

Epistle of James - Part 3

by John Hunter

In this sermon, John Hunter explores the significance of controlling the tongue and the contrasting natures of earthly and heavenly wisdom as presented in James chapter 3.

Duration: 1:02:45

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, James 3, James 4:4, James 4:7-10, James 5:14-15

Topics: "James"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his own journey from being a young fellow to becoming a proficient teacher of the word of God. He emphasizes the importance of bridging the gap between the speaker and the audience in order to effectively communicate and hold their attention. The speaker outlines the topics he will cover in future sermons, including separation from the world, confession and repentance, the will of God, exploitation of workers, the coming of the Lord, oath-taking, and the power of prayer for healing. The sermon also references James chapter 3, highlighting the need for teachers to be mindful of their words and actions, and to avoid inconsistency and hypocrisy.

Transcript

Tonight we're reading in James chapter 3. James chapter 3. We're commencing at verse 1. You will note that in verses 1 and 2 he makes an appeal in relation to taking the place of a teacher. And in verses 1 and 2 he gives a warning. Then from verses 3 right down to verse 12 he's going to speak on the use or misuse of the tongue.

And finally in the final movement in the chapter from verses 13 to 18 he brings before us the wisdom from above, contrasting it with the wisdom from beneath. That's what's before us tonight. Tomorrow night we shall deal with chapter 4 when we shall deal with the subject of separation from the world, the need for confession and repentance, and the will of God as we live it out from day to day.

On the closing meeting on Lord's Day afternoon I shall deal with chapter 5 that deals with the exploitation of the workers by rich and scrupulous employers. Then I shall deal with the coming of the Lord, with oath-taking, and finally if possible give most of the meeting to the prayer of faith that saves the sick. And I shall outline what the scriptures have to say on the question of healing that is in the chapter and in its broader context.

That will be on Lord's Day afternoon at half past three. James chapter 3. My brethren, be not many teachers, it should read, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation, for in many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Now in verses 3 to 12 he deals with the tongue. He gives seven illustrations. He gives the illustration of the bit in the horse's mouth, verse 3, the rudder in the ship, verse 4, the illustration of fire, verses 5 and 6, beasts, verse 7, poison, verse 8, and then he deals with the fountain, verse 11, and trees, in verse 12, the seven illustrations of the tongue.

It reads like this. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body. 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.

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, the world of iniquity.

And so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell. 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. But the tongue can no man tame.

It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.

My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? Either a vine, figs, so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. So much for the tongue.

Now he comes to contrast the wisdom that is from above with the wisdom that is from beneath. Verse 13. Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good life his works with meekness of wisdom.

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. Now back to verse 1. The chapter opens with the idea of teaching, and there are those who believe that he takes it up again at verse 13.

Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Interesting to note in opening with teaching that that has to do with the use of words and the use of the tongue. Someone like myself is constantly using their tongue. We speak for about an hour every night, every week, every month, most of the year.

And of course, words have a tremendous power. We little realize the power of words, and the power of oratory, and how it can sway people, and yet on the whole accomplish a great deal for God. One has been impressed on this visit, although just here a week, by the number of letters one have received from those who already are feeling the gain of the ministry of the word of God, and who feel that life is being directed and helped.

That's a very wonderful thing. But James here has in view, my brethren, do not covet to be teachers, because therein you have a greater responsibility, and will come to answer for the exercise of your gift. There wouldn't be such a desire to get to the platform if brethren realized the responsibility that they are taken upon themselves.

Now gift comes directly from the risen Lord. He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastor teachers. That gift is exercised by those who receive the gift.

In fact, Ephesians 4 says he gave some apostles, some evangelists, and so on, so there the person becomes the gift. I suppose on the whole that we haven't many teachers, and possibly fewer theologians. A teacher is one who will come with the word of God in his hand, and he'll begin to read it to you.

Then he'll go down the passage, and he'll explain it carefully. He will give you, first of all, the interpretation, what it primarily means, ere he gives it an application. He will never be tempted to take up a tributary, a side issue of teaching, and develop it, and forget about the main line of truth.

His business is to tell you what it means. As I've said before, his business is not to read between the lines. His business is to explain what's on the line.

And that's a great thing, because you must get to know the word of God in its primitive and original setting, and you must be prepared to explain it exactly what it says, not what you yourself or the brethren would like it to say. So that, teaching. Now, it might be as well to draw your attention to the fact that gift is not ability, and ability is not gift.

