

# James 03

by John W. Bramhall

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*In James 3, John W. Bramhall emphasizes the critical role of the tongue in demonstrating Christian maturity, highlighting its power to direct, destroy, and delight.*

**Duration:** 59:39

**Scripture:** Psalm 19:14, James 1:5, James 3:1-2, James 3:14-16, James 4:1

**Topics:** "Christian Living", "Taming Tongue"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of true wisdom and seeking it from God. The sermon is based on the fourth chapter of James, which addresses practical Christian living. The preacher highlights the issue of carnal divisions and disputes among believers during the time of James. The sermon then delves into the power of the tongue, using illustrations such as the bit in a horse's mouth and the rudder of a ship to demonstrate its ability to direct. The sermon also discusses the destructive power of the tongue, comparing it to fire and animal life. Finally, the sermon explores the positive impact the tongue can have, using examples of a fountain and trees to illustrate its ability to bring blessing.

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## Transcript

As we continue our study in the Epistle of James, let us not forget the chief or the important truth the beloved apostle has emphasized to our hearts and consciences, particularly we who are the children of God and confess the Lord Jesus as Savior. We have already mentioned the use of the word perfect occurring a number of times in this epistle, meaning, as we have suggested, maturity, indicating the responsibility of a Christian going on faithfully towards Christian maturity. In our study of chapter one, we could summarize that teaching, telling us how we should have the proper attitude and also exhibit the proper manner in which we pass through the trials of life.

In chapter two, we have summarized the lesson by stating a matured Christian will be known by his and by her obedience to the word of God, for true faith in Christ will be manifested by Christian evidence, proving by good works, the manifestation of love in good works, the reality of Christian profession. This will be justified Christian living and confessing Christ to the glory of his name, not particularly before God, as particularly as James has written it, before men. For James has been concerned not by our justification before God, but before men.

Now, as we come to the third chapter of James, probably one main subject within it is concerning that little member, the tongue, that little member of the body that can really get us into trouble, that so easily can get

out of control. In substance, James seeks to bring before us a solemn but a profitable lesson that Christian speech is another test of spiritual maturity. We speak and we hear so many words every day, yet fail to realize what a wonderful and a serious thing a word that is spoken can be.

When God gave man a tongue, the faculty of speech, he gave him an instrument for either building and helping, or a weapon that unfortunately is capable of destroying and pulling down. I wonder if we ever gave thought to the fact after the physical location of the tongue in the human body, placed behind the teeth, as though behind bars, which would indeed suggest the very need of being careful when we permit the tongue to speak, to be careful about opening the lips. Would it not often be better for us to bite our lips, keep this unruly member behind the bars that God wisely provided for that purpose? The words of Psalm chapter 19 and verse 14 are so appropriate as a prayer the psalmist made, in which we can too.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. Well, let us read the opening two verses of James chapter 3. My brethren, be not many masters, properly translated it should be, be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation, for in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is the perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Would you permit me to read another translation of verse 1, which may be clearer? Be not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive greater judgment. What is James implying by these first two verses? Could it be possible that there must have been rivalry in the synagogues and the assemblies of the saints in those early days, concerning who would teach? James is saying, let not many of you become teachers. Why? Well, he points out to them that those who do teach will have a very more serious judgment to face than those who may listen.

What a serious responsibility it is for any Christian to assume the place of a teacher, and one who does so should have deep realization not only of its honor, but also of the account, the stewardship that must be given to the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ in the coming future. May God, by His Holy Spirit, raise up in our testimonies more true and faithful teachers of the word of God, but let us not fail to realize how sad it can be for an immature Christian to try and become a teacher before being ready. Preparation of heart and life, development and growth in the Lord and the knowledge of His word is so greatly important, before one can realize, myself included, that when seeking to teach the of God, it is not attaining just to a great place of blessing, but it is also bringing one to be subjected to the serious coming judgment of God.

