

James 3

Introduction:

1. You were warned in chapter 1 against being a hearer and not a doer of God's word. Then obey this chapter!
2. How important is the tongue to James? He addressed it here: 1:6,13,19,26; 2:2-4,12,14; 3:2-12; 4:11-16; 5:12!
3. How important was the tongue to Solomon for living a righteous and wise life? He addressed it even more!
4. This is an expository sermon, though we could turn topical and spend many sermons on the sins of speech.
5. If you want more about the tongue and speech, start with the proverb commentaries and follow the references.

The Outline of James 3

- 1 A warning about teaching (3:1).
- 2 A warning about speech (3:2-12).
- 3 A definition of wisdom (3:13-18).

Meditative Readings

Matthew 12:33-37

Matthew 15:10-20

Ephesians 4:29-32

Proverbs 6:12-19

Proverbs 26:20-28

Daniel 6:1-5

I Sam 18:1-5,12-16

Colossians 3:5-15

Mark 7:14-23

1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

- A. What is a *master*? It is a ruler-teacher by formal office or by practical exercise of the same work.
1. The Bible describes employers or slave owners as masters, but the context precludes that here.
 2. The Bible describes rabbis or teachers as masters (Matt 23:8-12; John 3:1-2,10; Luke 20:21).
 3. James clearly has those wanting to be formal or informal teachers by this verse and 3:12-13 later.
 4. However, the following lesson is not only for wannabe teachers, but also rather for all with tongues!
- B. What is the imperative warning, *Be not many masters*? It is a caution against presumptive teaching.
1. He warned his Jewish readers scattered abroad to not lust foolishly after the office of a teacher.
 2. His Jewish audience had a known problem of presumptuous pride in God's law (Rom 2:17-25).
 3. The churches of Christ have always suffered from men who profanely presume to be teachers.
 4. A wise man will much rather hear instruction and be taught than foolishly assume he can teach.
 5. It is interesting that some of God's greatest teachers did not want it (Ex 4:10; Jer 1:6; I Cor 9:16).
 6. Earnestly coveting best gifts is good, but desire proves nothing (I Cor 12:31; 14:1,39; I Tim 3:2).
 7. No man is to be in an office ordained by God without a proper call (Heb 5:4; Num 16:5-7,37-40).
 8. God has only called some to be public pastor-teachers or bishops (I Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11).
 9. God has only called some to be private teachers, and they are to show it with meekness (Gal 6:1).
 10. Meekness is essential (3:13) – humble, easy to be intreated, submissive, patient, not self-willed: these traits are easily seen by reservation, willingness to be corrected, and a cooperative spirit.
 11. Any tendency to hypocrisy is a grave danger for anyone wanting to correct others (Matt 7:3-5).
 12. The goal should be to be swift to hear, not swift to teach ... swift to hear, not swift to judge.
- C. Why the imperative warning, *Be not many masters*? Because God judges teachers for their hearers.
1. The first reason is simple – teachers receive greater condemnation for their greater responsibility.
 2. Aaron and the Levites were responsible before God for sins of worship (Lev 10:1-3; Num 18:1).
 3. Consider the severe warning God gave to the priests from the mouth of Malachi (Mal 2:2-3,9).
 4. God judges teachers for errors and leading others astray (Matt 23:14; Luke 11:52; I Tim 4:16).
 5. Every godly minister knows who shall judge him, and it is certainly not the church (I Cor 4:1-4).
 6. If you correct others while you have your own faults, God will deal with you harshly (Matt 7:2).

