

MAN²MAN

James Chapter 3

In the Bible, chapter “breaks” and verse “numbering” were inserted into the text much later than the writing of the original translation. I believe the chapter break here in James 3 inadvertently interrupts the flow of the letter. If we carry the finishing point from chapter 2; *real faith will be seen in real life*, into chapter 3 we see a continuance of thought from James. Basically, James is saying, 'What you believe is seen in how you live, what you believe is also verified by what you say. May your words be agreement with your belief.'

3:1- Teachers/Instructors were looked up to and were to be examples in the community. What they said was respected and affected many lives. With this influence comes accountability; an instructor is responsible for the information they share. Of course, the specifics in this chapter are to those who have influence within the church. The context is addressing leadership/teachers/instructors within the church. Of course, the principle of accountability applies outside the church as well, regardless of what contemporary feeling-based philosophy says.

For Christians, God holds us accountable for what we do with what He has given us. (*For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2Corinthians 5:10*). In light of our accountability before God we are cautioned, actually encouraged, to be sober minded about our opportunities to share about what God has done in our lives. We should not be doing this for notoriety, or compliment, or any self-gain, rather we are to share in a way that God gets the glory.

V2 James is so 'street-level', 'straight-forward', 'real-world' practical in this letter. If we are going to grow in Christ, we must be honest with ourselves... *"we all stumble in many things."* *Stumble*=trip, err, make a mistake, to cause one to fall... This is a reminder to pay attention, it is not an excuse. I have heard people say, "well, we all make mistakes, nobody is perfect." The problem is when they say that as an excuse for continuing in a particular sin. A reminder does not remove the consequences for our actions, so James would say; Pay attention to what you do and why you do it!

Consider the following outline for the remainder of this chapter:

V3-7 The Problem

V8-12 The Practice

V13-18 The Prescription

V3-7 The problem: Little things can make a major difference. The examples of a “bit for a horse”, a “rudder on a ship”, a “small spark” remind us that though the tongue is small, it can have great impact.

V6-Words can cut and burn and hurt far more than we realize. Remember the childhood chant, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me!" What a lie that was!! Broken bones and bruises heal much faster than cutting words and insults.

What is your oldest memory of someone saying something that really hurt you? Did the person who said it even realize how deeply it hurt?

What is your oldest memory of someone saying something that lifted you up, encouraged you and helped you?

V7- The tongue does come in a cage, although it does get loose sometimes. The best way to keep the tongue in check is to learn how to keep the cage closed. (See James 1:19)

V8-12 The Practice

We see this contrast in our words which should not be; We speak words of encouragement and then cut someone down with the same tongue! Remember the tongue is not independent of the mind! The tongue is an instrument for revealing what is in the heart! Jesus said that, "...out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." Luke 6:43-45.

In a way, what we are full of is what flows out of us! If we have pools of profanity, reservoirs of arrogance and ponds of pride within our hearts then that is what will flow out of our mouths. When we are born again we now have God in the person of the Holy Spirit within us. The Holy Spirit is described as 'living water'(John 7:37-39) that flows forth from us. Where we used to practice profanity and use prideful cutting words which were drawn out of the old way of living, we now have a new flow of conversation to speak. And yet we see some of those old ways of speaking still come out of our mouths. It is embarrassing when the old sludge shows itself! What should we do?

V13-18 The Prescription

V13- Questions are good, they can cause us to think before we act. Am I being wise and understanding? This question has an observable answer, shown by good conduct.

Wisdom is the application of knowledge, experience and good judgement.

Meekness- Humility with gentleness and strength under control. Meekness is not weakness!

V14- As someone wisely said, 'Check yourself before you wreck yourself!' One of our greatest needs we have is for each one of us to have an attitude and willingness to be honest with ourselves and about ourselves! "...if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts..." then admit it! This is not the wisdom you want! There are 2 types of wisdom:

V15, 16- Earthly wisdom is limited to this temporal life and bodily senses. The origin of this type of wisdom is from Satan himself and it contradicts and challenges the Word of God. Consider the conversation in the garden of Eden, Genesis 3, with the serpent and Eve. The serpent, a demonic agent see Rev.20:2, manipulated the Word of God in order to deceive Eve. The serpent's 'wisdom' has bitter envy and self-seeking as he boasts and lies against the truth.

V17, 18- Heavenly Wisdom! The opposite of earthly, sensual, demonic wisdom. Heavenly wisdom is not only opposite of earthly wisdom, is extremely superior! Notice the qualities or expressions of heavenly wisdom-

Pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

These are qualities that God implants and brings forth from every man who puts his trust in Him. These qualities are the true qualities that each one of us should cultivate and nurture as we desire to be conformed into His image and likeness.

In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom.

Proverbs 10:19-21

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