Will Your Tongue Damn You?
By Steve R. Mitchell II  1/21/18

God in heaven, we come before you today. Just ask for your mercy to be upon us. Just ask that you would remember us according to your loving kindness and not according to our sins and our wicked deeds that we have done in our life. Father God, we thank you for Jesus, thank you that you sent Him here to teach us how to live, and I pray that we would really take to heart His teachings, that we would walk according to His ways. Just ask that you would help me this morning. Be with the brothers and sisters. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

It's good to be with the brothers again, a blessing. Brother Duane got a hold of me sometime last week and asked if I had a message, and I did. A message came to my mind almost immediately, then I said, "Well, I just don’t really want to talk about that". So I thought I would preach through the book of Galatians/start going through the book of Galatians. I just felt like I was kicking against the goads, I don't know if that makes any sense to anybody, but I would've rather not talked about the subject I'm going to talk about today. But last night when I started to write notes on the book of Galatians I just could not, so anyways, I have a pretty serious message that I want to share this morning.

Before I get started, I want to make this real clear, this is not so much a message just to anybody in particular or to all of you, but it's a message to me, and it's a message to all of us as a unit, because the days are evil and time continues to race by. And the Lord will return one day, and we stand before His throne. It's just a really serious thing. I'd like to open up in the book of Revelations to the message that Jesus had to the churches.

Let's go ahead and open up to chapter 2:5-7 He's talking here to the church of Ephesus here, in the churches. I read some of these things and I just think "Wow! These churches are doing really good!" but then he gets to verse 5 which is where we'll pick up. It says: Remember then, from what you have fallen and repent and do the works that you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this is to your credit, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitanes, which I hate. Let everyone who has an ear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. The one who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.
Now go ahead and move on down in chapter 2:14, talking to the church of Pergamos here. **But I have a few things against you.** You have some there who hold to the teachings of Balaam, who taught Balac to put a stumbling block for the people of Israel so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornications, so you also have some who practice the teachings of the Nicolaitanes. What I really want to hear is not those things, but verse 16. **Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and make war against them with the sword of my mouth.**

And on to chapter 3:1-6 **To the angel of the church of Sardis, write:**

These are the words of Him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works. You have a name of being alive, but you are dead. (I'm not saying that we are dead. I just want to read through this to point something out.) **Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.** Remember then, what you have received and heard, and obey it and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief and you will not know what hour I will come to you. Yet you still have a few persons who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. If you conquer, you will be clothed like them in white robes and I will not blot your name out of the book of life. I will confess your name before my Father and before His angels. Anyone who has an ear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Verse 14 of the same chapter: **To the angel of the church in Laodicea write the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation.** I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either hot or cold. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. For you said: I am rich, I have prospered and I need nothing. You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white robes, to clothes yourself, and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen. And salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore and repent. Listen! I am standing at the door knocking. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you and you with me. To the one who conquers, I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne. Anyone with an ear to listen what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
What I wanted to point out just simply was not the particular things they were doing, but this: this was a message from Jesus to churches. This was not a message from Jesus to the lost world, and all these churches had different and various issues and struggles, sins, or what-have-you. They understood the kingdom of God. You need to understand that there was no doubt. This was the early church; they had not gone off the deep end yet. They knew that they were supposed to love their enemies, they knew the tenants of the sermon on the mount, but they were not walking faithful in some way, and God in His mercy called them to repent and if they could hear what He was saying, they would have a chance to repent, and that He would give them the opportunity of life.

But I wonder if Jesus would have a message for us, what would it be? What would we be known by (by Jesus) if He was going to deliver a message from heaven to one of His apostles? Would there be any areas where we need to take a big look at ourselves?

I also wonder what we as a church, the church of southwest Missouri, is remembered by when we have visitors that come in to see us/walk among us. And the truth is, there is probably a lot that God would give us a message for. I think we must ask ourselves these questions and questions like this often, and if we won't, I think we're going to end up like those churches in Revelations. And our lamp will be put out. So probably when I ask those questions, many different things probably shot through your mind, and I don't know what they are. But the message that I cannot get away from today that the Lord has put on my heart (that I in fact did try to get away from preaching) is going to be maybe a bit painful. It's painful to me, like it will probably be to all of us, but we have to examine ourselves.

