

JAMES 3

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to James chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

There is no doubt that James is not interested in pleasing people, but he does want Christians to grow in the Lord, and that can be difficult as we often don't like what others are telling us.

And I think we have seen that play out in our study of James so far, he doesn't pull any punches.

James just tells it like it is and for the most part, he would not be allowed to teach in most churches today. He would be too hard, too negative, you would not necessarily leave feeling good, but you would leave a changed person if you allowed God to change you!

I guess some might say, "*James, what is wrong with you! You are making me feel bad. You are hurting my fragile self-esteem! Stop it!*"

But sometimes it is just what we need to hear and think about it. Do you really think God put something in the Bible that is not for our edification? Of course not. It is here so we can read and apply these things to our lives, so that we may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

As we have seen, James started out by dealing with the issue of a believer and suffering in James chapter 1. Keep in mind that James is writing "**To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad**" or Jewish believers who were scattered for their faith!

He told them, **“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”** James 1:2-4.

You see, as Stephen was martyred for his faith in Christ, persecution against Christians grew and they were scattered outside the land of Israel. And James point is that trials come to test our faith to see if it is real and trials come to mature us.

In saying that, don't let the Devil tempt you as you are going through these things, to sin through the difficult times but allow God to grow you through them. You see, God sends trials and Satan will send temptation.

Then, in James chapter 2, James deals with the believer in service, how he is to treat the brethren in Christ. He is to show no partiality, he is to accept people, be courteous to all, show people compassion, be consistent in how you treat people, come to the aid of those in need, because faith without works is dead!

James put it this way in James chapter 2, **“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. . . . But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? . . . For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”**

James 2:17, 20, 26.

Tonight, it is good to see all of you here, I guess you didn't read ahead to see what we are going to be dealing with tonight – ***THE UNTAMABLE TONGUE!***

This is a tough one and I know you knew where we were at, but again, James lays it out for us and challenges us to speak differently.

Hard lessons for us to learn and grow by and yes, sometimes it does hurt to grow. When we were kids, we called them ***“growing pains.”*** These are no different.

I have called this section here in James chapter 3 – *THE BELIEVER AND HIS SPEECH*.

And, as I have said, it is truly a difficult area for most if not all of us!

But, as we are going to see, a believer is a new creation in Christ and thus, what flows from his lips should be a reflection of his saved nature. Our speech should be holy, it should reflect the nature of Jesus, the One who has given us this new life!

Paul, in Colossians chapter 3 starts out by saying in verse 1, **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. . . . But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. . . . But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”** Colossians 3:1-5, 8, 14-17.

And, like I said, I think we all want to grow in the Lord, it is those growing pains we don't like but it is needed for us to grow!

With that said, let's begin reading in James chapter 3, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening on this difficult subject of our speech, the untamable tongue!

JAMES 3

VERSE 1

Let me first deal with the time period James was writing in and then we will see how this applies in our day.

During the days in which James lived, the Rabbis were master teachers and they loved to receive the honor, the respect, the praise from their fellow Jews.

In Matthew 23:1-7 we see this played out for it was no secret. We are told, "**Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'**"

Obviously, Jesus is rebuking them here.

First of all, they placed themselves into a position that God did not and thus, they had no authority to add human tradition to God's Word, no one does!

They were *false spiritual leaders* that lacked *integrity*, they lacked *sympathy*, and they lacked *humility*.

You see, they loved the title, they loved the honor, they loved the attention, and they lacked the humility!

And for them, it was more the outward appearance of holiness than an inward transformation. You see, we can make ourselves look better than we really are, but like Jesus said to the religious leaders of his day, inside are dead men's bones. It is a façade!

And when you think about it, not much has changed today. We see religious leaders who want the title, they want the honor, they want the attention of being a teacher, of being a pastor, but they don't want the responsibilities that go with it.

You see, it is not just coming in, teaching and then leaving and going home – your life is given over to serve God's people, not for anything else but the love for the Lord and His people.

I keep reminding myself that God spoke through a donkey in the Old Testament very powerfully and I guess I fit that bill, if He can use a donkey, He can use me, and that keeps me humble!

