

James 3

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Tape #8221
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Let's turn now to James, chapter three.

It's interesting in chapter one, after James introduces himself, when he begins actually, the letter after the introduction of himself, he says, my brethren.

He begins chapter two with the words, my brethren.

He begins chapter three with the words, *My brethren*, He actually uses this some eight times in this epistle. Writing to his brothers in Christ, eight times calling them, my brethren. Three more times, he calls them my beloved brethren. And four times he just speaks to them as brothers.

And so this is sort of a personal letter within the body of Christ to those brothers and sisters within the body. It's an exhortation for the believer, *My brethren, be not many masters*, Now, the master, of course, was the teacher.

And he is just sort of warning them, don't be many teachers, *knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation*. God has a special ministry, of what is called in the Bible, the pastor teacher. But as I stand before you as a teacher of the Word of God, I have a tremendous responsibility before God and before you. To teach as accurately as I can, what the Scripture says.

I'm not really here to offer my own opinion, though I often do that, but in reality, I'm here to teach you what God's Word says. And where the Bible is silent, it's important that I am silent. Where the Bible speaks, it's important that I speak.

And one day, I'll will have to stand before God or before our Lord Jesus Christ and the judgment seat of Christ. And there I will be judged under a more severe standard of judgment because of being a teacher. You see, if I get into aberrant doctrine, if I get into false teaching and I stand as a respected teacher of God and yet I'm in to false teaching, then I'm leading many people astray. That is why it is to me of vital importance, that I just teach through the Word of God. And as we go through here on Sunday nights, the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, putting the emphasis on trying to explain what God's Word is saying. It's really not important what I have to say. What is important is what God has to say. And it's important to me that I represent God and the Word of God properly to you.

So many times people ask questions that call for a speculative answer. And on many passages of Scripture, there are people who have taken different positions that are almost opposite of each other of what the Scripture actually means. On some of these controversial issues, I don't have a hard stand, but I try to present both sides of the issue, both opinions, and let you choose which one you like the best. I do take the responsibility of teaching the Word of God, very seriously. And I seek before God to be an honest expositor of the Word of God as best I can and as best I know how.

James warns against just anybody getting up and teaching without recognizing the responsibility that you have when you will stand before God to give an account of yourself. And if you are guilty of teaching people falsely, you will have the greater condemnation!

James goes on now to talk about our speech, our tongue, ²*For in many things*, he said, *we offend all*. Paul said, if I seek to please all men, I am not a servant of Jesus Christ. And it is quite obvious that Jesus didn't please all men with His teaching. He taught without compromise. And that stirred animosity against Him. It lead Him to death on the cross, because He dared to speak the truth to the people, even when it cut and even when it hurt! And as a teacher of the Word of God, we've got to be true to the Word of God and if it cuts, so be it! But we've got to be true to the Word!

And *If any man offend not in word*, And in many things, he said, *we offend all*. People find the Word of God offensive at times, certain passages. They are offended by them.

One time Jesus asked His disciples, are you offended by this? And at another time, His teaching was so sever that many of His disciples left Him. But yet there are things that are hard to say, but they must be said.

For in many things we offend all, and if any man offends not in word, *the same is a perfect man*, Have

you ever said things that later you wish you had never said them? Or is that just me? Am I the only one that's ever felt that way? I wish I had never said that! Oh, if I could take it back, you know. But of course, once it crosses your lips, really it's out and you can't retrieve it. It's been said. And if you have never offended anybody by some rash statement that you've made, I'd like to meet you afterwards because I've never yet met a perfect man.

and He said, you are able also to bridle the whole body. You know, you've got things under control.

And then he speaks now about the tongue. And he gives us a couple of illustrations of how the tongue is just a small part of your body, but it can exercise such tremendous control. ³*Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.* He used the example of a bit that is put in a horse's mouth. And by this small little bit that you put in a horse's mouth, you can guide and direct that horse. It obeys you. And with that little bit, you can turn the whole, large, body of that horse—by just that little bit.