Now, there's quite a confusion about this. Now, follow carefully. In the parable of the talents, it is said that he gave to every man according to his several ability.

So their gift is given to ability. Got that? Again, when you go to Ephesians 3, he gives grace to gift. So you have gift given to ability, and grace given to exercise the gift.

Now, you'll see that God's doing it all. Again, if gift were ability, and ability were gift, then that would mean that every school teacher that got converted could teach divine truth, and that's not always true. So that when the Lord gives a gift, he takes into account the person concerned.

He takes into account his background, takes into account his mental capabilities, takes into account his capacity, and he gives him the gift accordingly. And that ability becomes consecrated so that the gift will operate through it. And, of course, there are different gifts.

Now, please don't despise them. Everyone can't be a teacher, yet there are those who can exhort, etc., and give something that can be helpful and stir up. But you will appreciate, won't you, that the exercise of the gift is the responsibility of the person concerned.

For instance, the person that you listened to tonight was not always what he is tonight. There was a time when I was a young fellow like the rest, and had to begin and work in order to make the gift profitable. It's more than knowledge.

A teacher must have the art of communication. When you stand to your feet, brethren, remember that there's a gap between you and your audience, and you've got to bridge that gap to hold the attention. Now, it's quite a gift that, because I've heard so of you, many a brother speaking for 30, 40 minutes, and

he never got through to you at all.

He never bridged the gap. So that you could have brethren sitting in the audience who might be far more intelligent than you are, but they don't have the gift of communicating the truth that God gave to them. Again, I think I said this at one of the readings, that if God has given you a five-talent gift, and he's only given me a two-talent gift, please don't blame me.

Because he gave the gift sovereignly, and he only gave me two, while he gave you five. But if I exercise my two-talent gift to the full, and you exercise your five-talent gift to the full, then God is gracious, and I'll receive the same reward as you. Because it's not my fault that I've only two, and you've got five.

Now, come now to verse two. Now he says, In many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man able also to bridle the whole body.

Now, throughout these meetings, we have been seeing that James has some very strange teaching, and he approaches things nearly the opposite to what we would do. And James says this, If you can control your tongue, you can control the whole of your body and the whole of your life. The reason being that the tongue is the most difficult member of the body to control.

That's understandable, isn't it? It's through your lips, your mouth, that you express your personality, that you make known your disappointment and your elation, through which you make known whether you agree or disagree. It's through that that you can bless or curse people, so you can understand that if a person can control their tongue, then they're able to control the rest of their members in their body. Now, I'll leave you, or if you have some very good friends, to tell you just how much you can control the whole of your life as you seek to discipline your tongue.

Let me say this at most times, and especially in dealing with believers and in meetings of the assembly, the time not to speak is when you're angry. Whatever you do, don't speak then. You'll be inclined to say things you'll possibly regret.

Just wait till your temper has cooled, and if the situation is still the same, say what you've got to say when you're in complete control of yourself. So, James says, now the tongue can control the whole of the body. Now, it may be as we go through that on occasions I'll give, I'll interpret and apply in relation to the teacher using his tongue, and in a more general context, the tongue in relation to each one of us.

But notice now, please, will you, in verses three and four, the two illustrations are to teach us the control of the tongue in certain areas of life. But when you come down to fire and beasts and poison, in those three illustrations, he's showing the danger of the tongue. It's got terrible potential to damage and wound and hurt and kill these three, fire, beasts, poison, the danger of the tongue.

When you come to the fountain and the trees, he's speaking about the inconsistency of the tongue. You wouldn't expect sour water and sweet from the same source. And the source, of course, here is the mouth, and so on.

Now, back now to verse three and four, you'll notice that the first illustration, he says, you take a horse with all its inward power, with all the energy at its command, and there it can dissipate that energy, an energy that is restless and moving. But if you put a bit in its mouth, you can control the whole of the body. You can control the whole of the horse.

So, the horse tells us of energy that is restless. Do you remember, in numbers 16, that when the ten spies brought a very distressing report, and the people inwardly are disturbed, it says that Caleb stepped forward and he stilled the people and encouraged them to trust in God and go up into the land, so that the ministry of the word of God, the use of the tongue in a good way, can come to you to still your inward fears, to calm your distress. And ministry meetings like this can teach you how, in the presence of God, to still your soul and keep down the passions that would arise within and the restless energy that can prove to be so fruitless.