And please understand that as you teach God's Word there is a huge responsibility to present it accurately. We see today how much this is lacking.

With all this social justice garbage that is going on and being white is evil, listen to what one pastor, a big-name pastor, had to say. We are told,

Tim Keller has become completely useless to the Church and does not represent the Scriptures or minister the gospel in any meaningful way.

Keller, who is completely given over to the social justice gospel - which the Apostle Paul describes as “another gospel” which is “no gospel at all” - now makes an outrageous claim that the Scriptures say that if you have white skin, you’re involved in injustice, “even if you didn’t do it.”

“If you have white skin, it’s worth \$1m over a lifetime,” he says, “you have to say, I don’t deserve this . . . I am the product of and standing on the shoulders of other people who got that through injustice . . . the Bible says you are involved in injustice, and even if you didn’t actually do it.”

Let’s just be clear that the Bible does not say this, nor anything even remotely to suggest that this could be derived theologically from the Scriptures. In fact, it is antithetical to the gospel. It is heresy.

- <https://bit.ly/34yvwMP>

It is absolutely heresy and praise God that there are Christians who are calling him out on this heresy!

Listen to what we are told in Ezekiel 3:17-19, **“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”**

You see, pastor/teachers and teachers Paul has made it very clear what they are to do. They are to, “. . . **watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.**” Hebrews 13:17.

Don't take this lightly, in fact, young believers should never be put in as a teacher until they mature in the faith as Paul said in I Timothy 3:6, “**not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.**”

It grieves my heart to see pastor/teachers and teachers who are lackadaisical about God's Word because they are hurting people and there is a judgment against anyone who does take this lightly, if you don't teach God's Word accurately.

Not a judgment of damnation but of losing your reward, unless you don't believe the Gospel message and then it is a judgment of damnation!

Jesus said in Luke 12:48, “. . . **For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.**”

The great Scottish Reformer John Knox was so awed and burdened by the responsibility to declare God's Word faithfully that before his first sermon, he wept uncontrollably and had to be escorted from the pulpit until he could compose himself.

One pastor reportedly said of preaching what could also be said of teaching, “***There is no special honor in preaching. There is only special pain. The pulpit calls those anointed to it as the sea calls its sailors; and like the sea, it batters and bruises and does not rest. . . . To preach, to really preach, is to die naked a little at a time and to know each time you do it that you must do it again.***”

I wonder how many would want to teach if they truly thought of it like that?

And I don't think many people take this serious enough today. They don't hold teachers accountable for what they are teaching and sometimes, when they do, the pastor gets mad and removes them from the church because they don't want to be accountable to anyone.

If you think I am going overboard on this, I am not and I will share this with you because I want to drive home this point of how dangerous false teaching, heresy is to a person's life, it can be deadly.

What I am going to share with you is what was born out of this person reading of Henrietta Mears's, who built up her Sunday School to unheard of proportions from the 1940's and 1950's to 4,000 people!

And it is out of that he wrote this,

Thumbing through her biography, I mentally contrasted it with the chilling experience I had in 1978 when my issue of *Time* magazine fell open to a series of pictures recording the life and death of another teacher, Jim Jones. The photographer similarly chronicled Jones's life, his coterie [camp] of disciples, his triumphs, and his end – the rotting bodies of hundreds of people in the infamous Jonestown massacre – an unforgettable testimony of the influence of a teacher for evil.

Teachers wield incredible power! Young or untaught minds in the hands of a skilled teacher are like clay in a potter's hands. Such a teacher is closely watched by his or her students, and often the teacher's attitudes and personal morals have as much influence as the information conveyed – perhaps more.

Casual advice from a teacher can direct the course of one's whole life. Phrases such as "Have you considered the theatre?" or "I think you would make an excellent doctor" often propel young lives into one career or another. We must realize what power teachers have at crucial times in tender lives – to crush the bloom or make it eternally flower!

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Father That Works, p. 126

That is why when opinions outweigh the Word of God, there is tremendous danger. Stick to the Word of God, it is not open for your interpretation or what you think it says, God says what He means and it doesn't matter if we like it or not, it is to be taught and obeyed!