James very quickly agrees in verse 2 that all of us stumble and offend in many ways, but especially by what we may say or how we may speak. Do we even begin to realize the great and the important place that the tongue has? In relation to Christian maturity, it may be located near the top of our body, inside the mouth, but the apostle says, if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Does not God suggest to us that the proper use of the tongue will prove that the whole body will also be controlled? A reference in chapter 1 and verse 26 would teach this, when James wrote, if any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

James, by God's spirit, certainly thinks very little of someone who does a lot of talking more than practical living. O my beloved fellow Christian, I readily confess the need of heeding the exhortation of James to guard the tongue. Many years ago, when I was in a business office visiting, I cannot recall just where it was, I believe in the state of South Carolina, on the wall of the office I entered was a motto with a title

which caught my attention quickly.

It was called the businessman's prayer. Naturally, it attracted me when I saw it was a something concerning prayer, and I read it with interest. These were the words to my surprise, Lord, help me to keep my big mouth shut.

That was all, Lord, help me to keep my big mouth shut. Oh, how I thought such a motto could be appropriately placed in many places where Christians gather together. What great trouble we Christians can make and have done by misusing that little member of the tongue.

What offense we have given. May God help us to watch into God our lips. But we continue in the chapter that James has written, where the preeminent subject concerns the tongue, and with deep conviction we confess what a needed lesson we have given to us in what follows, for which most of us can certainly say we are in complete agreement.

In the opening two verses, we were given the introduction to the subject, but from verses three through twelve, James presents to us three illustrated lessons on the power of the tongue. Let me outline them first, and then we will consider them separately. In verses three and four, he speaks of the fact that the tongue has power to direct, illustrated by the bit in the horse's mouth and by the rudder of a ship.

The second part of the portion, in verses five through eight, he tells that the tongue has power to destroy, illustrated by fire and even by animal life. The third section that follows, in nine through twelve, he tells us that the tongue has power to delight or to bring blessing, illustrated by a fountain and by trees. Now let's consider verses three and four.

Let me read the words. Behold, we put bits in the horse's mouth that they may obey us. 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 tossed about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor or the pilot lifteth. The strength of a horse can be controlled by a small bit in the mouth, and the animal is made to serve some useful purpose by its owner. Do we realize that our own life can also be controlled by that little member of our body and made to serve a useful purpose for God's glory? Then the sea-going vessel is guided through the waters of the ocean by that small rudder or helm, made to travel in whatever direction the master of the vessel desires.

We often think that our words are unimportant. Oh, but that is not so. We need to realize the importance of words.

What we say. Wrong kind of words may direct others into wrong paths. Right words can direct them into proper paths of righteousness.

An idle word, a questionable story or a deliberate lie, could even change the course of a life and lead to its destruction. On the other hand, words can be used by the Spirit of God to direct souls out of sin and into salvation. Just as the horse needs a guide and the ship a pilot, so our tongue should be in the powerful control of our Lord.

Let us heed the words that we quoted once in Isaiah chapter 50 and verse 4 in our beginning, where the prophet Isaiah wrote of the Lord Jesus in prophecy, saying, the Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, meaning the instructed, that I should know how to speak a word to him that is weary. Oh beloved,

not only what to speak, nor when to speak, but even how. But let us consider verses 5 through 8, where we learn that the power of the tongue is not only to direct, but it has power to destroy.

Here are the words, even so the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. Behold, our great matter a little fire kindleth, and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. So is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body and seteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell.

The illustration of fire and its power to destroy is first given to us. Now, the size of the tongue does not indicate its power. It is a little member, but oh what great destruction it can cause.

You may have a great forest fire. How great, literally the apostle is saying, how great a forest a little fire can destroy. Just a small flame can begin a forest fire.

And then the whole forest and the field becomes ablaze. So the tongue is a flame. Through lies, through gossip, words of anger, even families can be destroyed.

Assemblies and churches can be involved in serious trouble, and spiritual disaster can be caused and affecting many lives because of the tongue. There is a proverb that the writer has written in Proverbs chapter 16, 27. An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is as a burning fire.

What destruction, physically, morally and spiritually, evil lips can cause. Its power is to destroy is also illustrated by the animals, the creature life in verses 7 and 8. For every kind of beast and of serpents and of things in the sea is tamed by man, and hath been tamed of mankind, but the tongue can no man tame. It is an unruly evil full of deadly poison.