7. If you listen to judge teachers and others to nitpick them, God has a word for you (Is 29:20-21).

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

- A. How do we understand *in many things we offend all*? Do we all offend? Or do we offend all others?
1. We choose the first option, saying all men are sinners and subject to offending God, for there is none righteous, who can ever presume to be without offence (1 Kings 8:46; Prov 20:9; Ecc 7:20).
 2. Our Lord used a similar *all* by saying, “Drink ye all of it” (Mat 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17).
 3. The reason we should fear or avoid teaching offices or practices is because we all sin so easily.
 4. The positive relation by the coordinating conjunction *for* shows 3:2a explains the warning of 3:1.
- B. What is *offending not in word*? It is a general or hypothetical case to make sins of speech universal.
1. At this point our apostle takes his general argument about offences and goes after sins of speech.
 2. The tongue is easily the least manageable member of our body, so the apostle attacks it this way.
 3. The obvious fault from the context is censorious speech, which James attacks as their great fault.
 4. It is impossible for any man to never offend by speech, for James declared the opposite (3:2,8).
 5. If we assume any absolute sense, there are men who can bridle all passions, including the tongue, and be without offence by any means, within the same verse that declares such to be impossible!
 6. We must learn to bridle our tongue, as a horse is ruled by a bit, but this is not perfection (1:26).
 7. But it is possible for men to have excellent spirits and generally rule it (Pr 17:27-28; Dan 6:3).
 8. Such men are without general faults of speech and have no outstanding offences by their speech.
 9. Is one of those cases in scripture of inspired ambiguity – where two or more senses are detected?
- C. What is this *perfect man, able to bridle the whole body*? The glory of a man who rules his speech!
1. Since the case is general or hypothetical (previous point), it proves no man can speak perfectly.
 2. If a man could ever get his tongue totally under control, he could rule every other bodily passion.
 3. If a man can gain general control of his tongue, then he could rule other bodily passions better.
 4. The sins of the tongue and its unruliness are aggravated for our learning by this comparison.
 5. A great goal of body rule is here! Start with the little member in your mouth – the rest will come!

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

- A. The entire body of a horse – easily 1200lb – can be controlled by a small piece of metal in its mouth.
1. James just stated that ruling the tongue proves sufficient grace and power to rule the whole body.
 2. In the same sense, men are able to direct the entire bulk of a horse by a small item in its mouth!
 3. A bit is a piece of metal in the back of a horse’s mouth attached to the reins for directing it!
 4. The metaphor uses the bit’s size, not its location in the mouth, though the Spirit might do both!
 5. The analogy here is a small-great comparison – ruling the small tongue leads to ruling the body.
- B. We use bits in horses’ mouths by God’s wisdom to have dominion over them and make them obey.
1. If we would bridle our tongues as we should (1:26), we might get our whole bodies to obey us.
 2. The godliness, grace, commitment, and strength necessary to rule the tongue can rule the body.
 3. If we by prayer, humility, and fear before God rule our speech – we can rule our other passions.
- C. This metaphor should prompt us to emphasize our speech as the most important body part to rule.

4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

- A. James provided a further metaphor for comparison – *also* – to emphasize the tongue’s small size.
- B. Consider the *size* of a ship and the *fierceness* of winds at sea, which combine to make things hard.
- C. Yet, a ship’s captain can easily choose its course by a very small helm attached to a small rudder.
- D. What is the goal of the metaphor? Through control of the small tongue, your large body can be ruled.
- E. Do not claim or profess to be a Christian, unless you rule the small member of your total reputation.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

- A. The Bible’s transitional wisdom is beautiful – having *fire* in 3:6, it is used again here, differently!
- B. Continuing but altering the small-large comparison, the small tongue sins by boasting great things.
- C. And James added a third metaphor from this angle, consider a forest burned down by a single match!

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.

- A. The Bible’s transitional wisdom is beautiful – having *fire* in 3:6, it is used again here, differently!
 - 1. A little campfire, or even a single match, can burn down a great forest and cause massive harm.
 - 2. The tongue is a fire – catch the metaphor – which is able to burn and consume body and nature.
 - 3. Fire is a great destroyer, for it consumes far more than what first burned (Pr 30:16; Ec 10:12-13).
 - 4. Can you hold a fire down? Does it not want to explode? So is the tongue (Job 13:19; Ps 39:1-3)!
- D. The tongue is a *world of iniquity* – there is a whole ocean or universe of evil contained in the tongue.
 - 1. The tongue as a fire and world of iniquity is not a small sinful member with small consequences.
 - 2. Consider backbiting, blasphemy, boasting, clamor, cursing, debate, false accusing, false witnessing, filthiness, flattery, foolish talking, jesting, lying, perjury, railing, scorning, sedition, seducing, slander, sowing discord, swearing, talebearing, and whispering, among many others.
 - 3. Consider the alienations, arguments, bitterness, confusion, contentions, enmity, fights, grudges, heresies, pain, strife, suspicions, and wars that the tongue has caused in marriages, families, businesses, churches, nations, and the world.
 - 4. How much better would the world be, if men only spoke what is right, or did not speak at all!
- E. How does a tongue *defile the whole body*? It is involved in and leads to many other sins of the body.
 - 1. The man with his tongue out of control will be open or provoked to commit other sins (see 3:2).
 - 2. The tongue can anger, confuse, offend, over-commit, promise, seduce, slander, vow, and so on.
 - 3. Seduction begins or is helped by the tongue, which eventually results in fornication of the body.
 - 4. Your mouth can corrupt righteous bodily actions – hugging a brother is ruined by backbiting; paying the minister is ruined by undermining his authority; paying taxes is ruined by disrespect.
 - 5. Solomon warned that hasty vows lead to sins of the flesh in order to escape the vow (Eccl 5:6).
 - 6. It ruins the reputation of the whole man, reducing regard for any other good he may have done.
- F. How does a tongue *set on fire the course of nature*? It provokes the evil passions of men in all sins.
 - 1. Can you measure the violent feelings that erupt instantaneously at hearing provocative words?
 - 2. Bitter and harsh words have carried their effects through many years and even generations.
 - 3. From marital bitterness to international conflagrations, the tongue stirs the evil for both and all.