But strange, when you come to the rudder and the ship, it's not a question of controlling what's inward, it's a question of controlling what's outward. In those days, there were sailing ships. There they were, and they were at the command of every wind at blue.

But if you had a good man at the helm, just a little rudder, then he can take that ship safely through the storms and the tempest, where otherwise it would possibly make shipwreck. So, I take it that in this epistle, Peter was writing what he might have preached, to show them that in the storms of life, when your little boat is buffeted, and all these tests come that I've been speaking to you about, when you're disturbed because of changes at work, when you're disturbed because of family problems, when you're disturbed because maybe illness has come in, or you're in danger of losing the job, and a thousand other things, and the storm is blowing, how wonderful to meet a man who's got his hand on the rudder, and you find that you can guide your little back safely through. Brethren, the Word of God is a great preservative.

Let me say again what I keep saying to you. I do wish that Christians would learn their psychology from the Bible. Quite a time ago, maybe around a year or more ago, I was ministering in the north of Ireland.

I was having some meetings at request on the book of Nehemiah. I went out of my way going through the book of Nehemiah to show how that Nehemiah can teach those who are in middle management big lessons. Not only was I dealing with spiritual things, but showing how that book can instruct you if you're in a responsible position.

And unknown to me at the time, there was a young sister who was holding quite a responsible position and was going through exams at the time in relation to middle management. And she actually quoted in her exam paper certain things that I had said throughout these meetings. She got through all right.

I don't know what the examiner thought when she gave as her proof the text of the Bible. But you see, the Bible can meet your every situation. The reason why you've never seen it before is because either you don't read it carefully or you read it carelessly.

You just think if you read, you've done your duty. My, you're missing rich things. Come again.

You will notice, please, that he begins in verses 5 and 6 to illustrate the tongue from fire. You will notice verse 5, Behold, how great a matter, a greater fire, how great a matter a little fire kindleth. You see, the tongue is a fire.

Now, please, drop your eye to verse 6 and listen carefully. The tongue is a fire. That's its danger.

It's the world of iniquity. That's its character. It defileth the whole body.

It stains it. It pollutes it. That's its influence.

It setteth on fire the course of nature. That's its continuity. It is set on fire of hell.

That is its associations. Got that? The tongue as to its danger, its character, its influence, its continuity, and its associations with hell. Look again.

The tongue is a fire. Behold, how great a matter, a little fire kindleth. Isn't that right? In the old days especially, in some of these large wooded areas, a cigarette left burning could cause an inferno.

Embers of a picnic fire not put out could do that. In the old days of the steam train, a spark coming over could start it. The idea is this, that the use of your tongue can be a terrible danger to people.

For instance, you hear a story. Now, it's amazing. It would amaze you the amount of brethren that believe a story when they hear it.

They don't stop to think. They don't make any investigation at all. They just lift the phone and it started.

And before the night's out, it's right through the province and maybe to the other end of Canada. Not only so, but notice please, what began in a very small thing can have terrible consequences, very far-reaching consequences. Tell me, did you ever try to stop a rumor? It's impossible.

It's gone. Once it goes, you can't stop it. You can't bring it back.

You've started something and it's beyond your control. And many, many a person, reputation has been ruined just like that. They didn't know about it.

Nobody tells them. Everybody passes it on and on and on. It never comes back to the person concerned until it's too late.

Have you got it? Now, just remember that, won't you? Learn to discipline your tongue. Your Bible tells you if you hear a thing, investigate to see if it's true. I got it from an unimpeachable source.

Well, what you should do is this. What I do is, I say, especially if I'm at home, I'll say, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll go and see the person concerned.

Nobody ever goes with me. Now, just a minute. You wouldn't like someone to start it about you, would you? So just you do to others as you would have done to you.

So, he says, the danger. But look again. He says, it's the world of iniquity.

That is, the concentration of all the evils in the world are centered in the tongue. Now, think for a moment. Everything that makes up this world of iniquity, this world of unrighteousness can be expressed through your tongue.

And all the evil and sin in a world that is fallen and alienated from God, everything that's in it, its greed, its lust, its covetousness, its blasphemy, it all can be spoken by the tongue. It will utter everything that will dishonor and defy God. Remember this, that very often when the Bible talks about the world, it's talking about the system that is sustained by the devil.