I hope that is clear! Because Peter warned us what it will be like in the last days, the false teachers that are out there as he wrote in II Peter 2:1-3, **"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber."**

The warning is there, are people listening?

VERSE 2

Now I don't know about you, but as I read this it is very discouraging to me. James is saying that if we don't stumble, we are – ***PERFECT!***

Not even close!

But I should not be discouraged by these words and neither should you. You see, James is speaking of spiritual maturity and the Greek word used for “**perfect**” is TELEIOS, (tel’-i-os) and it can mean absolute perfection but that is impossible for any human being, except the Lord, of course.

I believe he is speaking of maturity and a sign that a person is mature in the Lord is his speech, what flows from his mouth. What flows from our mouth can stumble us, hinder our progress and thus, grow in the Lord, mature in Him. And, as we allow the Spirit of God and not the flesh to control our lives, we will be “**. . . able also to bridle the whole body.**” James 3:2.

Allow the Holy Spirit to have control of what flows from your lips. This is especially true of pastor/teachers and teachers, but it is also true for all of us.

Thus, James is now going to speak of the tongue and how destructive it can be.

One pastor put this verse and leading into what we will talk about next, the tongue or our speech, like this, *“If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man.” To not stumble in word shows true spiritual maturity. This is especially relevant to teachers, who have so much more opportunity to sin with their tongue. We stumble in word about ourselves, with our boasting, exaggeration, and selective reporting. [And] We stumble in word about others, with our criticism, gossip, slander, cruelty, two-facedness, and anger; or with flattery and insincere words meant to gain favor.”*

This is a tough portion of Scripture we are moving into, but it is also an important one if we want to grow, to mature in the Lord. We need to examine our hearts and our speech and see where we are at so we can grow in the Lord!

VERSES 3-6

We don't think much about what we say and the destruction it can bring. But we can look at history and we can look at our own lives and see that our words can build up or they can tear down and be very destructive!

Warren Wiersbe wrote, *“A judge speaks some words and a guilty prisoner is taken to a cell on death row. A gossip makes a phone call and a reputation is blemished or perhaps ruined. A cynical professor makes a snide remark in a lecture and a student's faith is destroyed. Never underestimate the power of words. For every word in Hitler's book Mein Kampf, 125 people died in World War II. Solomon was right: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Prov. 18:21). No wonder James compared the tongue to a destroying fire, a dangerous beast, and a deadly poison (James 3:5–8). Speech is a matter of life or death.”*

And as we have read, James gives to us a few illustrations regarding the tongue, that even though it may be small, it is very powerful, and it is very destructive, or I should say it can be, but it doesn't have to be!

Now keep in mind that James wants us to mature, to grow in the Lord and thus, these lessons are obviously important for all of us to learn from.

Some years ago, there was a sportswriter for the Atlanta Journal, Morgan Blake and he wrote the following satire that speaks volumes.

He wrote: ***“I am more deadly than the screaming shell from the howitzer. I win without killing. I tear down homes, break hearts, and wreck lives. I travel on the wings of the wind. No innocence is strong enough to intimidate me, no purity pure enough to daunt me. I have no regard for truth, no respect for justice, no mercy for the defenseless. My victims are as numerous as the sands of the sea, and often as innocent. I never forget and seldom forgive. My name is gossip.”*** (Cited in George Sweeting, Faith That Works, pp, 76-77).

How true that is!

Now, the first illustration to show how something very small can control something very powerful is that of a bit that is placed in the mouth of a horse. With that tiny bit you can turn a horse on a dime, any direction you want.

Now, if you lose control of that bridle that the bit is attached to, the horse will be out of control. Thus, if we can't control our tongue, then our lives will be out of control.

Next James speaks of a large ship that is controlled by a small rudder.

Let me give you an example of a very large ship, the Queen Elizabeth. It has a gross weight of 83,633 tons but its rudder only weights 140 tons, less than two-tenths of one percent of the total weight of the ship and yet, without the control of the rudder, the ship would be out of control. The same is true for our lives if we can't control our tongue!