- G. How is the tongue *set on fire of hell*? It is the common device of the devil to cause sin and mischief.
1. As James will explain shortly, wickedness that comes through the tongue is from hell (3:14-15).
 2. The devil used his tongue to lie in the beginning, and he has been lying ever since (John 8:44).
 3. The depravity of the human heart is easily detected through the words formed for the tongue, which is evident from the early months of a child's life when crying turns to screams of rage.

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:*

- A. God told man to have dominion over the animal creation, and they have done so from the beginning.
- B. Men have caged them, penned them, bound them, yoked them, charmed them, bridled them, etc.
- C. We may understand *every kind* as all sorts, for not every creature or every species has been tamed.

8 *But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

- A. In contrast to man's success with the animal world, he cannot as easily or fully tame his tongue.
 1. Though he may get an elephant to stand on a ball, he cannot so easily manage his speech.
 2. We may get an ox to plow or grind out corn every day, but who can do so with his tongue?
 3. The apostle is not teaching that speech control is impossible, but that the Jews had a problem.
- B. The tongue *is an unruly evil*, in that it rejects control and management to make it only profitable.
 1. When a thing is unruly, it is acting without rules and contrary to the rule that should control it.
 2. But the tongue is not unruly like the brute creation, for the tongue is unruly with moral evil!
- C. The tongue is *full of deadly poison*, in that the damage caused by not controlling it is fatal to life.
 1. We can capture, charm, or kill snakes; but the poison of asps is under our tongues (Rom 3:13).
 2. Cruel words can poison and kill relationships in all spheres of human contact, and they have.
 3. Cruel words can poison and kill reputations, ambition, joy, knowledge, authority, peace, etc.
 4. An evil tongue can easily destroy souls and friends (Pr 12:18; 16:28; 17:9; 18:8; 25:18; 26:22).
- D. There is power of death and life in the tongue, and either use will bring it to you (Pr 18:21; 13:2-3).
 1. If you use pleasant and helpful words, you are a tree of life to men (Prov 11:30; 15:4; 16:24).
 2. If you use pleasant and helpful words, God will give you a good life (Ps 34:12-13; I Pet 3:10).
 3. But the tongue is also your glory! If it is used to glory God and to edify others graciously!
- E. The tongue is a member of the body capable of great evil, and it truly is full of deadly poison.
 1. When Isaiah saw the exalted Lord, he was foremost convicted of his speech (Isaiah 6:1-8).
 2. Sarcastic ridicule, especially to children, is poison (Job 5:21; Pr 12:18; Ep 6:4; Col 3:21).
 3. Foolish talking and jesting is not convenient and a way of life today (Eph 5:4; Pr 26:19).
 4. Boasting of what we have, have done, or will do is evil (Ps 12:3; Pr 27:2; Jas 4:13-16).
 5. Whispering and slandering destroys men (Ps 101:5; Pro 11:13; 16:27-28; 25:9; 26:22,22).
 6. Cursing others is a sin (Proverbs 11:12; 20:20; James 3:9-10; Matthew 5:21-22).
 7. Flattery to secure your benefit is wrong (Ps 5:9; 12:3; Pr 6:24; 7:5,21-23; 26:28; 29:5).
 - a. Praising for good is a godly kindness (I Cor 11:2; Pr 31:28-31; Rom 16:1; Phil 2:20).
 - b. But praising to secure favor or good from another person is flattery and sin.
 - c. But praising to enhance your own image and reputation is flattery and sin.
 - d. But praising to engage in flirting with the opposite sex is flattery and sin.
 8. Disrespect to those in authority is a great evil (Deut 27:16; II Kings 2:23-24; II Pet 2:10).
 9. Deceit is a major source of evil in speech (Psalm 10:7; 120:2; Prov 6:16-29; 12:22).
 10. Contention and debate are unacceptable (Prov 18:6; Rom 1:29; II Cor 12:20; Phil 2:14).
 11. Complaining and murmuring are sinful things (Psalm 106:24-25; I Cor 10:10; Phil 2:14).
 12. Filthy communication of sexual or other matters is sin (Colossians 3:8; Eph 4:29; 5:4).

