

### **3. James 3 of a Verse by Verse Study of James, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter**

James 3, as in the manner of the entire letter, covers three subjects: stricter judgment for teachers, the tongue, a restless evil, and wisdom that comes from heaven. These topics, as those of the preceding chapters, are unequivocal in their requirements for Christians.

#### ***Strict Judgment for Teachers***

*3:1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*

The idea that just any member can and should teach is erroneous. Teachers should be those who study the word of God and who make sure they teach only His will. False teachers receive the severest condemnation in the New Testament. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2:1-2:

. . .there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

Perhaps, one may just inadvertently teach false doctrine. The damage is just as bad as that of the false teacher, not matter how well intentioned.

On the other hand, if we are indolent and fail to study so that we may know and teach the truth, we are just as guilty of sin as the false teacher. The Hebrew writer warned us in Heb 5:12, “12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again.”

Those who teach must study hard to know, understand, and handle correctly the word of God. Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim 2:15: “15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” One not making the commitment to know the word of truth should not be a teacher.

Those who teach must also make sure that what they say is true to the revealed word of God. Peter taught in 1 Peter 4:10-11, “11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.” The most serious judgments fall to those who pervert God's word. The Bible ends with Rev 22:18-19 warning:

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Finally, Paul condemned those who pervert the Gospel of God in Gal 1:9, “9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!”

Elders in the church must make sure that teachers are qualified in the Scriptures and in methods of teaching.

#### ***The Tongue, a Restless Evil***

*2 We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.*

3 *When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

7 *All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, 8 but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

9 *With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.*

James is so clear and emphatic on the subject of the tongue and its evils. The summary statement of this passage is clear: "It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

The Lord described the destructive nature of our tongues. They relate directly to murdering and killing in the nature of their evil. In Matt 5:21-22, he said:

21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

### ***Wisdom that Comes from Heaven***

13 *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.*

17 *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*

James introduced us to wisdom in James 1:5-8: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." In this passage, he describes the true wisdom as one belonging to the good life and to deeds done in humility that comes from wisdom. On the other hand, there is the wisdom of envy and selfish ambition. This latter wisdom is earthly, sensual, and of the devil. Where you find this wisdom, you will also find disorder and every evil practice.

The true wisdom, the one that comes from heaven is first pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. These are test that Christians may apply to their every act and thought.