

# Prevent Wildfires

by Duane Troyer

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*Duane Troyer's sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's commands and the destructive power of uncontrolled speech.*

**Topics:** "Obedience To God", "Taming The Tongue"

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## Description

Duane Troyer preaches about the importance of being like 'myrmidons', who execute their master's commands without question or hesitation, emphasizing the need for obedience in various aspects of life. He challenges the congregation to carry out God's commands faithfully, highlighting the consequences of making excuses and not taking action. Troyer also discusses the significance of controlling the tongue, warning against the destructive power of careless words and the need to speak words that edify and bring grace to others.

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## Transcript

Let's pray. Father in heaven we thank you for this day. Thank you for this opportunity to be here. Thank you for the Lord Jesus. I pray for those of us who aren't here today, whether they're sick or whatever the reason is that they're not here, Lord, I pray that you would be with them as well and minister to them. Pray Lord that your Spirit would be here in our midst. Give us words of truth to speak. Give us a heart to receive. May your will be done. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Grace be with you all from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. I just wish that peace on all of us, brothers and sisters, fellow pilgrims, strangers on this earth. Saints.... and myrmidons. I came across a new word the other day. Myrmidon. And when I saw the definition of it, I was like: that's what I want to be. I want to be a myrmidon, and I would like for all of you to be myrmidons. The definition is: A person who executes without questions or scruples his master's command.

Someone who without making a question, hesitation or a fuss, executes his father's commands. Let's be myrmidons. Amen? What would happen with a congregation this size if we all had that heart within us. If we got up every morning and we, without any question or fuss, stood at our post, ready to carry out the Father's command. Us husbands would love our wives as Christ loved the church, without question or scruple. And you wives, would submit and obey your husbands without a question or fuss.

And all of you children would obey your parents without question or hesitation. What would happen? What would happen if we got up and fed the poor? And clothed the naked. And visited the sick and those in

prison. And invited the strangers, without question or scruple. If we went and ministered to the fatherless and widows. If we loved our neighbors as ourselves, without any question or fuss. If we did good to those who hate us, and we return good for evil, without worrying about the outcome.

If we took this gospel of the kingdom out to the uttermost parts of the earth and preached it to all creatures, without being afraid of what we would lose, without any question or scruple. What do you think might happen? What would you think might happen if we don't? What's going to happen, if instead of being a myrmidon, we sit around and we make excuses, and we ask questions, and we talk about it, and we just share ideas about it. After all, we've got a piece of land or we bought a yoke of oxen and we must see them.

We took a wife and therefore we can't do it. Or we want to go bury our father. Or we want to make all the excuses we can. What's going to happen then? I know one thing that will happen. God will find a people. He will find a people who's heart is right towards Him and He will fill them with His Spirit, and He will give them a vision, and He will give them the power, and we will miss out. Because the eyes of the Lord go to and fro over the whole earth in search of a man whose heart is right towards him, and who He can show Himself strong in.

He WILL fill His kingdom. If those who are invited don't take up the call, He will go out in the highways and byways, and He will invite those people in. He will fill up His kingdom. It's up to us whether we want to be there or not. Let's have the heart of a myrmidon. A person who executes without question or scruple his master's command. I want to read a little passage here in 1 Maccabees, if you have Maccabees, if you have the Septuagint you can open up to it in chapter 4: 41.

And the reason I want to read this verse, is that I am well aware of the fact that sometimes when we don't know, like we actually have this heart to obey these commands, but we come to something, a specific thing in our life, that we really don't know what to do with. But that doesn't mean we have to stop altogether, neither does it mean that we have to take this thing that we don't know something about and just pitch it altogether. This was an interesting little passage here in 1 Maccabees 4:41. Then Judas ordered

his men to fight those in the citadel, until he purified the sanctuary. He chose righteous priests devoted to the law. They purified the sanctuary, carried the defiled stones to an unclean place, and they discussed what they should do with the altar of whole burnt offerings, which had been desecrated. It seemed to them the best plan was to tear it down, so it would not be a reproach to them, because the gentiles had corrupted it. So they tore down the altar, they also stacked the stones in an appropriate location on the temple hill until a prophet would come and tell them what should be done with them.