13. False witness in court or any other situation is vile (Deut 5:20; 19:16-21; Prov 6:16-19).
14. Making vows but not keeping them is presumptuous sin (Ec 5:1-7; Ps 15:4; Mat 5:33-37).
15. Sowing discord with talking or murmuring is sin God hates (Prov 6:16-19; 16:28; 22:10).
16. Backbiting is running down others to hurt their reputations while they are absent.
17. Talebearing, tattling, and whispering are spreading true secrets about others to hurt.
18. Slander is spreading lies about others to hurt (Ps 101:5; Pr 10:18; I Tim 3:11).
19. Answering again is disrespectful responses to those in authority over you (Titus 2:9-10).
20. Clamour is loud and unruly objecting against those in authority (Pr 9:13; Eph 4:31).
21. Gainsaying is arguing and resisting those in authority (Acts 10:29; Rom 10:21; Jude 1:11).
22. Railing and reviling is harsh and profane speech and name-calling (Ex 22:28; I Pet 3:9).
23. Scorn is sneering rejection of correction (Prov 9:7-9; 21:24; 22:10; 24:9; Isaiah 29:20-21).
24. Sedition is speaking against established authority, whether parent or pastor or king (Gal 5:20).

9 *Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.*

- A. Here seems to be a direct reference to his condemnation of religious men with unruly speech (1:26).
- B. Do not be alarmed by the plural pronoun, for this is wise writing when condemning peers for faults.
- C. How many Christians speak grandly in the church, and then rip others before they even get home!
- D. Men are made similar to God in dominion, intelligence, a spirit, communication, perpetuity, etc.
- E. But the most condemning feature of their similitude is that fellow saints are God's adopted children.
- F. It is impossible to love God and hate His children, which you do by talking evil of them (I Jn 4:20).
- G. This is hypocrisy and duplicity, whereby we declare one thing toward God and another toward men.
- H. The tongue can be an incredible tool for righteousness, which is why David called it your glory.
 1. The tongue has fantastic potential for good both to God and man when used righteously.
 2. The tongue is a glory if praising God (Ps 16:9 cp Ac 2:26; Ps 30:12; 108:1; Heb 13:15).
 3. The Lord keeps a book of remembrance of those who speak often about Him (Mal 3:16).
 4. Being a tree of life to others requires the wise use of your tongue (Prov 11:30 cp 15:4).
 - a. The value of a wise tongue can be compared to precious stones (Pr 10:20; 20:15).
 - b. Just men have tongues that speak acceptably and wisely (Ps 37:30; Pr 10:31-32).
 - c. Our tongues are the means by which we can be a tree of life (Proverbs 15:2,4,7).
 - d. A righteous man feeds many by his words (Prov 10:21). Are you known for this?
 5. Rebuke is better than flattery even to the object of correction (Prov 27:5; 28:23).
 - a. Graciousness should mark our speech (Ps 45:2; Prov 16:13; 22:11; Eccl 10:12; Luk 4:22).
 - b. Proper words for the occasion are a beautiful thing to observe (Prov 15:23; 24:26; 25:11).
 - c. Persuasion lies in the ability to suffer long and speak softly (Proverbs 15:1; 25:15).