So, he says, it's the concentration of the world's evils. Your tongue is anti-God and pro-world. Have you got that? It's anti-God and pro-evil.

And it will embrace in its speaking the whole world of evil all around us. It constitutes the world of iniquity. Again, thirdly, he says, it defileth, it stains, it pollutes the whole body.

That's its influence. That is, it can, with its suggestions, permeate the whole body with all its slime and filth and dirt. Do you remember your Bible? It would say something like this, Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.

Let no corrupt, let no rotten communication proceed out of your mouth. For you'll understand, please, that the world that we know is morally rotten, and there are people today, and in all their sin and iniquity, they are rotten. He says again, listen to this, he says, Now, fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, neither filthiness nor foolish talking or jesting, acting the fool.

You see, that sort of thing spreads. Now, you know, in the world, if a man's got a filthy tongue, you'll say he's a filthy man. He takes character from his tongue, for that's how he expresses most of his personality.

Here's an interesting thing. You see, generally speaking, we talk ourselves into sin. Isn't that right? We talk ourselves into doing the thing that's wrong.

And our, so to speak, our tongue, whatever we want to do, our tongue introduces and justifies it to each of the other members, whatever the sin may be that's wanted to be committed. And so he says it stains the whole of the personality it produces. That's right.

That's right. Now, don't you go in for it. Don't you stain your sanctified lips with filthy stories and two-sided jokes and all this sort of thing.

Come again. You will notice, he says, it sets on fire the course of nature. I take it that the course or wheels of nature is the whole of life.

So that it affects a person the whole of their life. Now, isn't that right? Now, just a minute. Generally speaking, as people grow older, vices begin to drop off.

And the energy and ardor that made them commit certain things begins to decrease. But wonder of all wonders, the tongue never decreases. They become more garrulous as they get older.

Come far better at speaking than ever they did in their life. This tongue keeps going on all the time, right to the end of life. That's its continuity.

Every other sin you'll probably lay aside as you grow older. But not this. Finally, he says, it is set on fire of hell.

Phillips, now you hear me a nod time, a nod time quoting J.B. Phillips' translation. I'll tell you why. Now, I know he doesn't believe in verbal inspiration.

I know that. But you know, in the epistles especially, he'll very often give a turn of phrase that's quite striking. And here he says about the tongue, it makes the whole of life a blazing hell.

Now, that's true, isn't it? Oh, the people that would give everything if they could just recall the things they've said. But notice, notice, he tells us its associations. Its associations are satanic.

It's set on fire of hell. That's a tremendous thing. Notice he tells us that it, it's a world of iniquity.

So that the whole world of iniquity is centered in it. It will stain the whole of our body for the whole of our life. Tremendous, isn't it? You'll recognize the danger, won't you? See, now come quickly.

Verse seven. Every kind of beast is tamed or has been tamed of mankind. But the tongue can no man tame.

It's an unruly evil, restless evil, never stops, never under full control. Beasts can be tamed, but not this. You know, this is interesting.

He says that these beasts have been tamed of mankind, but the tongue can no man tame. That is, the native strength of mankind and the ability of any particular person has not got the power to control the tongue. Oh, that's amazing.

Now listen carefully now. That means that if you ever meet a person who can discipline their tongue, they're not doing it themselves and the native strength of humanity is not doing it. It's being done because they have known the touch of God on their life and on their lips.

If there is control in the tongue, it's because of supernatural power. Ah, that's interesting. Now, come with me, please.

I suppose you will know there's a section in Isaiah that's known as the songs of the servant. The servant there prophetically is Christ. Now, listen to what it says of the Lord prophetically.

Now, I'm giving now the translation as it should read from the Hebrew. Men appointed his grave with the wicked, but he was with the rich, singular, in his death, plural. Because he had done no violence, neither was deceit in his mouth.

Here is the moral excellence of Christ and because of that moral excellence, because of his life, God appointed a virgin tomb to receive his body. He had control of his tongue. Is that right? Morning by morning he awoke, wakened by God, that he might hear the voice of God, so that he might speak a word in season to him that is weary.

The servant of God listens to the voice of God and his mouth becomes words to encourage the weary. And as Isaiah wrote that, I have no doubt his mind went back to chapter six, when yonder in the presence of the eternal, he says, I am a man of unclean lips and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, because it was the unclean lips that unfitted him for the service of God. Thus, to touch the service of God, the coal from off the altar will touch his lip.