Of these two points, one author wrote, ***“This means that both the bit and the rudder must be under the control of a strong hand. The expert horseman keeps the mighty power of his steed under control, and the experienced pilot courageously steers the ship through the storm. When Jesus Christ controls the tongue, then we need not fear saying the wrong things - or even saying the right things in a wrong way!”***

Lastly, he speaks of how a little fire can set a forest ablaze!

We see that in the hot, dry summer months when someone carelessly throws a lit cigarette out the car window and it catches the dry grass on fire and before long, thousands of acres of forest have been destroyed!

Think of the lives that are destroyed by the words that are spoken. This kind of talk, perverse, degrading, out of control is not from God, but it is from the pit of Hell. It speaks of Gehenna, which was a place located in the Valley of Hinnom that was used as the city dump and the fires would continually smolder just as our idol words do in people's lives!

We saw the destruction that words can bring with Jim Jones, but our words can also be uplifting and helpful, beneficial as we speak them.

Warren Wiersbe talks about the power of the spoken word to direct a person's life to God and to a life of good.

He wrote, *"On April 21, 1855, Edward Kimball went into a Boston shoe store and led young Dwight L. Moody to Christ. The result: one of history's greatest evangelists, a man whose ministry still continues . . . Yes, the tongue is like a bit and a rudder: it has the power to direct. How important it is that our tongues direct people in the right way!"*

Listen to these contrasting thoughts on wise words and foolish words from Proverbs chapter 10. We are told, **"The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, But violence covers the mouth of the wicked. . . . Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, But a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding. . . . In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; The heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom. . . . The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, But the mouth of the wicked what is perverse."** Proverbs 10:11, 13, 19-21, 32.

In other words, “**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.**” Psalm 19:14.

VERSES 7-8

I don't know about you, but I am always amazed how people can train animals to do all kinds of different things, to even control the most powerful of animals, they can be tamed.

We can make bears ride bicycles and I am not talking about the Chicago Bears but wild animals!

We can get lions to do tricks, but you can't get the Detroit lions to win any football games! Sorry.

We can get elephants to stand up on their hind legs on our command. I don't have anything for that one!

But look at how human nature can tame beastly nature and yet the tongue, as small as it is, we have no control of, it can't be tamed!

David's cry was, “**Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.**” Psalm 141:3. I think we cry that out after we have spoken many times! It should be before we speak!

And think about it. If I was to go around this room and ask you if you ever said anything you regretted, all of you would say, “**Yes**” and probably you would be able to give plenty of examples.

It is so easy to vomit out destructive words that destroy people, but it is a lot harder to speak words that will build people up.

Someone told me, and I thought this was really good, *“It is faster to flush a toilet than to fill a toilet!”*

And that is true of our speech. We have no problem spitting out things but to build people up, to encourage them, or even to try and get back something you said, that is a slow process!

Jesus, in rebuking the ignorance of the religious leaders as they came against the disciples of Jesus for not washing their hands according to the Law that they made, tells it like it is.

In Matthew 15:16-20 Jesus explains where real defilement comes from. He says, **“So Jesus said, ‘Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.’”**

Do you see that?

Jesus is saying that what comes out of our lips, what we say with our tongue is only a reflection of what is in our heart, it is a heart issue!

If you are self-centered then evil will come forth. If God is on the throne of your heart, then your speech will be seasoned with salt, it will be gracious!

Paul tells us in Galatians 5:17, **“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”**

Do you see what Paul is saying here?

He is telling us that there is a war going on, a battle going on in our lives. That flesh nature that was crucified is now trying to resurrect itself and show its ugly face, but the Spirit of God is trying to control your life also.

Who wins?

It all depends on who you surrender your life to at that given moment but prepare ahead of time how you will respond by spending time with God and heeding the Spirit's guiding!

You see, Paul said in Galatians 5:16, **"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."**

And Paul tells us in Romans 6:12-14, **"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."**

Thus, may we walk in the Spirit!

Let me explain it like this.

There was a woman who approached John Wesley and told him that she knew what her talent was. She told him, ***"I think my talent from God is to speak my mind."***

Wesley very wisely responded back by saying, ***"I don't think God would mind if you buried that talent."***

Folks, we can't control our tongue but as we give it to the Lord and ask Him to control what we say, then the words that flow from your lips will be for construction, for building people up and not for destruction, tearing them down!