10 *Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*

- A. This is carnal and compromising Christianity at its worst – allowing such a great conflict of conduct.
- B. This is hypocrisy and wickedness – praising God in worship and damning men cruelly and unjustly.
- C. James would not make an appeal, exhortation, and warning, unless there is power to avoid such sins.
- D. God hates the sin and sinners of ungodly speech, as three of seven are about the tongue (Pr 6:16-19).

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

- A. Here is another analogy to further illustrate and condemn the conduct he just described (3:10-11).
- B. No! A fountain is the origin or source of either sweet water or bitter water, but not both waters.
- C. It is entirely incongruous for a converted Christian to continue to speak with an evil tongue.
- D. Doeth a child of God, born again and taught of the Spirit of God, have such a conflict? Not as a rule!

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

- A. Therefore, our duty is clear – make the tree good, so that the fruit of it will be good (Matt 12:33-37).
- B. Here are two more analogies, or comparisons – fig trees do not produce olives; vines do not figs.
- C. How can we yield only fresh water from our fountain – only speak righteous words from our lips?
 - 1. Do not think your words are your own or unknown to God (Ps 12:1-4; 139:4; Matt 12:36-37).
 - 2. Confess your wicked and speech and beg God for help (Psalm 141:3; Isaiah 6:5-7; Luke 11:13).
 - 3. Cut your words in half – reduce the quantity (Proverbs 10:19; 17:27-28; 21:23; Eccl 5:3; 10:14).
 - 4. Slow down to hear, think, and study before speaking (James 1:19; Proverbs 15:28; 16:23; 18:13).
 - 5. Only speak kindly to build up with grace (Pr 10:21,32; 17:20; 22:11; 31:26; Eph 4:29; Col 4:6).

13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

- A. For those who thought highly of themselves and were infatuated with being teachers (3:1), James exhorted them to show their wisdom and knowledge by a lifestyle of good works and humility.
- B. For those spiritually wise and knowledgeable, James exhorted them to show it by their good works.
- C. It is one thing to think or declare yourself religious or wise, but only works can prove it (1:26; 2:14).
- D. True knowledge and wisdom are not only matters of the head, but are rules of conduct for life; they can be shown and seen by a good life, full of works approved of God, done in a spirit of humility.
- E. The word *conversation* means manner of life or lifestyle; it does not mean a modern sense of talking.
- F. The word *meekness* means free from haughtiness and self-will; piously humbly and submissive; patient and unresentful under injury and reproach (3:17; see Titus 3:2; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; Matt 11:29; I Pet 3:4; Gal 6:1; II Cor 10:1; Num 12:3).
- G. The noble and true princes of God show their wisdom by consistent godly conduct done in humility.
- H. The true servants of the Lord must not strive but be gentle and patient unto all men (II Tim 2:24-26).
- I. Do you really want to be a leader, ruler, or teacher? Try the more excellent way (I Cor 12:31 – 13:7)!

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

- A. What is *bitter envying and strife in your hearts*? They are wicked attitudes, spirits, and thoughts.
 - 1. **Envy.** Malignant or hostile feeling; ill-will, malice, enmity. Active evil, harm, mischief. The feeling of mortification and ill-will occasioned by the contemplation of superior advantages possessed by another.
 - 2. *Bitter envying* is burning feelings of grudges, hatred, malice, or resentment (Eph 4:31; Pr 27:4).
 - 3. *Strife* is hostile antagonism, conflict, contention, discord, dispute, enmity, fighting, and variance.
 - 4. Observe that these sinful feelings are in your heart! Keep your heart with all diligence (Pr 4:23).
 - 5. These wicked sins proceed from the heart, rather than what you consume (Matthew 15:17-20).

- B. Do not *glory* or be puffed up about such feelings or thoughts, neither glory in yourself having them.
 1. Some were glorying in their wisdom, but they had no real reason to glory (1:26; 2:14; 3:1,13).
 2. No matter what you think you know or actually know, the real test is to purify your heart (4:8)!
 3. If angry, disrespectful, hateful, or resentful toward others, do not take pleasure in such sins.
 4. If you are ambitious and contentious against others, do not glory in this devilish pride of life.
 5. Despising and ridiculing others as their superior in wisdom is nothing to rejoice or glory in.
- C. Do not deceive, excuse, or justify yourself. The truth of God declares that these feelings are devilish.
 1. Of course, your flesh and the devil will seek to convince you that your enmity is fully justified.
 2. Faith believes the promises of God, but it also believes the condemnation and definitions of God!
 3. The truth of the matter is this – you are not qualified to be a teacher, if your heart is this way.