Wherever you get a person that can control their tongue, the touch of the eternal is seen there. Come again. It's full of deadly poison.

This is not the poisoned letter, it's the poisoned words. Now, I want to ask you something. Now, I've got to ask you because I can't declare myself on this, because I don't, while I'm coming and going over the years, fourth visit now in 11 years, nevertheless, I don't know people that well, but you'll know them.

Do you know any of them with a poisoned tongue? Because of things that they have said, it has wrecked friendships, it has broken homes, it has ruined assembly peace. Poison, deadly poison. Do you have a count coming for that? I'm interested.

You know, it's a strange thing. Strange that poison, the doctor here will tell you this and the nurses, poison can kill or cure. Isn't that right? Certain poisons, would I be right, strychnine and opium, used in very small quantities by a doctor can prove helpful? Certain drugs can, but on the whole, they're poison.

Oh, you can speak words that wound or heal, that will bring life or death. Hmm. Verses 10 to 12.

Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things not ought so to be. You wouldn't find a fountain that sent forth sweet water and bitter.

Couldn't be. You'd never taste the sweet, it would all be bitter. Say, does your fig trees bear berries? Or does the olive tree, or does the vine bear something else? Oh no, trees are true to their kind.

That's it. He's showing the danger of inconsistency. Would you know any brother that on a Lord's day morning here, between half past nine and 11, offers up his burnt offering to God.

And at the close of the meeting, he's using violent words, talking about his brethren. Now watch how James puts it. Now do you read carefully? Listen to what he says.

He says, Therewith bless we God the Father, and therewith curse we men. How about just a minute? Men who are made after the similitude of God. Now we are forgetting the dignity of man.

What he's saying is this, this man's both blessing and cursing God, because man is made in the similitude of God. So we leave the tongue. But before I leave it, just one thing.

I don't attend the doctor's surgery very much at all. Blessed with good health. Maybe it's because I don't go to them.

I'm so good, I don't know. I can remember when I used to be a little boy, they would take you into the doctor. Before he asked you anything, he said, show me your tongue.

And he could read lots of things by looking at your tongue. Is that right? Now I'll need to leave the subject. It's in everybody's mouth.

The tongue. Come now to verses 13, please, to 17, to 18. As I said earlier, some connect verse 13 with the teacher of verse one.

But notice, who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Do you think you've got it? Do you think you possess this wisdom and this knowledge? Then he says, let him show out of a good life. Conversation is an old English word for manner of life. You see, words lose their value as time passes.

Oh yes. In the old days, conversation meant conduct. Life now only means speech.

Words lose their value. So he says, now let him show out of a good life. The word for good there is callous.

Let him show out of a beautiful and attractive life. His works with meekness of wisdom. Meekness.

You often hear them saying it's not weakness. Meekness means that there is no arrogance, no self-importance, no self-sufficiency. Listen, what do you think it means when the Lord said, I am meek and lowly in heart? What do you think that means? Apart from the general thing that you would say that lowliness is what you are in yourself, meekness is what you are in relation to others.

When he says that Christ is meek, what would that mean? Don't you think that that would suggest power under control? That Christ was meek? And he appeared that, seemed that, but it was power under control. That's it. That's it.

Verse 14. But if you have bitter envying or jealousy and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. For you'll always find people who want to be prominent.

Isn't that right? Want to be leaders and they're jealous of other people. And there's bitterness comes in. Have you met, have you met them? And they're marked by strife and contention because they want to get their own way and they don't care of much trouble on the road through.

That's right. I've known brethren desperate to go on the oversight and by the trouble that they created to try and get that. Verse 15.

This wisdom descendeth not from above. That is, it's not of God. It doesn't come from heaven.

But it is earthly, sensual, devilish. Let me explain. This wisdom that is earthly means that its sources are earthly, its standards are earthly, it judges, it judges by earthly success.

Here is a wisdom that is earthbound. It's the wisdom of this world that well nigh ruined Corinth. Come again.

Sensual. Some translate it natural. Jude verse 19 will tell you what it means.

Sensual having not the spirit. That is, the wisdom that is of earth is bereft of the spirit of God. It is the natural mind operating without the guidance of God's spirit.

And that's what just about killed Corinth. The wisdom of, doesn't he tell you? Read it. Doesn't he tell you in chapter one that the wisdom of this world can't save us all? Doesn't he tell you in chapter two that the wisdom of this world cannot receive nor communicate divine revelation? Doesn't he tell you in chapter three that the wisdom of this world can never edify a local assembly? It's true.

