

I. Introduction

A. The human tongue...

1. It is the most flexible muscle in your body — easily manipulating food inside your mouth, and able to clean your teeth a bit after a meal.
2. Like your fingerprint, your tongue print is unique.
3. Your tongue has up 10,000 taste buds. If your tongue is dry, you can't taste anything, because your food has to be dissolved in saliva before a taste bud can sense it.
4. About 2/3 of your tongue is visible. The remaining 1/3 goes down into your throat.
5. The longest human tongue ever measured was just shy of four inches long.
6. It weighs about 1/10 of a pound.

a) Yet the tongue is strong enough to pretty much blow up the world.

B. Welcome to Neighborhood. Every week, we gather to worship God. This is just us expressing to God who he is, and declaring our respect for him. We do this in singing and in giving. And then we listen to what God has said to us in the Bible. We do this by actually opening our Bibles — I know, it's a shocker — and then we go verse by verse and see what it says.

C. So we have been going verse by verse through a book in the Bible called James. James was the little half brother of Jesus. He grew up to lead a huge church of thousands of people in ancient Jerusalem.

D. The book James wrote has a laser beam focus on one major theme: growing mature as a believer in Christ. When a person first gets saved, that's awesome. There is a new life. And like any new life, you have to grow and mature and fulfill all your gigantic potential.

E. And we have seen that that James is going on a rant for believers in Jesus who don't grow up out of sheer laziness and apathy.

F. And James is saying, yes, you're saved, and you're forgiven, and you're going to heaven, and God's special love is upon you, and all that

1. — and you might be very successful in life and family and money

a) —but when it comes to God, you are a spiritual baby who has never grown up.

b) The result of that is a large mass of chaos inside your soul.

G. We have already listened to God in chapter one and chapter two. Today we dive into chapter three, and James is on a roll. Wait until you see. He is blunt. He is in your face. He is direct. And a lot of people tune out here, in James three, because, well, they can't handle the truth.

H. So put on your big kid's pants, and let's think about the topic:

1. The Grace Operating System.

I. I'll give you the conclusion first, and then we'll work it out.

1. GRACE OPERATING SYSTEM:

My words, choices, relationships, and instincts express the grace and truth of God, as I rise above the devil's lies through the deeply embedded knowledge of God's Invincible Word.

II. The Divine Wisdom Operating System

A. *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. 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. (James 3:1, 2)*

1. So there is the main theme again, a perfect man. This means a spiritually mature person. This is the goal God has for your life.
2. In order to be a spiritually mature person, he says, you have to take charge of the words that come out of your mouth. If you can control your speech, you can control your life. And it takes great maturity to do this. That's the idea.
3. Bite your tongue.
4. Which is also why you should be very careful if you are a spiritual teacher in any form. Because those of us who teach God's Word are accountable for our words too, and we say a lot of them.
5. This verse puts a healthy fear of God into me, and it should for every pastor and preacher and teacher of the Bible.
6. So, your mouth and your maturity go together.
7. Now, we have three quick illustrations back to back:

B. *Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 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. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! (James 3:3-5)*

1. A bit, a rudder, a match, a tongue. What do they all have in common? Two things: their size is small and their impact is disproportionately huge.
2. The words that come out of your mouth are more important than you realize. They are more potent than you realize.
3. Why?
4. Let's break this down. James is saying, "Have you listened to yourself talk lately? Because you sound like a crazy person."
5. What you're saying, and what you're posting, are tapping into the value system of hell. Have a nice day.
6. Our family recently moved, and part of the fun (not fun) of that is finding old stuff you forgot you had.