15 *This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.*

- A. James uses *wisdom* to describe the feelings and thoughts of a man’s head and heart who presumed he was wise and full of knowledge to be able to teach others (1:26; 2:14; 3:1,13).
- B. If you claim to be religious, but you cannot bridle your tongue, your religion is vain (1:26); and if you claim to be wise and fit to teach, but are full of envy and strife, you only have devilish wisdom.
- C. Feelings and thoughts of bitterness, envy, and strife are not sent down from the pure God of heaven, so any man with them must admit before the truth of God’s word that his religion is not from God.
- D. Bitterness, envy, and strife are sins of natural men of the earth, based in our lusts, and from the devil.
 1. Earthly wisdom is feelings and actions that natural men approve and do (John 3:31; Phil 3:19).
 2. Sensual wisdom is feelings and actions proceeding from our base and depraved lusts (Jude 1:19).
 3. Devilish wisdom is feelings and actions like the devil and/or coming from him (I John 3:10-12).
- E. Test your wisdom! How well do you get along with those who disagree with you or offend you?
- F. Test your wisdom! How well do you treat those who are your inferiors in one or more ways?

16 *For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*

- A. God is not the author of confusion in His churches, and He neither tempts nor is tempted to any evil.
- B. He expects assemblies to be decent and in order, so ministers and saints must show it (I Cor 14:40).
- C. Accord, agreement, harmony, peace, and unity are the marks of the true saints and churches of God.
- D. But allowing envy or strife in your heart will certainly result in these devilish consequences of sin.
- E. Observe the context of giving place to the devil and grieving the Holy Spirit of God (Eph 4:26-32).
- F. There can be no order, peace, righteousness, or tranquility where envying and strife are allowed.
- G. But there will be agitation, anarchy, contention, disorder, disturbances, fighting, grudges, opposition, sedition, tumults, and every sort of sin and vice ... wherever envy and strife are allowed.

17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

- A. In contrast to the devilish wisdom of bitter envying and strife, James now defines heavenly wisdom.
- B. A true wise man will live in agreement with this holy and inspired description of heavenly godliness.
- C. True wisdom of God is first *pure* – it is holy and free from all impurities of attitude or ambition.
 1. We often quote this first clause as if it read “doctrinally correct,” but it does not say or teach so.
 2. If the context guides us (3:13-18), the purity here is a heart free from all evil motives or thinking.
 3. The context is not of doctrines of religion, but the spirit of it – opposed to bitter envy and strife.
 4. It is a heart free from earthly, sensual, and devilish impulses of the natural man’s impure heart.
 5. It condemns mixed motives – hypocrisy; it condemns fleshly lusts – earthly and sensual actions.
 6. If we cheat back and ahead to see James’s other use of “pure,” it confirms integrity (1:27; 4:8).