Now people give all kinds of excuses why they say the things they say. And to tell you the truth, it is just an excuse for doing wrong.

Thus, James is going to lay it all on the line here by showing the hypocrisy of having a tongue that is out of control!

VERSES 9-10

Let's think about this one for a minute. We are saved, cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ and thus, the redeemed man who has a redeemed heart should produce a redeemed tongue.

But, unfortunately, often the last part of a Christian's body to be redeemed is their tongue!

And James hits this hard. He says that we bless God with our speech, and that truly is our highest calling! But with our tongue we also curse our fellow man, and that should not be!

In I Chronicles 29:10-15, as David collected some of the provisions for the Temple, we are told, **“Therefore David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David said: ‘Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, We thank You And praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You. For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, As were all our fathers; Our days on earth are as a shadow, And without hope.’”**

And so, we are in church, for instance, and we are praising God and then we walk out the door and we are putting people down, mocking them, making fun of them.

And the point James is making is that we praise the Lord one minute with our mouth and the next minute we are cursing man who was created in the image of God, and that should not be found in our lives!

That is inconsistent with who we are, who is in control of our life!

Our speech should be filled with praise unto God, not just on Sunday or Thursday but as we leave the church and go out into the world. We should not sound vulgar, be obnoxious, sound like a sailor with our speech.

You see, as we have been redeemed by God He has given to us the capacity of speaking things that are holy, that not only bless God but man who was created in the image of God!

The key is, who are you surrendering your tongue to, the Lord or the flesh?

Now James is going to give to us a couple of illustrations to show how our speech should not be used as an instrument for the Devil, it should not be inconsistent because it doesn't make sense, you are not living what you say you believe if you are doing those things!

VERSES 11-12

Talk about the obvious. As we read these words, they are logical, and they are true. And yet, when it comes to the words we say, we don't think much about it.

Think about this with the picture first and then we will look at the point that James is making here.

A spring is not going to send forth both fresh and bitter water through the same opening.

Nor can a fig tree produce olives, or a grape vine produce figs!

You can't have a spring that brings forth salt water and fresh water.

And yet, when it comes to our speech, we bless God and we curse man, and this should not be!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this, "The tongue that blesses the Father, and then turns around and curses men made in God's image, is in desperate need of spiritual medicine! How easy it is to sing the hymns during the worship service, then after the service, get into the family car and argue and fight all the way home! 'My brethren, these things ought not to be.'

The problem, of course, is not the tongue; it is the heart . . . "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man" (Matt. 15:18).

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

As we fill our hearts with God's Word, and yield to the Holy Spirit, He can use us to bring delight to others, and we will be refreshing fountains and trees."

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p 869

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 12:34-37 as He was speaking to the Jewish religious leaders. He said, "**Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.**"

Again, what is going on in our heart will be manifested in our speech!

Thus, get right with God, give Him your whole life and as you do, good will come forth.

If you refuse, you won't like what you hear and neither will others!

You see, what we say can be an indication of what we are – it can reveal our inner character, who is on the throne of our hearts, who is controlling our life!

Make no mistake about it, bitter words will come from a bitter heart!

I don't know about you, but when I appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, I don't want my speech to condemn me more than it already does.

Thus, may we cry out and say, **“Lord, put a guard on my lips! Don't let me say things to hurt anyone but let my speech be seasoned with salt, filled with grace!”**

We see those that are not saved and the ugliness that comes out of their mouth, the vulgar speech, but we need to be careful, because we can curse, we can spread gossip, we can have filth come from our lips as well.

May we say as David said to the Lord in Psalm 19:14, and I know that we have read this already, but I need to hear them again, **“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.”**

As we move into verse 13 James is going to speak about another subject, he is going to move away from our speech, the tongue, and some of you are saying, ***“Praise the Lord!”*** and he is going to deal with how a mature Christian walks in wisdom.

Another important point that James is making here. Not only should our speech match up with our faith, but so should our actions!

VERSE 13

James spoke of wisdom in James chapter 1, where he wrote, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”** James 1:5.