Before I say the topic, I have to confess that I feel as if there is a problem, to a certain degree as somebody who should be, who is older and has more life experience, maybe, more time in the kingdom of God than I to a certain degree responsible for some of these things. I know that I am guilty, and have sinned in this way, and that by my sinning, maybe I have taught others or have influenced others in this way, or by simply not speaking up and trying to stop somebody, have also been an enabler.

But anyway, I want to talk to us about words today, and speaking. Our tongue. I guess if I was going to title this message, I would title this: Will your tongue damn you?

And my goal is that we would simply be open to the scriptures, to the Spirit of God and that we really examine our hearts. This thought occurred to me last night and this morning when I was thinking about how to share this. What if God had a message to a brother like John for us? It's just so
heavy! But I don't want anybody to take offense at this, and I'm not going to identify anything or anybody, just want to show the scriptures, and I do want to beg forgiveness for anybody who I've sinned against by my words. I've said this before, when you become a parent and you see your children doing the things that are bad and then you realize that you have done them in the past and that they have learned those from you, it's a hard thing! So anyways, I take full responsibility and I'm not coming up here definitely as somebody who has this taken care of. I just know that if we don't take care of this, we are in big, big trouble. I mean, that is just the bottom line. So may God be glorified and may we hear what the spirit has to say.

Let's start in Matthew 12:36 and 37. This is Jesus speaking and He says: I tell you, on the day of Judgment, you will have to give an account for every careless word uttered. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

There is this extremely sober reality that we ourselves will be the ones condemning ourselves by the things that we say and do.

Turn to James 3, and I'll start at verse 1. Not many of you should become teachers, my brethren; for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness, for all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect and able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. If we put bits in the mouths of the horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole body. Look at a ship, though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet 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 exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small spark. The tongue is a fire. The tongue is a place among our members as a world of iniquity. It stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast, of reptile, sea creature can be tamed and has been tamed, by the human species. But no one can tame the tongue, a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father and with it we curse those who have been made in the likeness of God, from the same mouth come blessings and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, grow olives? Or a grape vine, figs? No more than can salt water come out of a fresh spring.

Turn back to Matthew 12, starting in verse 33. Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad. For the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can speak good things
when you are evil. I'm not saying that, Jesus was talking to the Pharisees, but just listen to what He says, bad fruit cannot come out of a good tree. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person brings good things out of the good treasure, and the evil person brings evil things out of the evil treasure. I tell you, on that Day of Judgment, you will have to give an account for every idle word you have uttered. For by your words you will be justified. By your words you will be condemned.

This reminds me also of the passage in Sirach where he's talking to people about dreams. I don't know if you're familiar with this, but he's telling them to basically not put much stock in dreams, because within your dreams, he said your dreams are a reflection of yourself. The dream is a reflection of what you meditate on day and night, the things that consume your thinking. And so, whatever those things that come out in your dreams, and he's warning people, don't think these things are from God, because most likely they're from you, and he just gives a real stern, serious warning to be careful. But the same thing is true with our speech. We meditate on things, we think about things and these things are the things that often times pour forth from our mouth.

So just some questions for me and you:
  What do you speak?
  Are you a jester?
  Do you like to poke fun at people in a little way?
  Are you a story teller?
  Are you crude?

Are you consumed by the cares of this world? And by that, I mean, the things that fill up your thoughts, concerns, about food, or liquid, or clothing, or being provided for/ not being provided for, or the government is doing this, the government is doing that, all these things are the cares of the world. Let's read Matthew 13. Verses 18 -23 is this explanation of the parable of the sower and the seed, and He says this in verse 18: Here then the parable of the sower. And anyone who hears the words of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in the hearts. This is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on the rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; such a person has no root, but endures only for a little while and when troubles or persecutions arise on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, choke the word, and it yields
nothing. But as for what was sown on the good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit, and yields. In some places a hundredfold, and another sixty, and another thirty.

