evil one by the blood of the Lamb, which covers our sin, and the word of our testimony. And if I can help any young man here to not do what I've done, I'd share every sin I've ever committed if it would just spare you. The body of Christ is being ripped apart by a bunch of truth speakers.

Men that need to grow up in love. And I am burdened by it. It goes on to say in James, I'm switching Bibles on you.

For every kind of beast... Well, where is this? I want to go back to verse 6. Where is this great fire set on fire by? Hell. Hell sets this thing. Gehenna.

The place where you burn trash. The place where dead bodies are thrown. Every nature of beast, every kind of beast, every kind of bird, every reptile or creature of the sea is tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no one can tame the tongue.

It is an unruly evil full of deadly poison. Now there's an interesting word here in the King James. Would someone read verse 8 in the King James? From the King James Version.

The word unruly, Eric, comes from the word not able to rest. A good translation would be it's a restless thing full of deadly poison. You know what he's trying to picture here? What do you see when you see that little creature on the ground? Can't ever keep that tongue still, can they? That snake constantly sticks that tongue out there.

What's he sticking it out there for? It's a sense organ. It's a sense organ. He's out there trying to sense.

What's going on? What's going on? Is that really what happens when we try to get so focused on what's going around around? What are people saying about me? How do they think about me? What's going on? They pick up something. And you know a snake, not always trying to eat. They only eat about every three days or so, I think.

If they get the right thing. They don't have to eat very often. They're reptile.

They're kind of slow. But you know what they do when you step near them and they feel threatened? Bam! Didn't mean to kill you. You just stepped a little too close to me.

Wham! And in that little wham, with our little tongue, we put poison in someone else about someone else. Because they stepped a little too near us. And we are shocked.

Sometimes we put the poison right into our wife, or right into our husband, or right into our children. And if we were wise, by the power of God, we'd see that cease. The Scripture is so wise when it says, Be quick to hear and slow to speak.

The wise in heart weigh their answers. Weigh it. Is this poison? Okay, it's accurate.

Is it full of faith? Is it full of hope? Will it edify? Will it minister grace? Weigh your words. They have the power of life and death. This is what's exciting, because if you catch the vision of this, you can become an instrument of blessing.

You can become one who builds and ministers grace. Life can come from you. But it's not coming there if you strike when you're threatened.

It comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit and understanding that you've been given a commandment. I don't have time, and I'm not going to take time to go into all of this, but you know it says Aaron. Aaron was set apart for the Israelites to stand and bless the people in the name of the Lord.

Aaron wasn't appointed to stand and curse the nations. Aaron was appointed to stand and bless the people. That's what the Scripture says.

And I looked into this even a little bit more. I said, well, but wait a minute now. In the Bible, right when they went into the Promised Land, God had some tribes stand on Mount Ebal to pronounce curses.

And He had some tribes stand on Mount Gerizim to pronounce blessings. Which tribes do you think stood on which mountain? Why don't we turn there real quick? All we need to do is go back to Deuteronomy 27. Look in verse 12.

And study the tribes real quick. You can study real quick and see. It tells which ones are on Mount Gerizim and which ones are on Mount Ebal.

And tell me, which tribes does the Scripture associate us with? That's right. We're associated with the tribe of Judah because Christ is the Prince of Judah. What other tribe are we associated with? Levi.

Because we've been made a kingdom of priests. There's another tribe we've been associated with. It's the tribe of Benjamin.

The son who sits at... We've been seated in the heavenly places at the right hand of God with Christ. We're not on a mount cursing the nations. We're supposed to be on the mount blessing the people.

I need to learn this. Ray knows I preach to myself all the time. He's looking at me saying, yep, okay, you need to hear this.

You're right, Ray. I need to hear this as much as anybody. We all need to hear it.

We need to hear it. It doesn't leave room for tolerating evil. God will deal with evil, won't He? No one's going to get away with anything.

Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. God is not mocked. But today is the day of salvation.

Now is the acceptable time. God is being long-suffering. And we're to be long-suffering.

And I just want you to read just a little bit. I've got to take you to this real quick. Romans 15.

I want you to see this. This is the heart that really changes. If you catch the revelation of this heart, you'll see why this is... Because you're going to have to have a change of heart if you're going to have a change of mouth.

Because you are going to speak what's in your heart. And if your heart is filled with the love of Christ, you'll speak the truth in love. Romans 15.

Start with me in verse 1. We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the failings of the weak. It's interesting. It's basically almost forms of the same word.

We who are strong ought to bear with the lack of strength of the weak and not to please ourself. Each of us should please his neighbor for his own good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself, but as it is written, the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on Me.

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning. What's one of the first things Christ wants us to learn? I desire mercy. So that through the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope.

Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded towards one another according to Christ Jesus. Why did it say that? Like-minded. Not every one of us thinking exactly alike.

Every one of us having the very same mind that Christ had. What was the mind of Christ? According to Romans 1, Paul is talking about we who are strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak. Listen to Christ.

This is what it says of Him in Matthew 8. And in the evening they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed, and He cast out the spirits with the Word and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, He Himself bore our infirmities. What's the mind of Christ? Bear with the infirmities of people. Bear with them.

Bear long with them. Take them up. Bear them like Christ bore them.

Love one another as Christ. What does Christ do to your infirmities? You better hope He bears them. And if He bears yours, you're to bear one another and so fulfill the law of Christ.

That's the mind that we need in one another. And guess what gets restored when we actually begin to live this way? When we begin to bear with one another and love one another, guess what testimony becomes clear to the world? By this shall all men know you're My disciples. Right there.

Not by our doctrine. Not by our stance in the church, out of the church, this denomination, that denomination. When we begin to bear with the infirmities of the weak, when they begin to see the long-suffering of love and the patience of love and the kindness of love, it still speaks the truth.

But it's long-suffering. And it doesn't speak a condemning word. It speaks a word that cries out for mercy and repentance.

Then they'll know these are disciples of Christ. We need to see the testimony recovered. Behold how they love one another.

Amen. Let's be quiet before the Lord a few minutes and just ask Him to search our hearts for the fires that I myself have started.

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