⁴*Behold also the ships, (Behold the large ships.) which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm (rudder, an oar, a helm. Just a small little helm, can turn that great ship.), whithersoever the governor listeth.* Wherever the pilot of the ship desires. He can steer it with just a small little rudder.

Then he makes the application, ⁵*Even so the tongue is a little member,* It's just a little member of your body, just a small little thing.

and boasteth great things. It boasts great things.

Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! Or behold, what a great forest can be set afire by a little spark. How many fires has your little tongue sparked? And have you ever noticed how great an issue can be because what has been said? How it can blow up and explode? Until it affects so many people.

During World War II, one of the slogans of World War II, was, a slip of the lip can sink a ship. The little tongue and it can do so much damage. It can bring so much pain. It can bring so much hurt. Conversely, the tongue can bring so much comfort! It can bring so much hope! It can assure of love!

And so it's an interesting thing. God has given us the tongue. You can use it to destroy or to build up, to encourage, and to just help people by words of comfort, words of hope, words of love and words of encouragement and strength! Or you can use it to just cut them to pieces and destroy them.

The power of the tongue, James is warning us about the power of the tongue. It's such a little member, but it boasts such great things. And it can kindle a fire that will destroy a forest.

⁶*And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.* Devoted and given over to a destructive purpose, James tells us that the tongue can be set on fire from hell, in its power to just destroy and devastate people. How many people have had their reputation destroyed because of someone's tongue? Their life has been made absolutely miserable because of what people were saying about them. And many times what is being said is not true. But oh, the destructive power—the fire of hell!

Then he says, ⁷*For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:* We've been to the circus. We've seen the huge elephants that are tamed and do their tricks. We've seen the lions that are tamed, the tigers. We've seen the tamed poodles doing their little tricks and all. And it's amazing how a good trainer can train an animal to all of the interesting types of feats and tricks.

Then birds, they can be trained to talk. And of course we've always got the stories of, have you heard of the parrot that..... But birds can be trained to talk.

Serpents, the snake charmers, training even serpents.

Then of course, you go to Sea World. You see how they've trained the seals, the walruses. They've trained Shammu and his cohorts. And the marvelous things that they can train the sea creatures to do—their responses.

We can train all kinds of things. Things that you would never dream could be tamed. And yet there is one thing that defies being tamed and that is the tongue!

⁸*But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.* And thus he ends his exhortation concerning the tongue. And of course, as we said, we need to realize that the power of life and death is in the tongue. And we can use our tongue to destroy or to build up. May God help us to use our tongue in a constructive way, to encourage, to strengthen, to comfort, to give hope!

⁹*Therewith (that is with our tongue) bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.* It's the same tongue! I can come to church and I can say, oh, bless the Lord, all my soul, all that is within me, bless His holy name! And then I can go out and I say, that so and so---Did you see what he did? And I can curse someone, with the same tongue! Blessings come forth and cursing.

He asks the question or he declares, ¹⁰*Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.* My brothers! These things ought not so to be! Something's wrong here!!!

¹¹*Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?* ¹²*Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.* So watch your tongue! It is totally inconsistent that you would use your tongue to praise God and to bless God, and you would use your tongue to curse your brother and to destroy him, your brother who was made in the likeness of God.

Now he moves on the subject of wisdom. ¹³*Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?* The true wisdom. There is a wisdom of the world that is not really wise. But the man who has true wisdom and true knowledge. And there are always those who boast of their wisdom, those who boast of their knowledge.