I'll just go ahead and read this other one. I just had some thoughts about this too. And He put before them another parable. The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in a field, but while everybody was sleeping an enemy came in and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then they went away. And when the plants came up and bore grain, the weeds appeared as well. Because they looked all the same when they were growing together. If you've seen a wheat field… you probably haven't seen a wheat field lately that has weeds in it, because most of them are genetically modified so you can spray roundup on everything, and you don't see the weeds. But if you could, what you would see is just a whole bunch of green, and it will all look similar until the head begins to start developing, and then you can identify the difference in the plants. And the slaves of the householder came and said, "Master! Did you not sow good seeds in your field? From where then did these weeds come?" and he answered, "an enemy has done this", the slaves said, "Did you want us to go out and gather them up?" He said, "No, for in gathering the weeds, you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest, and at the harvest I will tell the reapers 'Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into the barn' "

The reason that I found this kind of important to bring up too, is because a weed… so we have this picture at the end. He's saying, "Just wait because at the end, what we'll do is we'll gather up weeds first, then the wheat. So we don't want to go right now into the field and damage any of the wheat plants that are already there." But why was it bad in the first place that there were weeds there? Is it because there's going to be work at the end separating them. No, it's because when there's weeds that grow amongst the grain fields, those grains that are next to the wheat die. They take up the space, take up the nutrients, they choke it out. I mean, this is the problem. Who would care about weeds if that's all it was: just a little work at the end? The problem is that it kills stuff when it grows next to it. And I think he's actually talking about people in the kingdom of God as weeds, but I think that for today's thought, we can identify sins in our lives as weeds. The wheat is what we want to be, we do not want weeds being cultivated within our heart and mind at the same time. And, at the same time, we also do not want to be a weed to a fellow wheat plant that would cause them to wither
and die. Cause the nutrients they could get to be sucked up in some other way.

Do you find yourself in arguments and controversies a lot?

Are you silly?

Do you say that you are going to do something and you don't follow through?

Do you talk back to your parents?

Do you have an angry sound in your voice? That is particularly something I am for sure guilty of in the past. I've been working on like crazy for the last year and a half, and it is so bad that my children, my sons especially, without even meaning to sound hard and mean, and they're like "I wasn't being mean". And I know it's because of my example, I mean, to a great degree they all have to make choices. I'm sharing this failure just so that we can all understand that we too, will influence each other. It's not just that I influence my children; it's that I influence you; you influence him and so on and so forth. This serious thing that we have within our mouth, called our tongues.

In Matthew 5:33-37, Jesus said this: you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, You shall not swear falsely, but carry out your vows you have made to the Lord. But I say to you, do not swear at all, by heaven or by earth, for it is the throne of God, or by earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. But do not swear, and do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your words be yes, yes, and no, no, anything more than this comes from the evil one. I tell you on that day of judgment, you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter, for by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned.

Turn to Ephesians 4:25 basically to 5. He says, so then, putting away all falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and do not make room for the devil. This is verse 29. This is a very profound verse. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up as there is need so that your words may give grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with which you were marked with the seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you, all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and wrangling, and slander, together with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant
offering and sacrifice to God. But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you as is proper among saints. Entirely out of place is obscene, silly and vulgar talk. But instead, let there be thanksgiving. Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy, that is, an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Just look at this verse 29. **Let no evil talk come out of your mouth, but only what is useful for building up**, or the NASV says, let no evil thing come out of your mouth, but only what is useful for edification. Edification. It means to build up, but I do like the ring in that better. **But what is useful for building up as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.** I just have to give this testimony. I have, all of my life, had an issue with speaking. It's nothing at all, not even close, not even comparable to when I was not following Christ. But I remember when I was on my journey but hadn't really entered the kingdom yet and I was a young guy. I was college age, maybe 20 years old, and I was working at this camp up in the mountains. It’s just all these young people working under a couple of 30 or 40 year old managers. It was a blast. And one strange thing is, that God for whatever purpose, continued to bear with me, though I was such a wretched man all my life that He kept pulling me little by little. I am just so ashamed of this, but I remember I was doing my quiet time one morning, and I got up and I was reading in Ephesians, out of the NASB Greek study bible and it said, **let no evil talk come out of your mouth, but only such a word that is useful for edifying**. And I just thought 'I am so condemned. Almost all of my words are not building up'. I wasn't being mean to people, I was being mean to some, but that wasn't the majority of it. It was just playful and silly, and I realized, I knew most of my talk is not building people up. And I just thought like, ‘God what am I going to do? 75% of my language needs to be cut out.’ I tried, but I wasn't walking in the kingdom of God and I don't know that I had the Spirit. Anyways, it wasn't till I actually think I entered into the kingdom of God, that God really began to help me.