7. Peter, who wrote similar epistles to the same audience, identifies the sense of pure (I Peter 1:22).
 8. Paul's exhortation to Timothy combines a pure heart with peace and righteousness (II Tim 2:22).
 9. A good cross-reference would be the pure heart resulting in gracious speech (Pr 22:11; Ps 101:2).
 10. The wisdom from above is more than other things holy in heart desires and motives (Matt 5:8).
 11. This first characteristic of godly wisdom is toward God ... and those following are toward men.
 12. There is a peace the world knows that is flattering, hypocritical, and lying, so we must first be pure to avoid any of these false concepts of peace (Ps 144:7-8,11; Prov 27:5-6; Mark 12:13-14).
 13. By using the wrong sense shown above, we may contend for truth in a harsh and ungodly way, which is the basis on which wicked men have used the sword to enforce "pure" religion first.
- D. True wisdom of God is then *peaceable* – it does all it can for peace and to avoid contention or strife.
1. It is an apostolic order for the saints of Christ to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:17-21).
 2. It is a spirit contrary to Christ that loves to call down fire or separate from saints (Luke 9:49-56).
 3. A froward, or wicked, man sows discord, shares secrets, pushes wrath, and causes strife (Proverbs 6:14-19; 10:12; 15:18; 16:28; 17:14,19; 20:3; 26:20-22; 29:22; 30:33).
 4. Righteous men love accord, harmony, unity: they do all possible to promote them (Phil 2:1-2).
- E. True wisdom of God is *gentle* – it hardly ever deals harshly or severely, but is rather tenderhearted.
1. Jesus and Paul, two very righteous men and teachers, used gentleness (II Cor 10:1; I Thess 2:7).
 2. Though we by nature we are hateful and malicious, now we are to be gentle instead (Titus 3:1-3).
 3. Let us be like David in rejecting the severe loyalty and service of nephews (II Sam 3:39; 16:10)!
- F. True wisdom of God is *easy to be intreated* – responds gladly to correction and apologizes quickly.
1. An *intreaty* is an earnest and pleading request to ask for something by beseeching or imploring.
 2. Here it is the gentle response to correction or instruction of another (Pr 18:23; 9:7-9; 12:1; 13:1).
 3. The opposite wisdom is devilish implacability, scornful stubbornness, and foolish obstinacy.
 4. How easily, quickly, and fully do you admit you are foolish and wrong and beg for forgiveness?
- G. True wisdom of God is *full of mercy* – it rejoices in mercy against judgment (2:13; Isaiah 55:6-9).
1. God has forgiven us 10,000 talents: it should be easy to forgive others 100 pence (Mat 18:21-35).
 2. Do you want to know the heart of God? To give a real sacrifice? Love mercy (Micah 6:6-8)!
 3. Do you delight in letting people get away with offences against you? Be glorious (Pr 19:11)!
- H. True wisdom of God is *full of good fruits* – the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Eph 5:9).
1. By sentence structure and punctuation, we connect the good fruits here to mercy just mentioned.
 2. So we exalt good fruits connected to mercy ... charity, kindness, forgiveness, longsuffering, etc.
- I. True wisdom of God is *without partiality* – it does not respect persons for a sinful motive or reason.
1. As James taught earlier (2:1-9), the religion of Jesus Christ has no room for respect of persons.
 2. Neither is it partial in God's word, but applies it as consistently as possible (2:10-13; Mal 2:9).
 3. It has no friends or enemies when it comes to treatment of others; it recognizes no economic differences among men; it does not calculate even subconsciously about others' ability to repay.
- J. True wisdom of God is *without hypocrisy* – it is entirely sincere without dissimulation or any deceit.
1. All the parts of godly wisdom are sincerely felt and given without any pretensions or pride.
 2. The blessed wisdom from heaven is entirely consistent, constant, undisguised, and transparent.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

- A. Righteousness is the beauty of our Lord's kingdom (Jer 23:5-6; Matt 6:33; Rom 14:17; Heb 1:8-9).
- B. How do you *sow the fruit of righteousness*? You are a peacemaker exalting peace for righteousness.
1. The righteous character of Christ's kingdom depends on zealous endeavors for peace (Ep 4:1-3).
 2. Wrath of man – earthly, sensual, devilish wisdom – does not work God's righteousness (1:20).
 3. Paul prayed for the Philippians to sow more righteousness through more love (Phil 1:9-11).

4. The repetition of *peace* indicates the mild and peaceful methods of a peacemaker – like a farmer.
 5. A peacemaker not only makes peace, but he peaceably makes peace, not by fear, threats, etc.
 6. The peacemakers in the churches of Christ are children of God here and hereafter (Matt 5:9), and they shall bask in peaceable righteousness with God’s blessings here and hereafter (II Tim 4:8).
 7. One of the greatest callings is to be a peacemaker, which marks true wise men approved of God.
- C. Combining the senses of verses 17 and 18, note Paul’s similar summary to Timothy (II Tim 2:22).

Conclusion:

1. You were warned in chapter 1 against being a hearer and not a doer of God’s word. Then obey this chapter!
2. This chapter contains some of the most practical godliness – godly speech, a pure heart, and peaceableness.

For Further Study:

1. The Proverb commentary, “[Proverbs 12:18](#),” provides God’s wisdom about the good and evil use of the tongue.
2. The Proverb commentary, “[Proverbs 18:21](#),” provides God’s wisdom about the good and evil use of the tongue.
3. The Proverb commentary, “[Proverbs 22:11](#),” exalts gracious speech very high and shows its source is a pure heart.
4. The sermon outline, “[Ruling the Tongue](#),” uses James 3:1-12 as a springboard to further scriptures about the tongue.