In that portion James was speaking about wisdom as you go through various trials, how you should handle them, count it all joy, learn from them and let that joy be manifested in your life for others to see.

Here James is speaking about wisdom as we live out our faith!

And keep in mind that wisdom is not just the right information.

In fact, having the right information is knowledge, the truths of God found in the Word of God.

And true wisdom is applying the truths of God to your life, walking in the love of what you know to be true!

Solomon tells us in Proverbs 9:10, **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”**

That is where wisdom begins, honoring the Lord, respecting Him but it continues on as Job tells us in Job 28:28, **“And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.’”**

You see, you know the truths of God, now live them or as James put it, **“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”** James 1:22.

Now there is also humility, or there should be, in what we do.

We don’t bring glory to ourselves but to God. He is the One who has enabled us to live a life that is pleasing to Him and thus, He gets the glory!

Solomon rightly tells us in Proverbs 15:33, **“The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility.”**

If you don't humble yourself before the Lord, Paul warns us in I Corinthians 10:12, **“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”**

It is truly a choice on our part if we want to humble ourselves or exalt ourselves, but there are consequences with both.

If we exalt ourselves, we will stumble and fall, but if we humble ourselves, listen to what James tells us what will happen.

In James 4:10 we are told, **“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”**

I would rather be lifted up by the Lord than have a false honor that will come crashing down, wouldn't you? You see, we are all servants of the Lord, bondslaves of Christ and one day we will be raised up in glory with Him and we will come back with Him to rule and reign on this earth with Him in the Kingdom Age!

And this humility fits in with the meekness that James is talking about here. You see, true wisdom is also evident by its meek manner. Those who do their good works in a way designed to bring attention to themselves show they lack true wisdom.

So this is true wisdom and it is manifested in our lives.

But, if there is true wisdom there must also be a wisdom that is false, and James is going to speak on that next!

VERSES 14-16

James tells us that this world contains two different kinds of wisdom, and that should just make sense.

These two schools of wisdom descend from two entirely different information streams, God and Satan!

And here, in these verses, James is speaking of human wisdom, earthly wisdom, demonic wisdom you might say and what it is like.

First of all, it is “**bitter**” which speaks of it being a sharp kind of jealousy, it is cutting, it is destructive. In fact, there is no value to it!

Secondly, human wisdom is selfish, self-centered, “**self-seeking**.” Think of it like this, from bitter jealousy comes selfish ambition so you promote yourself, you make yourself better than you are and better than others!

And here we need to be careful. We can have all the right words and yet speak them, act out in a very wrong manner. Moffat put it like this, “*Religious people may be extremely provoking, and defeat their own ends by overbearing methods; right views and sound counsels may lose their effect if they are expressed by men who are self-seeking partisans or unscrupulous controversialists.*” How true that is!

Also, William MacDonald put it like this, “*The worldly-wise man is characterized by bitter envy and selfish ambition in his heart. His one passion in life is to advance his own interests. He is jealous of any competitors and ruthless in dealing with them. He is proud of his wisdom that has brought success. But James says that this isn’t wisdom at all. Such boasting is empty. It is a practical denial of the truth that the man who is truly wise is truly humble.*”

Keep in mind that James just spoke of godly wisdom in the previous verse we looked at here in James chapter 3. And this godly wisdom is seen with good conduct, meekness, humility!

But not here, it is the exact opposite, and it is ugly!

And James tells us not to deceive others or ourselves by this human wisdom, that is an unwise thing to do. You need to do a heart check and examine what you are doing and why you are doing it!

Many years ago, over 25 years ago, my son's drum teacher, who also played on the worship team back in Elk Grove, was an example of this heavenly wisdom.

He was not self-seeking at all. He was a very humble man. He was so talented, so gifted and he helped to instill in my son that humble spirit.

He once said that when he played on the worship team, he wished it could be behind a curtain because he did not want to distract anyone from worshipping the Lord as he was playing.

Often it is the exact opposite for those who are doing worship!

Folks, it is all about Jesus and we need to worship Him, exalt Him and let His nature flow from our lives!

Again, look at what James says this false wisdom, or this earthly wisdom is from, and obviously, it is not from God.

First of all, it is earthly or of this world.