But who is the one who has true wisdom and knowledge? He said, *let him shew (demonstrate or show it) out of a good conversation his works* Let him demonstrate it or show it out of his manner of living. Let it be demonstrated! It used to be that we had in our bulletins, I don't know if we still do or not. I haven't read that "we believe" kind of a things for a long time on the bulletin. But we used to have on the bulletin, the statement that if you hold a particular doctrinal persuasion, that you feel that it is essential that the whole church should know and understand this truth, let us first have the opportunity of how this truth has transformed your life and made your life like that of Jesus. Let us see the fruit of that truth as it has been worked out in your life, so that we can determine whether or not we want to listen to that new revelation that God has given you. In other words, if it doesn't work, if it hasn't produced good fruit in your life, why should we be interested in this revelation that you have received? So let us first have the privilege of seeing how it has affected your walk and relationship with Jesus Christ, so we can determine whether or not we need to receive that same truth and understanding that you feel that you have received.

James says pretty much, that right here. The true wise man, one endued with knowledge, let him show it in his manner of life (the word, conversation, there is a word that encompasses more than just what you say. It's in your whole life style.

Let's see it manifested in your life style and your works *with meekness of wisdom*. True wisdom has one of its characteristics of meekness. It doesn't boast! It doesn't parade itself!

There is an old maxim that says, he who knows not and knows not that he knows not, is a fool. Shun him! He who knows and knows not that he knows, is a teacher. Follow him! I forget what he is, who knows not, but knows that he knows not...no, he is a student, teach him! He who knows not and he knows that he knows not, he is a student, teach him. But he who knows and knows not that he knows, is a teacher, follow him!

The wise man, endued with knowledge, let it be manifested in the life of good works with meekness.

¹⁴*But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, (turmoil), glory not,* That's not really true wisdom. True wisdom doesn't lead to envying and strife.

and lie not against the truth. Those that boast of their wisdom and knowledge, but that wisdom has led them to strife, leads them to jealousy and envy, that's not true wisdom at all! And you are living a lie.

¹⁵*This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.* For this wisdom does not come from God. It does not descend from above, but it is earthly. It is sensual. And it is devilish. The wisdom of the world, Paul said, was foolishness with God. Man by his wisdom knew not God. So many people are following the wisdom of this world. But it is earthly. Listen to their earthly maxim—eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die! Just do it! That's not real wisdom. That's folly! Enjoy yourself, it's later than you think. Get, while the getting is good. That's not wisdom! That's folly! The wisdom that is of the world, earthly wisdom, it's sensual. It appeals to the sensual part of man's nature, to the jealousy, to the envy. And it's devilish. Its source is hell, the tongue that is set on fire by hell.

¹⁶*For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.* The wisdom of the world will ultimately lead you to confusion. And how confused our world is today!

There is a tremendous penalty for deliberately destroying certain animals or say, an egg of a bald eagle, or a spotted owl. And the government will and can imprison you and impose a heavy fine upon you if you are guilty of harming a particular endangered species. Destroying the eggs of a bird that is on the endangered species list, or harming a kangaroo rat or the kangaroo rat habitat. Talk about confusion, we are putting more value on animals that we are on human beings! We are putting more value on an eagle's egg than we are on a human fetus. That's confusion! But we are living in a world that is so confused, as far as true and real values are concerned.

Where there is envying and strife, there is confusion. Envying and strife that comes from worldly wisdom, and there is every evil work.

¹⁷*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure,* First of all, it's pure.

Secondly, then peaceable,

Then it is gentle,

and it is easy to be intreated, It's full of mercy and good fruits,

It's without partiality, and without hypocrisy. This is true wisdom and the wisdom of God! And this is what the wisdom of God will produce in your life. Following after the wisdom of God, it will lead you to purity rather than a life of sensuality and living after the lust of your flesh, the wisdom that is from above, will lead you to a life of purity, of holiness. It will lead you to a life of peace rather than the strife, that comes from the worldly wisdom.

Going down into the next chapter, verse one, from whence come the wars and fightings among you? Come they not even from your lust that war in your members? You lust and have not. You kill and desire to have. You cannot obtain. You fight and you war, and yet you have not! The wisdom of the world leads to strife. It leads to wars whereas the wisdom that comes from God leads to peace and brings you to peace.