We well know how even wild animals and the creatures of the sea have been tamed by men, though most of us may never have had such an ambition. But who is able to conquer the tongue? asked the apostle. What poison it can spread? And we are living today in the midst of such moral conditions? The publication of even daily events constantly seek the destruction of character, and there is so much character assassination being caused by the tongue.

There are so many today that by the tongue and words are seeking to poison the mind and the hearts toward individuals, and lies are becoming prominent in public life, and the misuse of the tongue and the abuse of it seems to prevail. And how often this saying can be true even in the private lives of little-known persons. My beloved fellow Christian, the Lord himself should control your tongue and mine.

The tongue by nature is restless. It is unruly. Then what poison it can spread? Yet what spiritual medicine it can give? Both suffering and health can be given by the tongue.

Hear the words of God in Proverbs chapter 12 and verse 18. They're precious. Yes, indeed, we can wound others with our tongue.

Listen to these words. There is that speaketh like the piercing of a sword, but the tongue of the wise is health. Yes, we can wound others with our tongue, and unfortunately we may do this, but let us take the other side of its ministry.

We can speak words of healing rather than wounding. How we all need to watch our tongue and not use it as a weapon of destruction. Certainly the prayer of the psalmist can and should be yours and mine when he said, Psalm chapter 141 and verse 3, said, I watch, O Lord, before my mouth keep the door of my lips.

Let us go forward and consider the third illustration concerning the tongue which the apostle James gives us in chapter 3 of his letter. We have noted its power to direct, its power to destroy. Now we can note its power to delight.

Verses 9 through 12. Therewith, that is with the tongue, bless we God, even the Father. 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 are not so to thee, just a fountain sent forth at the same place, sweet water and bitter. Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries, either a vine things? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

By the illustrations, particularly two of them, one about blessing and cursing, the other regarding the fountain producing both sweet water and bitter, God is declaring to us that it is impossible for the tongue to speak both blessing and cursing at the same time. Certainly there is inconsistency in using our tongues to bless and yet also to curse, but what does God mean? Note carefully in verse 9 that the tongue can be used two ways. One way toward God our Father, the other toward man, our fellow men.

Ordinarily when we speak to God our Father, surely we would never curse him, rather we bless him, we praise him, both in prayer and in song, and this is right. But it is right after blessing and praising God to bless others. Would it be right for us to turn from God toward our fellow men and speak words of anger, impatience and bitterness? Oh God forbid! Oh my beloved fellow Christian, are we not convicted that we can speak words that are proper to God, but unfortunately turn around and speak improperly to men? God says by James through the Spirit, my brethren, these things ought not so to be.

We may and we should ask our hearts, what is the fruit of my lips when I speak with my tongue? We know we cannot produce both blessing and cursing at the same time, sweet water and bitter. Then how can we be guided properly to this great responsibility? What should our tongue be producing? We know that it should be blessing and delight. Listen to the words of the proverb writer in Proverbs 18 and verse 4, the words of a man's mouth are as deep waters and the well spring of wisdom as a flowing brook.

Here are the words of divine counsel for those of us who are Christians. There can be depths of wisdom in the heart of a Christian who will seek to know God and Christ through his precious word, and how we Christians should permit the Spirit of God to bring forth out of our mouths living water, the living waters of the Word of God through the tongue. Oh my beloved, no greater honor, no greater problem could indeed be ours to settle than we shall use our tongue to magnify the Word of God.

Well did the Lord Jesus speak of a believer and the fruit of his life? When he or she will be controlled by the Holy Spirit, when he said in John 7 38, out of his inner being shall flow what? Rivers of living water. Plainly does the apostle James tell us that a tree cannot bear two kinds of fruit. What kind of tree am I? What kind of fruit am I bearing? Listen to the wise man in Proverbs 13 and verse 2. A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth, but the soul of the transgressor shall eat violence.

Is the fruit of my mouth good fruit, or is it bad fruit? Let our hearts be searched that we may know it. God does not appreciate me if I am inconsistent. May I point out further in the Word of God in relation to the power of the tongue, words from Proverbs 18 again, this time verses 20 and 21.

A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth, and with the increase of his lips shall be filled. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. The fruit of our

lips has the power to give blessing and delight.