This wisdom is earthly, it's sensual, it's devilish. That's terrible. It is satanic, it is demonic.

It is from hell. Here is a wisdom that is earthly and not heavenly. Here is a wisdom that is sensual and not of the spirit.

Here is a wisdom that finds its source in the devil and not in God. Did it ever strike you? Did it ever strike you that in this world, in the religious realm, in the spiritual realm, that the spirit of God is seeking for men to use their minds to propagate divine truth? And in the same realm, the devil is seeking minds of men to propagate truth that is false. Listen to this.

First Timothy four, the spirit speaketh plainly, expressly is plainly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies and hypocrisy. Now, what does he mean? He means this, that there were men who confessed the faith and apostatized. They departed, they apostatized from the faith.

They gave heed to spirits that seduce. Now, seducing spirits are spirits that seduce away from the truth into error, away from what is good to what is evil. Got that? And they open their ears to doctrines taught by demons.

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Tell me tonight, do you never get down and thank God that you're saved and that God can use your mind even in a Sunday school class to declare divine truth? Verse 16, for where jealousy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

Isn't that right? You've seen it. And all that it has done was produce confusion disorder. Instead of creating peace, they create trouble.

Instead of creating unity, they create division. Instead of cementing the people of God together, they divide them. That's it.

Now, verse 17 and 18, please, will you? You will notice the wisdom from above in verse 17 has eight qualities. Isn't that right? Pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, full of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now, just in a few minutes, I'll run over them.

But as I go over them, just put yourself alongside the verse, will you? And see now if you possess this wisdom that's from above. First of all, he says this wisdom is pure. You'll remember what the Lord said, blessed are the pure.

Got that? And of course, obviously, if it's wisdom from above, then they are clear as to false doctrine. But notice, this wisdom is pure, no impure motives. It's free from aggressiveness.

It is free from anything that contaminates and soils. The wisdom that comes from above is first pure, so that it is totally clean and it's free from anything that would dishonor God. And this kind of purity in its expression could never harm you.

Secondly, this wisdom that cometh from above is peaceable. Now, listen carefully. Blessed are the peacemakers.

That is, this person is always out for peace. Now, because it's wisdom from above, it can't mean peace at any price. So don't come in with that.

That's wrong. This wisdom from God is peaceable. That is, when others are for war, he's for peace.

And wherever there is trouble in your assembly, he's acting to preserve the unity of the company. Got that? Now, listen carefully to me now, you brothers and sisters. Listen carefully.

Whenever there's trouble between persons in your assembly, don't take sides. For once you take sides, you have disqualified yourself as a peacemaker. If you've taken sides, you can't help in reconciliation, because you've declared yourself on one side against the other.

Oh, you good brothers and sisters, listen please. In Philippians 4, Paul says, I beseech Jodeas and I beseech Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Maybe he knew who was wrong and who was right.

He says, I beseech both of you to be reconciled. Got that? Now, I'm not talking about false doctrine. You know that.

And I'm not talking about the violation of fundamental principle. Most of the troubles amongst us are not fundamental on the whole. No.

If you are going, if you are going, now I apply it to South Main because I'm here. You apply it to where you come from. If you are going to maintain the unity of any assembly, you'll need to be prepared to be a peacemaker.

You'll need to be prepared to still, to try and calm the violence, speech and actions of certain brothers and sisters. And you'll need to be prepared to encourage each to be reconciled. It's one of the hardest things I know, but I do know about it.

Got that? Come again. The wisdom which is from above is gentle. Now, you know, we could have done with about two weeks in this epistle.

You can see that. I can't go into a lot of detail. But this is one of the most untranslatable words in your New Testament.

It's very difficult to get an English word just to see what it means. So that you'll find it translated very often gentle. You would find it translated, let your moderation be known unto all men.

That's the word. Let your yieldingness be known unto all. Philippians 4 verse 5. Let, let your, Matthew Henry, I think says, let your sweet reasonableness be known unto all.

Now, all that's good. Now, let me tell you basically what the word means. It means this.

Don't insist on your rights. The wisdom that is from above never insists on its rights. Ah, but this is the trouble with us.