Secondly, it is sensual or of the flesh.

And lastly, it is demonic or from the Devil!

And notice what is born of that kind of wisdom. We see confusion, strife, all kinds of evil things.

Folks, I have seen this happen and it is truly amazing to watch because there is no peace when a person acts like this, just instability, just confusion!

Warren Wiersbe sums it up for us like this. He wrote,

The Bible contains many examples of the folly of man's wisdom. The building of the Tower of Babel seemed like a wise enterprise, but it ended in failure and confusion (Gen 11:1-9). It seemed wise for Abraham to go to Egypt when famine came to Canaan, but the results proved otherwise (Gen 12:10-20).

King Saul thought it was wise to put his own armor on young David for the lad's battle with Goliath, but God's plan was otherwise (1 Sam 17:38 ff).

The disciples thought it was wise to dismiss the great crowd and let them find their own food; but Jesus took a few loaves and fishes and fed the multitude.

The Roman "experts" in Acts 27 thought it was wise to leave port and set sail for Rome, even though Paul disagreed; and the storm that followed proved that Paul's wisdom was better than their expert counsel. They lived to regret it, but they lived!

What is the origin of man's wisdom? "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:15). The believer has three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil (Eph 2:1-3). These enemies are suggested by the terms "earthly, sensual, devilish."

There is a "wisdom of this world" (1 Cor 1:20-21). Do not confuse the world's knowledge and the world's wisdom. Certainly, there is a great deal of knowledge in this world, and we all benefit from it; but there is not much wisdom. Man unlocks the secrets of the universe, but he does not know what to do with them. Almost everything he discovers or devises turns against him. Over a century ago, Henry David Thoreau warned that we had "improved means to unimproved ends."

Whenever I ride a bus or elevated train in the city, I often think of the man in Boston who was entertaining a famous Chinese scholar. He met his Oriental friend at the train station and rushed him to the subway. As they ran through the subway station, the host panted to his guest, “If we run and catch this next train, we will save three minutes!” To which the patient Chinese philosopher replied, “And what significant thing shall we do with the three minutes we are saving?”

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p 870

Now James is not going to end on this downer, this negative note but he will close by sharing with us what heavenly wisdom is all about, as he just shared with us what demonic or earthly wisdom is all about!

VERSES 17-18

Notice the fruit that is born as we live out our heavenly wisdom with all meekness! That is what James 1:13 tells us, “**. . . Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.**”

And look at this fruit that is born out of this wisdom!

First it is “**pure**” or free of contamination.

It is “**peaceable**” or it brings about peace.

It is “**gentle**” and the idea here is patience that does not respond negatively when mistreated.

It is “**willing to yield**” or teachable.

It is “**full of mercy**” or they minister to all, even those who mistreat them.

We see “**good fruits**” which of course speaks of good things being produce in our lives.

And then we see James speak of being “**without partiality**” or not showing favoritism to people, dividing the church up.

And lastly James speaks of our faith being “**without hypocrisy**” or not to be two-faced but to be authentic in your faith.

Now isn't this wisdom from God much better than the wisdom of the Devil, earthly wisdom?

Of course it is unless you are self-centered, then it won't be!

Also, I think the point that James is making here in verse 18 is that the seed represents godly wisdom, and its fruit is righteousness.

You see, as we go forth producing fruit in our lives, right kind of living, godly wisdom, that seed will reproduce peace in others and as they come to Jesus, they too will reproduce and it goes on-and-on.

Earthly wisdom is destructive, godly wisdom is constructive, it builds up!

As I begin to close things up this evening, let me give you this to chew on. I want you to think about and apply this to your life.

What am I talking about?

Take verses 15 through 18 of James chapter 3 and apply them to all that you say and all that you hear and as you do you will see where it is coming from and what it will produce!

James said, “**For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. . . . Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**”

James 3:16, 18.

One we do not want others to see in our life, the other, we do!

May we bring forth peace as the fruit of God's wisdom is sown and not the confusion that the Devil desires to bring!

It is as John tells us, "**My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.**" I John 3:18.

May we be what God wants us to be!

May we do what God wants us to do!

May we speak as God wants us to speak!

AMEN!