It has the power to produce evil and sorrow. It has the power, when spoken, to be both godly and manly for blessing. But, oh, how we should ever be reminded there's death and life in the power of the tongue.

Have you ever noticed those beautiful words in Proverbs 25 and verse 11 concerning the priceless fruit of consecrated lips? Listen to the words. A word simply spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. Did you ever see a golden apple? Would it not be better to ask the question, have you ever heard a golden apple? I hope you know what I mean.

Against the framework of a silver design, the wise man in the Proverbs says, a word simply spoken is like an apple of gold. In other words, oh my fellow believer, we who are believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, redeemed by his precious blood, and I'm sure you must remember that our redemption by the blood of Christ, that precious blood, is sometimes symbolized in the word of God by silver. Think of the words of Peter when he wrote, we are not redeemed by corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

But I am reminded that the use of silver in the Old Testament had much to do with the redemption of the people of Israel in the tabernacle days. Do you remember that those, the frame of the tabernacle and the walls of the tabernacle, those boards of the tabernacle, were all every one of them placed in a socket of silver. Those boards represented the people of Israel.

The socket of silver represented the fact they were a people that had been redeemed by God. So, my beloved fellow believer, you and I have been redeemed by God. Silver is so often typical of redemption by the blood of the Lord Jesus, and against the background of your life and my life, a life that has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

Our words, when we speak, should always be to the glory of God, to be like an apple of gold, and what a delightful fruit we could and can produce if we will. A word fitly spoken is like an apple of gold framed in silver. Oh, how precious! An apple of gold in pictures of silver.

In other words, my fellow believer, we're the pictures of silver. What we speak can be apples of gold. Let our prayer be the words of Psalm 141, verse 3, which we have quoted in the past.

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips. And again the words of Psalm 19, rather, verse 14. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

I wonder if I may tell one of the old fables that was written in my boyhood days. We don't find them in the literature of today. They were called Aesop's fables.

Every one of those fables that we read in our childhood had a moral lesson. There was one particular story that I've never forgotten. It was only a legendary story, but with a moral meaning.

There was a woman that had two children. One of them was a stepchild, the other was their own child. The stepchild was often mistreated, misused and abused, but very quietly and patiently suffered all.

The child of the mother was unfortunately spoiled. One of the obligations of the children was to go down to the spring and bring back from the spring of water the vessel of water for the use in the home. One day the

mother said to her stepchild, go down to the water and bring back a jug of water.

So carrying the pitcher of water, the little girl went obediently. As the story was told, when she came to the spring, there sat what seemed to appear an old woman, a very old woman sitting by the side, who, when the little girl arrived, spoke to her and said, give me a drink. Very quickly and kindly, the little child stooped and filled her pitcher with water and gave the old lady a drink.

Immediately upon drinking, the old woman, who was according to the story a fairy in disguise, said to the child, because you were so kind, when you speak, out of your mouth will flow precious jewels. And immediately she vanished, and the child hurriedly filled her pitcher and went back home as fast as she could, knowing that she possibly would have a scolding because of being delayed. Sure enough, the stepmother scolded her as soon as she arrived, and as she began to make an explanation, out of her mouth came precious jewels of all kinds, gold and silver and stones, to the amazing wonder not only of the child, but even of the stepmother.

Immediately when the stepmother realized that she got her own child and sent her to the spring to get a pitcher of water, that it might be the same for her, when she arrived, sure enough, the fairy was there in the guise of an old woman and said, give me to drink. The character of this young child was not as the other. Very rudely, she says, get it yourself! I'm not going to do it for you.

And then came, unfortunately, the curse that was hers. She said, because you are so unkind and abusive, when you speak, out of your mouth will proceed frogs and toads and lizards and little things, all kinds of creeping things. Quickly she went back home with as the fairy vanished, and of course the stepmother was waiting to see what her own child would bring.

And when she began to speak, out of her mouth came these horrid little creatures. Well, beloved, I'm sure you recognize the moral of the story. What kind of words come out of your mouth? Oh, if often in childhood we would be told, what's your words, my darling? In continuing our study in the Epistle of James, we will now consider the application of the admonitions that God gave to us through His servants, regarding the use and the misuse of the tongue, as it has been recorded in chapter three, verses one through eighteen.