We're always insisting on our rights. And especially if somebody offends us, we're standing on our so-called dignity and we want our rights. Well, now, according to this word here, look it up when you go home, you don't insist on your rights.

It means that you are prepared to accept a lot less than what is your due just to maintain harmony. It means if you've got a variance with your brother, he may not be coming out as clean as you would like him to be. Or just you accept that and leave that, the rest with God.

It's, it's, it's mentioned in relation to the overseer in 1st Timothy 3. The idea is this, that if you're in any given situation with anyone, it means that you don't want your pound of flesh. It means that you will, eh, you will temper judgment with mercy. You will forgive when you have the right to condemn.

My, we'd have great assemblies if we'd been like this, wouldn't we? Temper judgment with mercy, brethren. Forego your rights. Let God vindicate you ultimately.

And forgive when you have the right to condemn. Quickly, please. Easy to be entreated.

Means that you're approachable. People can appeal to you. You'll not take a hard and fast stand and stand off everybody.

Oh no. The wisdom that is from above is easy to be entreated. Whenever you get a brother of this wisdom, you can appeal to him.

And he'll respond to your appeal. Again, you are full of mercy. That is, you feel for your brethren and sisters when they're in difficulties.

Now listen very carefully. You'll feel for them, not only when they're in difficulties that is not their own fault. For you can get into difficulties and it's not your fault at all.

But you'll feel for them when they get into difficulties and it is their fault. You'll be full of mercy for them. You'll feel for them.

You'll want to help them. In their foolishness, they'll get into it. It's their own fault.

And you don't say, let them stew in their juice. Oh no. You try and help.

Full of mercy, you feel for them. Full of good fruits means that you'll do something to help them. You see, there are lots of people that will feel for you.

So to speak, they'll say, you know, I'm really sorry, Jack, about it all, but they don't do anything to help you. Haven't I said before that as well as being based on the Sermon on the Mount, James's ministry is based a great deal on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Now there he comes down and there's the man lying huddled in the road.

He's been mugged. He's been mugged. He looks at him.

Now, should he do anything? You can see his mind working. After all, these robbers might be hanging around waiting just for somebody like him to go over and they'll pounce on him too. Or he might be saying, well, you know, it's ten past nine, and the wife's expecting me home at half past nine for the dinner, and she doesn't like if you're late and the thing's burned.

Oh no, he stops. He goes over and he pours in his own oil and wine. He uses his own bandages if need be.

He lifts the man up and puts him in his own beast, and he takes him to the hotel, and he pays for him and says on the road back, I'll pay what's costly business. Costly business. Mind you, there was a priest and a Levite came by just a wee while ago.

They passed by on the other side. No use saying to this man, you're all right, friend. Here's a priest coming, the anointed of God.

He'll help you. Oh no, he's not. Ah, there's a Levite coming.

He's a servant of God now, friend. Just a minute, he'll be here in a minute. And he's not helping either.

But the stranger will come and help. Would that be how you would live your life? Would it? Just to help in need. Doesn't matter whether they're Christians or not.

Got the idea? Quickly, please. Without partiality, now we're back to what we were on last night about respect of persons. You remember the man coming in with a suit and the gold rings? You're partial to him and you, the old tramp boy, he gets told, stand there.

If you don't like to stand, you can sit on the floor. All right? Now, you won't be taken in. You remember I told you that he's not condemning gold rings in the passage because if he was condemning gold rings, he'd be condemning the expensive suit for they both identified the man.

He's indicating respect of persons. Brethren, the wisdom from above is without partiality. If anything happens in here in South Main Street, be sure of it.

I make it personal, Pound Street. Any judgment, any decision will be without partiality. It won't matter whether you like me or otherwise.

I'll do what's right. I won't respect persons. I'll stand for God and Christ in that matter.

Got that? Without partiality, without hypocrisy. That is, it doesn't play a part. It doesn't appear to be one thing and be something else.

There's no veneer, no polish, no camouflage. The revised version says without variance. That means that your standards never vary.

You're always the same. This is the day, what do they call it? The day of the open mind. This is the day of suspended judgment.

My mind's open. I'll suspend my judgment. The wisdom from above is not like that.

Finally, verse 18, the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by peacemakers. If you want a harvest of righteousness and to enjoy it amongst each other and in your assembly, the harvest of righteousness is sown in conditions of peace by peacemakers. If there's trouble, problems, there's no harvest.

The harvest is sown in conditions of peace by peacemakers.

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