I was blessed with this, how these men, they were about to sanctify this defiled temple, and when they didn't know what to do with a specific thing, with these stones of the altar, they decided to carry them out, stack them off to the side, until a prophet would come and tell them what to do with them. Meanwhile, they kept on sanctifying the temple. And I don't want this to be mistaken for setting something aside because we don't want to do it. God knows the heart. He knows whether we've set something aside because we actually don't know, and once we do know, we will.

Or whether we've set something aside because it's too hard right now and we don't want to. That's one thing that becomes so clear to me, and I've known it all along, but it just becomes so clear to me the further I go, that we will in no way deceive God. We can go through our whole life, and deceive people,

and we can make them believe something about us that isn't quite true, and we can get to the point where we've actually deceived ourselves. But we will not deceive God. I know of a man, who was digging holes for a building, this was in a town back in Ohio, and he was digging holes to set poles for a building, or in addition to a building, and there was a code to meet.

I think these holes were suppose to be four or three feet deep, but the digging was hard. Really hard. And he was tired of digging, and so he took his tape measure and curled up the bottom of and he stuck it down in the whole until the four foot mark was even with the ground, and he took a picture of it, and that was going to suit. It's not too hard to do those kind of things, and deceive men, but God sees through all of this and He sees right into the intentions and motives of the heart.

And he even knows whether we've willfully deceived ourselves or not. What I really wanted to talk about today, maybe related or unrelated to what I've already shared, but I get this impression or this feeling that it's something God wants us to hear, partly because Lloyd has already touched on it, and I was not going to preach on it until just a couple days ago. I felt as if I was led to do that. And some of the passages that I was going to read, Lloyd already read. That's ok.

We can either read them again or maybe I'll skip them, but anyway... What would we do if right now, right here in this room, a wild and hungry lion jumped in that window right there, right in this room, what would we do? We would probably flee, maybe we would pray that God would stop the mouth of this lion, or it's altogether possible that we have enough man power here that we could tackle it, and pin it down, if we got our act together. But we'd take action! And we'd do something.

And if we got it pinned down, we would not let it go until every woman and child, and everyone else would be in a safe area, and we had a good way of taking care of it. Now what do you think we would do if one of us brought a tame lion in here-a pet lion, right into this room this morning. We might not panic and flee, but we would treat that beast with all due respect, and we would keep a wary eye on it. And if it even began to act up, we would take action, and take no chances.

But do you know that there's something in here more dangerous than that lion? Right now. Right here. Many of them. We all have them, they're about that long (3"). It's called a tongue. And James said that all wild beast and creatures and fowls and fishes have been tamed and can be tamed, but the tongue can no man tame. It's an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Let's read James 3 again, part of it, I'll start in verse one. Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur stricter judgment, for we all stumble in many ways.

If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body. I want you to keep that verse in mind. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole

body as well. Now if we put the bits into horses' mouths, so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also. Though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire, and the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity.

The tongue is set among our members, as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts, and birds, of reptiles, and creatures of the

sea is tame and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, and full of deadly poison. With it, we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come both blessings and cursings.

My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out at the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives? Or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh. In the chapter before this, James talks about faith and works. And he says faith without works is dead. And he goes on to say, that if we saw somebody who was hungry, or naked, and we said to that person, "God be with you, and I pray you will get something to eat or clothes to wear, but do not give him something to eat or clothes to wear, what good has it done for what we've said?"

And when I think of that concept, I think of what he is saying here in the next chapter about the tongue. And I ask, if we have this desire to have a controlled tongue and to speak only what's wholesome, but we don't do anything about it, what good is it? What good is it to speak about it, or think about it, if we don't do anything about it, if we don't take measures of having that? The tongue is a fire, it says in this chapter. It likens it to a fire, and how great a fire a small fire can kindle.

You know fire, when it's in control, is a great, great blessing -f very useful. In fact, I'm not quite sure if the human race could survive without it. Maybe. I'm not sure. But we would for sure suffer. We'd go very cold, we would probably go hungry, if there was no such thing as fire at all. We would have no way of lighting up the darkness, so fire is very, very useful, as long as we keep it in control. But let it go wild, and let it get out of control, and it is EXTREMELY destructive.