You will now notice in verse nineteen, that James refers to a wise man, saying, Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness and wisdom. Does not this remind us of his reference to wisdom in chapter one and verse five? This need of practical wisdom is emphasized by James, a practical wisdom in all the daily affairs of Christian living. Was there ever a greater necessity for it than even now? The testings of modern-day life, with all its moral and spiritual perplexities, are enough to confuse the mind and the path of many Christians today.

To know just what to do is a constant problem in the daily affairs of life, whether in the church or in the home, in business, in society. Where can wisdom be found? There is only one true source, it is God. If any of you like wisdom, let him ask of God, said James in chapter one and verse five.

And how does God impart the needed wisdom? Where is the knowledge of it found? In the 19th verse of James three, we find him referring to a wise man that is endued with knowledge. Where does this wise man obtain his knowledge? If it comes from God, then how does God give it to him? The practical wisdom that every Christian needs can only be found through one special channel which God uses. It is the word of God.

It is a tragedy when Christians are lacking practical wisdom. Unfortunately, it is possible for some Christians to believe that they are spiritual, and yet they can also be very impractical, which certainly is an unbalanced condition. True spirituality will be balanced with practical wisdom.

Wherefore, our guidance and direction in life can return for the facts, but to the word of God. Note also in verse 19 that practical wisdom and its display in life is shown by the Christian's conduct. A good conversation which means the manner of life, a life of good works, and note how, in the spirit of it, it is to be with meekness and wisdom.

There is nothing excitable and emotional in this experience suggested as existing, which often many Christians today seem to associate spiritual evidence with excitement in emotional and things of great power. Beloved, meekness never makes any loud demonstration. Wisdom is but the ability of carrying out God's truth, obeying the knowledge that has been given to us from his word.

Let me further apply the context of our chapter. What has been the subject? Has it not been on the use of the tongue? Have we not seen the power of the tongue to direct our line, its power to destroy and its power to delight? Then does it not change by the spirit advises that we use the tongue wisely? The believer must learn from God's word how to use his and her tongue. It can be used by wisdom from above, which is true wisdom, or it can be used by a false wisdom which is from beneath.

When used by wisdom from above, it is displayed in the life of good works. Not a loud talking, but it is displayed with meekness and wisdom. Within verses 14 through 18, the remaining section of this chapter of James, chapter three, the apostle touches upon the true source of false wisdom, and then upon the true source of true wisdom, with their respective results.

It will be very profitable for us to carefully study this closing section of James, chapter three, and seek by God's gracious help, through the spirit, to take the message home to our hearts and our lives. First, the source, or the evidence of wisdom that is false. Listen carefully to the words of verse 14 and 16, which clearly give the evidence, and verse 15 will reveal the source.

First, the evidence of it in verse 14 reads like this, but if ye have bitter envying, which means jealousy and strife, in your hearts glory not, and lie not against the truth. Verse 16 declares, for where envying and strife is, there is confusion in every evil work. Now, three particular conditions, outstanding conditions, are revealed.

First, there's the presence of jealousy, and division, and confusion. We sadly must confess that such conditions prevail too greatly in Christian churches of the saints. We also confess the truth about it, that it is contrary to the will of God, and it is against his precious word when such conditions prevail.

Ought not this to humble us in the presence of God with repentance and in confession? But what is the source of this kind of wisdom, false wisdom? James tells us in verse 15, this wisdom descendeth not from above, but it is earthly. It is sensual, meaning natural. It is devilish or demonized.

Beloved, false wisdom belongs, if I may put it in these words, to the world. It comes from the world, it comes from the flesh, and it comes from the devil. Are not these the three great enemies of the believer? How very, very careful Christians ought to be, for these enemies constantly are facing every one of us.

Every assembled congregation of believers in the Lord Jesus should recognize these dangers. Then what do these sad conditions that James describes reveal about any group of believers, wherever they may be?

Very simply, but clearly, reveals this one sad fact. Instead of humbly depending upon the Holy Spirit and the word of God, they look to the world for their ideas to inaugurate, they look to the flesh for their strength, and in so doing they just play right into the hands of the devil himself.