7. I found this software that I bought maybe ten years ago. It's an app called Parallels. Parallels lets you run a Windows Operating System on your Mac.
8. My son wanted to run some PC/Windows based games, but we only had a Mac, so we used Parallels, and it worked pretty well. It was cool. You could run your Mac OS like a Mac OS, and then switch, and it all looked like a PC running the Windows OS.
9. There were two parallel operating systems, both running at the same time.
10. So it is in your soul, and in your psychology, if you are a believer in Christ. If you are a Christian, the Bible teaches there are now two parallel operating systems running in that brain and heart of yours all the time.
11. The old operating system is the operating system from Hell. It is the Hell OS. The chief characteristic of the Hell OS is that it runs great for a while, but in the end it always crashes and you lose everything. That's the old operating system.
 - a) The Bible calls this "the flesh."
12. The new operating system, which runs parallel to the old operating system, is the Grace OS. But I'm getting ahead of myself.
13. With that in mind, let's look at our verse again:
 - a) *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. (James 3:6)*
14. When James says all this bad stuff about your tongue, and about yours speech, he explains why. It is because the wrong operating system is in control. Is it the Grace OS? No. It's the Hell OS, and he says so. When your tongue is energized by the Hell OS, your words wreck everything.
15. Have you ever had that happen? Have your tongue ever gotten you in trouble? Can you relate to this?
16. Jesus taught this. He basically said there's a direct pipeline from your heart to your tongue.
 - a) When hell runs your heart, destruction runs your tongue, and chaos runs your life.
 - (1) I told you he was blunt.
 - (2) But now he gets "blunter."
- C. *For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:7, 8)*
 1. Right. Every animal has been tamed. No one has tamed the tongue.
 2. The word "unruly" means chaotic. It is the opposite of harmony and peace. It's a deadly poison.
 3. You have two operating systems. One of them is in the background, one of them is in the foreground.
 4. When the Hell OS is in the foreground, watch out. Chaos ensues. Everyone is emotionally scrambling for cover. The Bible lists like a million sins of the tongue: gossip, backbiting, complaining, whining, cursing, murmuring, slander, outbursts of anger, telling lies, misrepresenting truth, false flattery, seduction, name calling, cruelty... it's a long list because when the Hell OS is activated, chaos ensues.
 5. And death too. See that? "Full of deadly poison."
 - a) Death to friendships. Death to faith. Death to marriage. Death to a relationship. Death to your testimony in the world. Death to people trusting you. Death to people wanting to be near you. Death to peace. Death to love.
 6. When you hitch your tongue to the wrong operating system, your words become a machete hacking everything good in your life to bits.
 7. Don't miss the stark reality here: no man can tame the tongue. No man. No woman. No one.
 8. It is impossible. Can't do it. Hasn't been done. Won't be done. Can't tame the tongue, says James, the half-brother of Jesus.
 9. So does that mean we're hopeless?
 10. Kinda yes, kinda no. Hang on. Because now, James traces your tongue pedal back to the transmission, and shows what happens when the gears don't mesh.
- D. *With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the [likeness] of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. (James 3:9-12)*
 1. What is this?
 2. This is the craziness of letting two systems run in parallel all the time.
 - a) You get contradictions that don't make sense.
 - b) And you get conflicts that can never be resolved.
 - (1) The whole thing crashes.
 3. We live in a culture that has made it okay to put God on the sidelines... or to deny he exists altogether. Our world has robbed the cosmos of its wonder.
 - a) Instead of an intricate marvel, a masterpiece of fine craftsmanship from the hand of a genius Creator, Darwin persuaded millions that the world's creation required no creator beside chance and self-creating dirt.
 - b) Marx convinced us that ideas of God are a narcotic to dead, the pain of social hardships, enabling the weak to cope.
 - c) And Freud seduced us into thinking religion was as simple as wish fulfillment and projection.