Most of you have probably heard at least, of what they call the great Chicago fire. Back in October 8 of 1871, on a Sunday night, after a long drought, that summer and fall, a fire broke out in Chicago, and there were strong southwest winds, and that fire went from one building to the next, and by Tuesday, it had burned a good portion of Chicago, and there were 100,000 people homeless, there were 17,500 buildings destroyed, 73 miles of road and 120 miles of sidewalks, 300 people at least, were dead.

And it is uncertain how this fire started. There's different speculations, but they know that it started close to someone's little barn, and that there was a cow or so in that barn. One speculation is that a cow kicked over an oil lantern. Another speculation is that some people gambling in that barn at night, got drunk and kicked it over. However it is, and we don't have to know, but it would be pretty certain that there was a fire somewhere that was in control, but it got out of control.

And three days later much of the city of Chicago lay in ruins. How great destruction a small fire can do when it's out of control. I'd like to get a little more practical with some of these things. For you all and for myself. Things that I think we all need to work on, at least some of them. You know, there's people, who, when you talk with them, you pretty much believe what they say. If you've walked with them for a while, there's probably reasons why you've come there. They've just proven themselves, that their words are trustworthy.

There's other people whom you always tend to doubt just a little bit. And it all comes, usually, unless somebody is just really skeptical about everything that everybody says, it usually comes from experience we have with people. And this first thing that I might say might seem like a small thing, but it's a thing that raises a red flag for me. And that's when things just get stretched, when the truth gets stretched and you know it, whether it just be some casual thing, like how cold it is, how hot it is, how much it rained, how

long something is, how short something is, or whatever, and you know the person has just stretched it to make his story a bit more exciting, or whatever. And a red flag goes up. If he's not faithful in the little things, will he be faithful in the bigger things? And how we relate what we have heard someone say or have seen someone do. How honestly do we attempt to accurately relate it? Am I more sensitive to that? There's been places that I've worked in the past where you have a whole bunch of people working with you, and you observe a conversation, and later you hear someone out of that conversation relate to someone else how so- and-so said...and he adds emphasis, he adds details, he adds things he thinks he heard that were never said, and then how do I know for sure if that person ever tells me something, whether I know that it's accurately related or not?

If I don't know anything about it. And I want to be very clear here that I realize it is completely hard for us people to perfectly relate something. Ok. Because we have a memory and our memory is not complete. But there is a big difference, and we may not always be able to discern this, but God can, because God is not deceived. There's a big difference between relating things as accurately as we possibly can, and having forgot detail, or changing the emphasis to change what was really said or done.

There's a big, big difference! The one is a lack of memory, and it can have bad results too, but the other is a false witness, and a false witness does not go unpunished. I'm not going to read this, but if you get a chance to read sometime in 2 Maccabees, chapter 14, there's this account there of a false witness who did great damage. In the past month or so I've read through the three books of Maccabees and there's a lot of inspirational things that have happened in there. And if we falsely report something and we actually intend to injure someone's reputation, it's not only a false witness, it's slander.

It's slander! God hates this kind of stuff. When we just articulate things, when we just explain things, and maybe there's no evil intent at all, but you know, some people really have a gift to articulate something. Others maybe don't. And it is really easy for someone who can articulate something really well to win a so-called debate, even though he's wrong, just because he's presented his case in a better way. It's the way the courts work today. The judges usually don't judge anything about what's really right or wrong, but which ever lawyer can present his case the best.

We should all be on guard for that. Not that we shouldn't try to articulate something well, that's a good gift, it can be a good gift. But we need to be discerning. We need to judge righteously. When there's things that are actually ambiguous, which means they could have more than one interpretation. I think we should be careful that we don't try to make our view of it an absolute by adding all kinds of things to make it an absolute. I don't care much for bible translators who take something out of the Greek, and they add what they think they need to add to make something that could be otherwise interpreted, to mean what they want it to mean.