False wisdom in its source issues only from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Certainly it is imperative that any body of Christians should carefully guard themselves and prayerfully, for where jealousy and division and confusion exist among them, it is clear evidence that the believers have followed the wrong kind of wisdom. Oh my beloved fellow Christians, I wonder how seriously many of us take these truths into our hearts in the midst of our local assembly of saints, honestly realizing the great importance of the words of the Apostle Paul of James, rather as we have considered them in his chapter, chapter three, the vivid contrast between false wisdom and the true wisdom of God.

Verses 14 through 16, we have noted, presented the evidence of false wisdom, and how terrible that jealousy and division and confusion should should prevail. For when believers follow the wisdom of the world, we can certainly expect we'll do what we do in our own strength, instead of the strength of the Lord, we play right into the control of the devil. Now, this is not the wisdom that God defines his children to follow, for it destroys the spiritual and the Christ-like character of the church testimony.

Now, in verses 17 and 18, we come to that which is true wisdom. Here are the words, but the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be untreated, 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, let us first of all consider the source of true wisdom from this scripture.

The opening words declare it. It comes from God, from above. It is not from the earth.

Men, by nature, boast of their so-called great wisdom. God refuses this. Has he not said, to the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God? As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, every local body of believers in our Lord Jesus, wherever they are, should definitely affirm that they cannot, they must not depend upon human wisdom, but depend wholly upon the wisdom which is from above.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally. We have learned in James chapter one and verse five, true wisdom is found only in God and by his Spirit, through his precious word. It is not invented, it does not originate in the minds of men.

Now, second, let us see how James describes the evidence of this true wisdom. There are certain specific proofs when true wisdom is followed, when God himself is permitted to control his children, and particularly control their tongues. First, true wisdom is pure.

Did you ever read in Psalm chapter 12 and verse 6, the words of the Lord are pure words? Did you ever read in Psalm 19 and verse 8, the commandments of the Lord, though the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes? That wisdom from above is revealed to us by God's word. There is no error found in the word of God, and if only we Christians would follow it. Second, true wisdom is peaceable.

It does not produce discord amongst God's people when followed. It produces harmony and love. It is worthy of note that God puts purity first, then peace.

Man would put peace first, peace at any cost, but no! God's order is first that we Christians must bow to the word of God, then there will be peace. True wisdom is gentle, undoubtedly indicating the spirit of patience and forbearance, and a wise Christian will use gentleness and persuasion with patience. He will

not threaten or recuse.

How this will evidence proper control of the tongue! Thy gentleness, wrote the psalmist, hath made me great in Psalm 18 and verse 35, for a truly great man is not a man who is indeed opposing the will of God, or neither is he arrogant, but he is humble. Juan Wallace said that true greatness is humility, and then true wisdom is easy to be entreated, we are told, which suggests the willingness to yield, or to be reasonable. How easy it is to be unreasonable, which is not true wisdom at all.

Then fifth, true wisdom is full of mercy. Instead of being too hasty in judgment and in condemnation, let us not be quick in condemning others, but always ready to manifest merciful kindness. If God had been merciful to us, if he had not been merciful to us, where would we be? Surely mercy, then, is wisdom from above, and God has shown mercy to thousands, according to Deuteronomy chapter 5 and verse 10.

Then sixth, true wisdom is also full of good truths. How can this be manifested except by our lives? By their fruits ye shall know them, said Jesus. Do good unto all men, especially to the household of faith, writes God in Galatians 6 and verse 10.

And then seventh, true wisdom is without partiality. We learn in chapter 2 and verse 4 that precious truth. It implies we shall not waver, we shall stand for the truth, we will never compromise God's truth, we will not be impartial to all, but we will be impartial rather to all.

And eighth, true wisdom is without hypocrisy. What true wisdom speaks is genuine, it is the truth, and said with no ulterior motive. The words spoken by the tongue will be absolutely to be trusted.

And ninth, true wisdom in its result is the fruit of righteousness and peace. In verse 18, it produces blessed results. Righteousness and peace so greatly needed among the people of God.

Practical righteousness and the blessed spirit of peace to prevail. Are these not true of the greatest characteristics that will be found in Christ's coming kingdom when he reigns over all the earth? We would raise the question, beloved, are we truly wise? Do we seek and manifest true wisdom? Oh may we seek it from above. God alone can bestow it.

