

## Scripture Reading:

**James 3:1 “1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. 3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. 13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”**

# *The Pilot of the Church*

We are continuing a short series of messages from the Book of James for young churches. You should have an outline of where we have been and where we are going: A reminder to sometimes “read through” these Epistles!

First we saw the Joy & Crown of the Church: God’s gracious gift of faith & wisdom that enables us to joyfully face the trials and temptations of this life. Next came the Mercy of the Church: Since we will stand before God’s judgment seat ONLY because of His mercy, so we must show mercy to others! And then we learned about the Faith of the Church: Where true saving faith is never alone: We are created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in.

- This week, we come to the Pilot of the Church: The important question of how Trinity Covenant Church will be directed: Who will be your pilot?

This morning James will again use simple illustrations to show that Trinity Covenant can be a strong refuge guiding people through stormy waters OR you can set devastating fires that will rage throughout Santa Cruz churches and the community. This choice is something to seriously consider on Reformation Sunday: We should rightly reflect on how Luther’s words have affected history for hundreds of years!

Who pilots your church is important!

A flashy sermon title for this passage could have been, “NO man can tame the Tongue!” Even my early thoughts were to talk about the “rudder of the Church” as the next part of this series. However, considering who will pilot the church is the proper focus.

- The tongue can and does function as rudder, sending us in one direction or another
- BUT, to properly serve God, we as individuals and together as the church must have the Spirit of God using the Word of God as its proper pilot!

With that in mind, let’s dig into our text in chapter three:

- **Having concluded that faith without works is dead faith in chapter two, some might think James begins to back off in the next few verses in Chapter three.**

**James 3:1 “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.”**

**KJV uses the word “masters” which give us a better sense: “masters of morals,” passing judgments, being reprovers as Calvin pointed out. Putting it in modern terms, after saying we must all be doing good works, James now warns against having a bunch of “know it alls”**

**There are some wrong lessons that we do NOT want to learn here:**

- **The first is thinking that teaching is up to others**
- **Its near cousin is thinking that we are not teaching each and every day**
- **The right lesson to learn is that we must all teach wisely:**

**Applications usually come at the end of the sermon: But we must take a moment to consider what each of us teach, for good or ill, in our sphere of influence**

- **Pastors & Elders**
- **Civic Leaders**
- **Vocation: as leaders or servants**
- **Participants in discussions**
- **Bible Studies: Church or family**
- **Older woman teaching the younger: formally or informally**
- **Parents teaching children**
- **Children setting examples**

**Notice that James points out that “we all stumble in many things”...**

- **God is going to build His Church with broken people!**

- James says if we do NOT stumble in word we are perfect...again like the “Be Holy for I am Holy” type command, in chapter one where James said. “4 but let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete lacking nothing.”

**This can be done ONLY in the power of the Holy Spirit!**

**Here we must remember what James said in chapter one: That we must ask for wisdom: In other words,**

**We need a good pilot!**

**-- Not a bunch of know-it-alls!**

**At this point, as is indicated on the outline, James will give us some more of those simple, but profound illustrations: Here we will learn the importance of having a good pilot!**

**James 3:3 “Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.”**

**[explain these examples]**

- **A bit in the mouth of a horse**
- **The rudder on a mighty ship**

**Both directed by a master or pilot that gives them direction: This is the lesson we must learn**

**It is interesting that James turns to the tongue:**

- **Why the power of the tongue or the spoken word?**
- **Why the tongue and not the mind or the feet?**

**James is drawing on the power of the spoken word in Scripture: We find the word, “word” used over 700 times in the Bible!**

- **Creation: “And God said...”**
- **Mt. Sinai: “And God spoke all these words, saying...”**
- **Incarnation: “In the beginning was the Word...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”**

**Peter clearly explains the importance of the written Word: How God speaks to us today! [Explain how Peter opens his final letter: Eye witnesses of the transfiguration.]**

**II Peter 1:19 “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”**

- **The Holy Spirit using the Bible, the Word HE has written & protected, must be the pilot for Trinity Covenant Church!**

**James presents the tongue as the rudder which must have the right pilot: That rudder must be guided by the Spirit of God as the pilot who will rightly direct us with the power His Holy Scriptures!**

- **James then warns that this same tongue is a dangerous thing without a good and powerful pilot:**

**James 5:5 “Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”**

- **Here is an important lesson that we must get right about the tongue**
- **James presents the powerful contrast of a rudder verses a raging fire:**
- **Both from that tiny member!**

**Calvin said this about the fallen tongue: “[it is] a material fitted for receiving, fostering and increasing the fire of hell.” It is certainly a part of our body that Satan covets**

- **So what are we to do?**
- **First James again reminds us that we are a broken people, fallen creatures:**

**James 3:8 “But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.”**

- **Here in these verses we should see pretty clearly that we are utterly dependent on God**

**We must understand that, Lord willing, God is going to build Trinity Covenant Church with broken people in the midst of a broken world by the power of His Holy Spirit -- IF He is our pilot!**

- **In this passage, James clearly shows us the unnatural affects of sin and that none of us can tame our tongues without God’s help!**

[ discuss examples of salt & fresh and the wrong fruit on a tree ]

**James has presented a very stark contrast for this tiny member, the tongue:**

- **Source of stability – rudder**
- **Source of destruction – fire**

**What determines how it will function in your young church?**

**James 3:13 “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.”**

- **James shows us contrasting “wisdoms” that will determine the direction of your young Church**

**Mathew Henry put it this way: “[it is] The difference of pretending to be wise and being really so.”**

**Your suggested homework assignment is Proverbs!**

**Wisdom [wisdom from above] & foolishness [wisdom from below] contrasted throughout first nine chapters**

**Proverbs 10:21: “10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom.”**

➤ **James wants God’s wisdom to be on our lips!**

**James 3:17 “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”**

➤ **James has brought us back to those works of faith, and to the mercy of the church!**

**Actually, James made this important contrast back in Chapter one: There we saw James warn against being man-centered – having wisdom from below:**

**James 1:13 “Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”**

➤ **James then contrasted this with wisdom from above:**

**James 1:17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. 18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.”**

➤ **This theme of which direction we will take runs throughout this Epistle!**

**We should also remember that James mentioned the importance of the tongue in chapter one as well:**

**James 1:26 “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”**

**[There James has also given us a hint about the next message]**

**So, the question that I want to bring before you this morning is what do you, as the church, the Bride of Christ, want to contribute to the Santa Cruz region?**

- Trinity Covenant Church can be a mighty ship to guide people through stormy waters**
- Trinity Covenant Church can set devastating & destructive fires to rage throughout the community**

**The outcome depends on which wisdom reigns supreme in your church, your families and your individual lives!**

**We must always honestly ask, who is piloting our ship?**

**AND we should pray Ps 141:3 “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips”**

**Communion Meditation:**

***Genesis 14: 18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19*** And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ***20*** And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all.