I don't appreciate bible translations like that. And I think we should be careful. And I would want to say this too, that recently a brother told me how, it's just the words are, if we want them to be ambiguous we can make them ambiguous. So once again, let's be honest and not call something ambiguous because we don't want to do it, or we don't want the right understanding, or we'd just as soon call it ambiguous, and stay a little ignorant than really search out what the matter really is.

But there are things that are ambiguous. Once again, we won't deceive God in these things. We won't deceive God. He knows exactly why we call something ambiguous or not ambiguous. Assumptions and suspicions without facts. It's so easy to do it, and brethren, I'm including me in this when I say I think we all

need to hear this, I'm including myself. If communication is a controlled fire, assumption is a wildfire. And with a little communication, we can construct something and with assumption we can destroy it.

There's so many times when we don't have all the facts, and we best either get them or be quiet. It's good to be cautious and we should always be watchful, but it's not necessarily good to be suspicious. I want to read a verse in Ephesians. And by the way, these things grow into wildfires, they can take off, they can take off and become completely uncontrolled. Ephesians 4:29 says, Let no unwholesome proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification,

according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. I was almost struck when I read that verse this morning. I'll read it again. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification, according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do we still feel like saying "We follow the bible"? Is there any wonder that James said here in James 3 that if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he's a perfect man?

What I'm afraid is, that we've gotten to the point, or I've gotten to the point where I don't even recognize that when this happens, I've stumbled. It's just something that happens, just get a little careless sometimes. No!! Paul says these things should not even proceed from our mouth. Unwholesome words. Unless they're good for the edification of the moment, that they could bring grace to those who hear them, they shouldn't even be uttered. In Ephesians 5 he says there must be no filthiness, and silly talk, and coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks, and in that same list, in the verse before, he says let no fornication, nor uncleanness, nor covetousness be among you - we're not anywhere close to be fornicators- but in this same list he says also that, Let no filthiness, or silly talk, or coarse jesting be mentioned among us, but rather the giving of thanks.

In Matthew 12, and Lloyd read these verses, but they're very important. And in case you think, "Well, Paul was kind of over emphasizing it and after all, we're more dedicated to what Jesus said" ...Jesus said this: But I tell you, every careless word that people speak, they shall give accounting for in the day of judgment, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. Careless word. I know the King James says idle word. But a lot of the translations say careless word.

Just a careless word. And I'm going to be honest with you, I remember when I was young, I just did not like that verse. I just didn't like it. I didn't like the idea that I would have to give an account for every idle word. But there it is and I'm not going to make any apologies for it. I'm not even going to try to explain exactly what Jesus all meant when he said it, but it's there. Did you know that carelessness is what causes wildfires? Real wildfires. You probably all know who Smokey the bear is.

Smokey the bear is that mascot of the bear with forest patrol hat on and he's got a shovel in one hand, and he says nine out of ten wildfires could be avoided if people were careful. Anyway, the picture shows him there with a shovel in one hand, and his finger pointing right at you and he says "Only you can prevent wildfires". I think we should take his advice, because probably nine out of ten broken relationships could be avoided if we were careful. If there was never a careless word that came out of our mouth.

And bear in mind that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. We can't blame the tongue...we can't blame the tongue! It only reveals the heart. How would it be if we never spoke a careless word? If there was never any silly talk? If every foolish and unlearned question was avoided? And if instead of assuming, we'd communicate, and we'd put as much or more effort into investigating the truth of a matter as we do in reporting it. If we'd take every measure possible to relate things as accurately as

possible, or then be quiet.

And on top of all that, if without hypocrisy, without feigning it, without question or scruple, we would esteem our brother greater than ourselves, how would it be? I think probably nine out of ten wildfires could be avoided. That little tongue of yours, and mine, it's mine. Mine is mine and yours is yours. And it will do whatsoever the pilot wants it to do. And don't forget the advice of Smokey the bear "Only YOU can prevent wildfires" Let's pray. Father, I pray Lord, that you would help us.

That you could cleanse us, Lord. Just think of how the prophet Isaiah said, Woe is me, a man of unclean lips in the midst of a people with unclean lips, and Lord, I pray that you would take a coal off of the altar and hold it at our lips and cleanse us, and help us to esteem each other higher than ourselves. Pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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