May God grant that we shall prove it. We now begin the meditation and study of the fourth chapter of James. How practical has been the ministry of this epistle given by the spirit through his servant James.

Touching upon the vital experiences of practical Christian living, and the fourth chapter before us is no exception. As the beloved apostle writes, he gives us clear evidence that there must have been in his day carnal divisions and even disputes amongst the believers of that time. This is certainly true, and is it not that even today present conditions indicate amongst Christians in our time? If it is not so, it is certainly always a threatening danger, and the cause can always be due to the lack of spirituality amongst us, and it denotes, unfortunately, the failure to live a true and a separated life.

We must always seek to be upon our God, knowing that we have enemies that oppose the Christian in his and her walk. In our study of chapter 3 in verse 15, we learned that the Christian must battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. As we come to chapter 4 verses 1 through 7, the Spirit of God explains in deeper detail that that battle, let us approach it by remembering that any unsafe person lives for the world, for the flesh, and is controlled by the devil, but when a person is saved, that person receives the Holy Spirit in his heart, who implants a new nature with new desires, and knows the enabling presence and power of the Holy Spirit to help, whether in battle against the three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the

devil.

James, in chapter 4 and verses 1 through 3, begins taking up the flesh. Here are his words, saying, from whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members? Ye lust and have not, ye kill and desire to have, ye cannot obtain, ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask not, ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts? Do you remember, you who have read your Bibles, that John the Apostle, in 1st John chapter 2 and verse 16, mentions the lust of the flesh? Now, do not be misunderstanding this word lust, for often persons will give it one kind of a connotation, the virus kind meaning, that which it does not even include. But, the complete meaning of the word in its interpretation should be desires, the desires of the flesh.

They may not always be immoral, they may not always be licentious, they can seem to be respectful. In contrast, for whichever, James is emphasizing that the use of them, when used, the root of them is the flesh. The desires of the flesh, when followed, may and can lead one into sinful indulgences, which James boldly names to us.

Therefore, the Christian must realize that when these desires begin working, problems can be created. Note very carefully the Apostle's expression in verse 1, the prominence of the flesh in its desires, saying those desires of the flesh are lusts that roar where? In your members, meaning in the members of your body. He is referring to an inward enemy, the old nature of the flesh that is still with the believer.

These desires persisted by the flesh. They seek to persuade the believer to live his and her life apart from God, to do what is only human nature, the things of the flesh. The world in its character is a society that is apart from God, and so the believer should realize the flesh is also apart from God.

My flesh, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing, wrote the beloved Apostle Paul. James describes the sinful actions of the flesh. They desire, they kill to obtain, they do not stop to pray properly about their desires.

When they do pray, their prayer is selfish that they might enlarge their pleasures and not glorify God. The flesh will never encourage us to pray a rite. Is this not true? How often the flesh is permitted to prevent us from praying.

Now, do not mistake the strict words of James in verse two. Ye kill and desire to have. For it cannot be questioned that they were actually committing murder, but listen to some words of the Apostle Paul which can enlighten us about this when he wrote to the troubled Galatians in chapter five.

Verse 15. Note his words. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Has not this implied the existence of hatred? Did not the Apostle John say in first John 3 15, whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and what he is saying, the presence of hatred, is but the presence of the desire to kill. O my beloved believer in Christ, here is a very solemn lesson of warning which James wrote to the early Jewish believers long ago. How that the desires of the flesh can lead to sinful action.

What is our escape from thee? Is it not to be obedient to the word of God as Paul wrote it in Romans 6 13? Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. The beloved Apostle Paul exhorted the Galatians to do the same, that instead of yielding the members of the body to the flesh, they were to yield them to the Spirit of God. O my beloved Christian, let us present

our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God which is our reasonable service.

Surely we can recognize the strength of James as he continues to write. Note the words that follow as we have them. Strong words, ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Do you think that the scriptures set in vain the spirit that dwelleth in us, lusted to envy? Now, here we can see the testing of the world that we face. Not only the flesh, but the world, and let us be careful and clear in our thinking of these words. He calls them adulterers and adulteresses.