But this is really important. We really, really, really need to get in our minds. Does anyone have a New American standard version here? I think it says: **let no word come out of your mouths, except for something that builds up.** This version says “Let no evil talk” but I think the word in that is a little more general. Like, just words that are not useful to build people up, whatever it is.

So maybe I have a gardening style that I like, Ok. Maybe I think it's really neat or something and I'm pretty intrigued about it, but I need to be careful
of how I express these things to people because it may be that this is not going to build somebody up. Maybe somebody sees a hole in it, or whatever, like, uh, I don't think that'll work because of this or this or this. I need to be sound enough in the spirit that I can be like, probably me sharing this won't build anybody up and I just need to zip it. I'm giving a very benign example, but this can go on about anything. What do I think about which vehicle is the best? Is Ford better than a Chevrolet? Or is this better than that? I'm talking about these kinds of things that can be non issues. They’re non issues. But they become issues that cause people to stumble when we talk about them, and we try to then prove why my philosophy on this particular subject is right, and it may end up tearing somebody down. And this goes from gardening to cooking, to food, to preservatives, to government, to what's going to happen, to end times, to everything! And I'm putting this huge category because I think this is where we all almost end up falling, is where we're talking about stuff that is not a bad thing, but it becomes bad because we end up getting into arguments or controversies or discussions about stuff that is not fruitful. It just is not fruitful. And it's best left undone. That is where we have to seek the Lord and gain wisdom to know when to be like: I shouldn't talk about this. If somebody keeps trying to pull it out of me, I'm not going to do it. Or I'm being pulled into it I need to walk away from it, these types of things.

Because, remember this: Matthew 12:36 I tell you on that day of Judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter. For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned.

Turn to Timothy 2:23. I find my sons doing this all the time, so we had to write this verse on a piece of paper and post it up on the wall, because they love to argue about little stuff. "Oh yeah, that puddle was so big!" "That wasn't a big puddle! I mean, that was a little puddle! What are you talking about? How can you think it was a big puddle?" I'm talking about simple stuff like this. It is so horrible for me as a father. I cannot imagine what it's like for God when we do it. But he says, Have nothing to do with stupid and senseless controversies. You know that they breed quarrels, and the servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome, but kindly to everyone. An apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. Now of course Paul was talking to Timothy here who was a young teacher and he's actually, in fact, in charge of a church. What does this tell us about Timothy's situation? He had to deal with this too. People back then wanted to talk about controversies, silly things that were like non issues. But the wisdom in understanding this is that those things often lead into quarrels.
And the servant of God must not be quarrelsome. And this is a strange thing: Even when you get into a conversation that just may be intellectually honest, and I'm not saying, Don't talk, I'm saying take the words of God to heart and seek after wisdom, because I'm not giving any direction on how or what, or how it should be done. I don't even know, really, I just know that this is serious.

But you can talk even about stuff pertaining to the scriptures, stuff that may not be clear, like the end time stuff, and you may just be trying to correct somebody else that you think is wrong, but they think that you're wrong, and next thing you know, you're talking. And you may not actually be riled up, but the sound that's coming out of your mouth, because this is something that has happened with my mouth, it sounds like you're bothered or intense, when maybe you're not. But those who are around, are perceiving: Brother Steve is upset, he's angry. That's wrong! I should do my very best to be as kindly and as gentle as possible. I mean, there are times when there needs to be firmness and I'm not saying that there's not. But I'm just saying, that when these things start happening, perceptions are skewed. You have this thing called reality, and then you have perceptions, but what somebody is perceiving is their reality at the time, so it may be that I'm not upset, but it may be that somebody is saying, He is intense! He must be upset! And we have to be aware of this and think: I don't want people to perceive that I'm upset. If this is an issue that needs to be talked about, then it needs to be talked about. But if it's not, we need to be really careful. I'm not saying, don't believe the things that you believe, and I'm not saying to not share the things that you believe, but totally be careful about these things, how they are done, because I tell you on that day of judgment you WILL have to give an account for every careless word you utter. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