- d) When our culture robbed the world the world of a Creator, we discovered the unintended consequence of killing off any rational foundation morality and not only brought into question the whole idea of truth, but positively affirming that there is no solid truth to begin with.
4. What is the consequence of all this?
5. We run to psychiatrists and counselors, narcotics, alcoholism, and sexual addiction, to solve more per capita depression than in any period of history.
 - a) The Hell OS is a slippery slope. Think like this, and your whole world is chaos. This philosophy is from the dark side, and the devil's been whispering it and shouting it since he tempted Eve in the Garden.
 - b) It contradicts reality.
 - c) It contradicts Scripture.
 - d) It contradicts experience.
 - e) It contradicts truth.
 - f) It contradicts itself.
 - g) It is crazy-making and heart-breaking and taking a tremendous toll on us all, and especially on our kids.
6. When you think this way, when you buy into this kind of thinking and believing — the world system and all its lies — you are tapping into the very ideas of hell itself. And the scary thing is that these destructive ideas find an ally lurking in the human heart called the flesh. There is part of our thinking that is always ready to throw off the rule and reign of God.
7. I saw an article online a while back that had done a survey about the Bible. They asked what were the most offensive verses in the whole Bible. The article ran through a whole bunch of verses about evil, and suffering, and why does God do harsh stuff. It was all the typical verses that people point to when they want to call into question the authority of the Word of God.
8. I posted a comment. I said the authors forgot one verse. The most offensive verse in the whole Bible.
9. Do you know what it is?
 - a) *Genesis 1:1: In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*
10. I said that if God created us, then we owe him everything, and the human heart hates that, as long as the Hell OS is rocking and rolling inside.
11. Have you ever seen a seed growing up through a crack in the sidewalk? Think of it — a tiny seed with the power to crack solid concrete.
12. If there ever is a war in your heart between truth and your psychology, I'm here to tell you your psychology will crack first. You can't defeat God's truth in the end.
13. But the Hell OS keeps trying.
14. And so we need another OS: here it is:
- E. *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. (James 3:13)*
 1. So at long last, we get a picture of the Grace Operating System.
 2. This is maturity. This is spiritual growth. It is your great potential as a child of God.
 3. It is a way of THINKING that leads to a way of LIVING and of SPEAKING.
 4. Question: who is wise and understanding among you? Who is the genuinely spiritually mature person?
 5. Not the one a talks a good game, but the one who lives a good reality.
 - a) At home, at school, at work.
 - b) In your choices.
 - c) In your relationships.
 - d) In your sexuality.
 - (1) Because you are whole, and mature, and not a wreck inside. Because you are going with the flow of God's truth and not against it.
 6. James says are a living breathing example of this thing called "the meekness of wisdom," which is a really religious sounding, boring phrase until you break it down.
 7. Meekness is not the same as wimpiness. Meekness is strength under control. Meekness is a gentle giant who can crush an opponent but doesn't.
 8. Where does this strength under control come from?
 9. Wisdom, which is a fully uploaded, fully installed Grace Operating System in your soul.
 - a) The Bible is the operating code.
 - b) Bible study is how you upload the code.
 - (1) Upload enough of the Bible, and you gain wisdom, not floating on the top of your mind, but reformatting your hard drive with the same instincts, the same beliefs, and the same thinking that Jesus had in his mind when he lived on earth.
 - (2) Are you following this?
 - (a) Because it all goes back to the tongue.
 10. So there's the setup, and now James wraps it up with a comparison of the two operating systems, as if to say take your pick.

- F. *But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. (James 3:14-16)*
1. There's your chaos.
 2. Listen... you can't break God's truth. You can only break yourself against God's truth, and the Hell OS is committed to that goal.
 3. It is a way of thinking that is earthly, sensual, and demonic.
 4. Let's just assume all that is bad.
 5. It is confusing.
 6. It is narcissistic.
 7. It is the mother of all evil.
 8. Contrast that to the last verse, and we'll wrap it up.
- G. *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. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:17, 18)*
1. Here is the Bible.
 2. Here is the Grace Operating System.
 3. Think like this, and the whole world will open up to you. All this inner health can be yours.
 - a) Your Creator is God.
 - b) Your Savior is Jesus.
 - c) Your Forgiveness is Complete.
 - d) Your Salvation is Eternal.
 - e) Your Destiny is Heaven.
 - f) Your Status is Beloved.
 - g) Your Beauty is Breathtaking.
 - h) Your Mansion is Glorious.
 - i) Your Name is Child of God.
 - j) Your Riches are Incomparable.
 - k) Your Power is Invincible.
 - l) Your Value is Inestimable.
 - m) Your Purpose is Inspiring.
 - n) Your Potential is Staggering.
 - o) Your Privileges are Regal.
 - p) Your Nature is Altogether Lovely.
 4. This is the wisdom that is from above. This is the code that God wants to upload. This is the Grace Operating System. This is righteousness. This is purity. This is peace. This is harmony inside and outside. This is your meaning and value and worth.
 5. This is the real you, not the you that the world sees, but the you that God sees and says you are.
 6. Grace lives at the intersection where theology meet psychology. That is the message of James.
 7. This is the wisdom that is from above. And if you want to grow up, all you have to do is let the Spirit of God weave the Word of God so deeply into your soul that you think this way, believe this way, feel this way, and begin to act this way.
 8. All of which leads us to our Royal Family Honor Code number 6:
 - a) GRACE OPERATING SYSTEM:
My words, choices, relationships, and instincts express the grace and truth of God, as I rise above the devil's lies through the deeply embedded knowledge of God's Invincible Word.

III. Bible Memory

- A. *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. (James 3:17)*