God wants you to have peace, to live a life of peace. And God has offered a peace treaty to you. You that have been at war with God. You who have been at enmity with God, enemies of God, because of your living after your flesh and you know that God has prohibited that. And because of the war with God, there is the inner turmoil that goes on within your heart, within your life, which manifests itself with your turmoil and shortness and all with those around you. Because inside you are a boiling caldron, because you are at war with God. And thus, at war with yourself and it puts you at war with everybody else. But the wisdom that comes from God will bring you peace—peace with God! Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, you can be as white as snow. Though they be red as crimson, you can be as white as wool.

God is inviting people to come to the good life, there in Isaiah chapter one. You can have the good, he said, of the land. Let's reason this out, making peace with God, having your sins forgiven, brings peace then within your own heart. No longer is that war going on within, that feeling of guilt, that turmoil that comes from knowing what is right, but not doing it. That being pulled by the desires of your flesh and by the Word of God and the plain teachings of the Scriptures. And you find yourself in turmoil. You find this unrest.

David, who sinned in that issue with Bathsheeba, as he wrote about his experience, after he had received the forgiveness. He said, oh how happy is the man whose transgressions are forgiven! How happy is the man whose sin have been covered. When I sought to hide my sin or iniquity, your hand was heavy upon me. Day and night there was this eternal roaring. And there are people who experience that same experience of

David, that internal roaring, that heavy hand of God upon them, because they are doing what they know God has told them they're not to do.

And you just can't find peace in that. You find this constant inner turmoil that is just destroying you. The wisdom that is from above brings peace to your own heart and soul. Which then allows you to have peace with your brother. You are no longer at war. The feelings then and all, of peace are great. You want to subdue all of the strifes by making peace. As the Bible says, live peaceably with all men, as much as is possible.

And then, it is gentle! That beautiful trait that comes as the fruit of the Spirit. The gentleness of a person. Not weakness, not at all weakness! There is greater strength in being gentle. It takes greater strength many times, to be gentle, than to fly off the handle.

And it is easy to be entreated. It is willing to listen. It is willing to change, if it is shown that the position is wrong. It is willing to listen to another idea, to another thought. It is open, easily entreated.

And then it is full of mercy! The wisdom that is from above. It just causes you to have great compassion and mercy on others, on others' faults, because God has had so much mercy on you and your faults.

It's filled with good fruit.

It doesn't show partiality, which he talked about in chapter two.

And it is without hypocrisy. An open book, what you see is what you get!

¹⁸*And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.* The NIV translated this a little differently, and I like it. It is they who sow in peace, shall reap the fruit of righteousness.

The wisdom that is from above is peaceable. And if you sow peace—blessed are the peacemakers, Jesus said. They shall be called the children of God. And if you sow peace, then you will reap the fruit of righteousness.

And so God, help us! We are either following the wisdom of the world, or we are following the wisdom of God—the wisdom that comes from above. And you don't have to ask a person. You can see it in their lives--the fruit of the Spirit, or the works of the flesh. They are so contrasting that it is quite obvious to see a person who is master by their flesh, the wisdom of the world, or you see them with a person who is mastered by the Spirit, following the wisdom that is from above. Now, if you are really wise, you will say, I want to follow the Godly wisdom. If you are a fool, you'll say, well, I'll just go like the world, you know. But what you sow, you reap!

Father, we thank You for these words of exhortation from our brother James, who writes to us as brothers, part of the family of God. Encouraging us, exhorting us to watch our tongue, to guard it, and to use it to bless and not to curse, to build up and not to destroy. To encourage rather than discourage. And as he talks to us about the wisdom that comes from hell and the wisdom that comes from heaven, Lord, help us to walk in Godly wisdom, Godly discernment. Help us to sow in peace the things of peace, that we might reap righteousness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.