In Titus 2, this is what he says to the young men, and it's interesting because it does seem in particular...it's easy for me and I know that it's been easy for us to kind of say, Watch out for that woman, she just talks and talks and talks, a garrulous woman. Even the bible talks about that. And that's true: women have a problem talking in certain ways. But it seems like men also have a problem talking in other ways. It's easy for us to see the problem in the way that women talk, and they talk and talk and talk, and maybe gossip. But men have controversies. They talk about important things, right? We can say, "Oh no, this is the way it's going to be" But no, listen to what was told by Paul to Titus to instruct the younger men. Urge the younger men to be sober, or self controlled it says in my translation, and then to Titus he says, show yourself in all respect a model of good works, and in
your teaching, show integrity, gravity and sound speech that cannot be
censored, and any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to
say about us. That is the goal that we should have. That nobody could say
something evil against us. And then in chapter 3:9 he says to Titus, but
avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about
the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Finally brethren, Philippians 4:8, whatever is true, whatever is
honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing,
whatever is commendable, if there is anything excellent, and if there is
anything worthy of praise, think about these things. That lesson there is
so valuable to me. It was the thing that made me stop watching movies,
because I thought, ‘Well, I'm supposed to do this, and if anything that is not
ture, I should not be watching it or having something to do with it. Or
whatever is not honorable, or just, or pure, or what is pleasing, or that's
commendable. Or that's excellent.’ That was the beginning when I was
young, thinking, I should stop watching that movie, I should stop listening to
this music. It did not dawn on me that that would also apply to my words,
but it does.

I just want to read a quote from Tertullian, he says this: But if we should
detest all that is immodest, on what grounds is it right for us to hear what
we must not speak, for all lewd speech, in fact, every idle word is
condemned by God. Eph. 5:3-4. In the same way is it right to look upon that
which is a disgraceful thing? In this, he's talking in regards to having had
gone to the theatre, or going and seeing prostitutes paraded around, and how
shameful that would be, and how we would be like, Oh no, don't watch that,
don't look at that. Keep your children away from that. So now he's talking in
the vein of "Ok, we wouldn't go and look at that, but would you speak about
that to somebody, about how bad that thing was? You know, you're
describing a picture. How is it that the thing that defiles a man when going
out of his mouth are not regarded as defiling him when they are going
through his eyes and ears, for the eyes and ears are the personal attendants
of the spirit. How can the spirit be pure when its personal attendants are
impure? Anyways, his point in this is that we would never want to see stuff.
I mean, when we're out on the street and bad things come by, we look down,
we look away, we try not to see bad images or in the store there's magazines,
we look away. We don't want our children to see. We wouldn't let them
watch television, these kind of things. But we all have lived a life and we all
have all sorts of stories and all this kind of stuff, and in this sharing of life,
we have to be very careful and tactful how to #1: Is it so important that I
should share this? And if it is good, to the building up of others, how must I modify it so that what is said does not pollute the minds of the hearers?

If I have interest about things; this conspiracy, or that conspiracy, is it worth talking about or can I just believe it myself? Or do I find out, oh, there's somebody that I believe...like when that young man Jordan came, I didn't want to hear about the things he wanted to talk about, he wanted to take me aside and say, ‘you know I'm really glad you guys are really an encouragement, but hey, I want to tell you about this’ and I was like, ‘I don't want to talk about it.’ And he got so offended because I would not listen to the things that he wanted to say.

We just need to be real careful, because we’re going to stand before God someday, and it is just a really hard thing for us to really, really take into our minds the reality of standing before God. The reality of those who are going to be burning in hell, in mire and stuff. It's just almost impossible, but those things are real. We will stand before God, we will have a real judgment, we will give an account, and it is a frightening thing. Anyways, again, I want to apologize to anybody who I've offended or caused to stumble or sinned against in my words, and I just pray that if we need to repent, anybody, that we would and that God would grant that to us, and that He would look at us like the church of Smyrna, where He said, I know your afflictions and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander on the part of those who say they're Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you in prison so that you may be tested and for ten days you will have afflictions. Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life. Let everyone who has an ear, listen to what the spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death.

God in heaven, I just come before you and I pray you would be with this church. Have mercy on us. Do not put our lamps out. Help us to be faithful in all these things, more than just our words, in all the areas we must change. Pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.