Now, he's not referring, I'm sure, to physical adultery, but to spiritual adultery. Have you not noticed in the Old Testament that God called Israel in their days of idolatry? He called their idol worship adultery. There were a nation of called, they were called God's peculiar people, but when they turned to idols, He called them adulterers, unfaithful to Him.

They should have been close to God, but they were closer friends to the idols than they were to the living God, Jehovah. Now, my fellow believers should not the heart of a believer in the Lord Jesus be in closer relationship to God, and to Christ, and to the world? Should we not be devoted to the Lord? The world is God's enemy. Do not think for one moment that God considers the world that crucified His Son to be His friend.

Never! If you have such a thought, ponder carefully the words of the Lord Jesus in John 15, 18, and 19. If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, then the world would love its own, but because you're not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hate of you.

Paul is saying in Galatians 6, 14, that we are crucified to the world, and the world to us. Let us remember that. Now, please let me present to my fellow believers four particular dangerous steps regarding our friendship and relationship with the world from God's word.

In our present chapter of James, chapter 4 and verse 4, we are warned not to be a friend of the world. Friendship with the world, to the degree that we rob God of our devotion, is a dangerous step. Second, in John's epistle, the first epistle, chapter 2, verse 14 through 17, we are told, love not the world, neither the things which are in the world.

When we love the world, it is to the neglect of loving our father. That's a dangerous step. Third, do you remember the wonderful plea of Paul in Romans, chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, beseeching the believer to yield himself and herself to God as a living sacrifice? In that portion, we are told to be not conformed to the world.

God wants us to be conformed to his beloved son. Then, fourth, in first Corinthians, chapter 11 and verse 32, Paul says, and warns the careless Christians at Corinth that by their conduct they should not be condemned or judged with the world. You can be sure that if a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus gets too far from God, the hand of God in chastening will fall upon him and her for whom the Lord loveth each hastening.

Now, let me give a solemn word of admonition to all of our hearts. The Lord, in his great prayer for his children in John 17, verse 16, declared, they are not of the world, even as I'm not of the world. Here is the divine truth.

We believers, according to the Savior's words in prayer, we are not of the world. In other words, we belong to Christ. We belong to God.

Someone may be saying, well, what can we do? We're still in the world, are we not? Yes, indeed, we're in the world, but please keep this fact before you, my fellow believer. Though you and I are in the world, God and your Savior and my Savior does not desire to see the world in us. There is a great difference of being in the world and the world being in us.

One of the saddest facts we confess in humiliation is the fact that there are too many Christians who are not only living in this world, but who also are living for this world. Oh, my beloved, some of those Christians do it to such a degree that there can be no great difficulty in telling whether they are not. There can be great difficulty rather to tell whether they are saved or not.

My beloved Christian, there are two things that we have thus seen in this chapter of James so far. Let us beware of the flesh, and also let us beware of being a friend of the world, for when a believer becomes a friend to the world, he becomes at enmity with God according to the word that James, the servant of God, has written. My beloved Christian, we could lift our hearts with the question and ask ourselves, and even the unsane, which world am I living for? This one or the next? Oh, my beloved fellow believer, we can ask our hearts today, is my life being lived for the glory of God, or am I living for self, or for this world? May I recapitulate the dangers that James has touched upon? He mentions three, but two of them we've only covered in this chapter to this point.

He mentions the lust of the flesh, he mentions to the world, and he will bring before us the devil, but all the danger of the flesh, the danger of the world, they're prominent, and God grant that you and I may seek to crucify the flesh as God has already crucified it in Christ at the cross, as well as say with Paul, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ my Lord, by which the world is crucified under me, and I unto the world. Shall we pray? Blessed Father, for one another as thy dear redeemed people, in the world in which we live, in the flesh in which we are, we confess there are dangers. We thank thee for thy divine provision we can face these dangers in the power of the Holy Spirit, through the power of the word of God, and be victors.

We just pray that the Holy Spirit, if the flesh is in us and manifested through us, or if the world is manifested in us and through us, the Holy Spirit will convict us, and we shall repent, confessing it, and in thy grace yield ourselves to do the will of God. For we ask it in the Savior's name, and we ask it for his honor and glory. Amen.

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