

**Title:** Wisdom From Above

**Text:** James 3: 1-18

**Date:** June 29, 2008

**Place:** Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Princeton, New Jersey

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

Seek Not To Be Masters--Teachers, Rulers or Judges--Over Men

1. In the day in which James ministered this disease of the flesh spread throughout the land--men seeking a reputation as being the wisest among men.
2. The most common avenue men took to achieve this coveted praise was to oppress sinners with religious rules and regulations--some from God's word, others made up by men. Then when the sinner committed an offense, the self-appointed wise man would expose them to others.
3. The motive was ambition and pride--a desire to exalt oneself above others, in the eyes of men, so as to appear "more holy than any of their peers."

Matthew 23: 1: Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, 2: Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: 3: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. 4: For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. 5: But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, 6: And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7: And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. 8: But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9: And call no *man* your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10: Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, *even* Christ. 11: But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12: And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Therefore James writes, **My brethren, be not many masters...**

B. Knowing That The Greater the Judgment We Use Against Men, the Greater the Judgment God Will Use Against Us

James 2:10: For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all...12: So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. 13: For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

**James 3: 2: For in many things we offend all.**

A. Every Man is an Offender In Many Things and Offending in One Point Is To Break All The Law of God -  
-so then it is hypocritical of us to deny to others the mercy we need ourselves.

James 1:19: Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: 20: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Illustration: Let's Look At King David's Response To Nathan

2 Samuel 12: 1: And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. 2: The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks and herds: 3: But the poor *man* had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and

drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. 4: And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. 5: And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; (now listen to judgment without mercy) and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this *thing* shall surely die: 6: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. 7: And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man...13: And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

Nothing causes us to be merciful to our brethren like knowing our need of mercy.

**James 3: 2...If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.**

A. The Man Who Covets A Reputation As Being Wise--With His Ungracious Rebuke And Strictness Over Men--Reveals He Is Not Wise At All.

1. The word of those religious leaders whose tongues lashed out stern rebuke was an offense to God. The tongue betrays the sin of the heart. A man who is not in subjection to God in the tongue is not in subjection to God in the body either. The Lord said this very thing concerning the Pharisee's...**For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.**

James 1:26: 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.

B. The Wise Man Is The One Who Has Been Taught Of God, Who Knows When To Speak and When To Be Silent, Who Knows What To Speak and How To Speak So That God Might Be Glorified, The Saints Edified And The Gainsayers Silenced. Believers consider it a great fruit of God's grace to:

Colossians 4:5: Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. 6: Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

**Illustration:** Silence can be the wisest answer of all. Very often the Lord was silent when asked questions.

Matthew 27:12: And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. 13: Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? 14: And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

Next James gives illustrations of how powerful the tongue is.

**James 3: 3: Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4: Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. 5: Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!**

Like the small bit in the mouth of a horse and the small rudder on a ship our tongues are capable of turning the whole body--for good or for evil. Both the bit and the rudder are at the command of the Rider and the Captain of the ship. But the Holy Spirit says the man whose religion is vain can't bridle his tongue or his body. It is as if the tongue rules the man rather than the man ruling the tongue.

Next James describes the tongue of those whose desire it is to appear wise, to be master's over men.

**James 3: 6: And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7: For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.**

Man can tame wild beast but not his own tongue. The tongue can not be tamed by man, by religion, or by yoking a man--only God can subdue the carnal course of nature--and that by creating a new heart in righteousness and true holiness.

**James 3:9: Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10: Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. 11: Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12: Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.**

Guile is deceit. It appears righteous outwardly--to have a good motive for the glory of God--yet inwardly the motive is selfish--for personal gain. These next few verses could be looked at as the definition of guile:

1. David said of the "religious--wanna-be-masters" in his day:

Psalm 12:2: They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak...4: Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?... 8: The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

Psalm 50:16: But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?...19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. 20: Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.

Skip down to:

**James 3:14: But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15: This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 16: For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.**

A. The heart which desires to be a Master over men, is envious and striving for the glory that belongs to God alone. It brings forth confusion and every evil work through this little member called "the tongue."

- Bitter envy of God's glory said, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?
- Strife against the God of Truth said, "Ye shall not surely die:
- Earthly, sensual, devilish desire for Mastery over men said, "...God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."
- What confusion did it bring forth! What evil work did it bring forth!
- Is it our hearts desire to be Masters over men? "Glory not, and lie not against the truth, this is not heavenly wisdom, but earthly, sensual, devilish."
- A man whose heart is set on ruling men, binding men, having his own way--is a man whose heart is set having the throne which belongs to Christ the King alone.
- The Lord said to the double-hearted...Matthew 12:34: O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Now I want to take verses 13, 17 and 18 together.

**James 3: 13: Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom...17: But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18: And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.**

## A. Who is The Wise Man Endued With Knowledge Among Us? Who's Every Thought, Word and Deed Showed True Wisdom?

Isaiah 11: 1: And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; 3: And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 4: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5: And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

1Corinthians 2:7: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

Colossians 2: 3: In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Yet we read of him...Isaiah 53:2: For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him.

Earthly Wisdom thought "Surely, the Messiah would come into Jerusalem riding on a mighty steed, instead of a lowly asses colt." Christ our Wisdom showed in all his ways that his works were performed in MEEKNESS of Wisdom.

In truth--he that is greatest among US came to serve us. And he that abased himself to such a lowly condition--hath God also exalted and given him a name which above every name.

### 1. He is Pure Wisdom--

Psalm 24:3: Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? 4: He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

2. Christ is Peaceable, Gentle Wisdom--for the glory of his Father and the redemption of his people...though Isaiah 53:7: He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. 8: He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. 9: And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

- He is indeed the Prince of Peace.

### 3. Christ our Wisdom is Gentle

Isaiah 40:11: He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young.

**Illustration:** How patient he is with our unbelief--we say, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" He says, "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith?"

4. Christ our Wisdom as God's faithful servant was easily entreated--compliant--with the will of his Father.

He taught the disciples: Luke 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

Matthew 26:42: In the garden of Gethsemane, under the heavy burden of being made sin for his people, he prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

5. Christ our Wisdom is **full of mercy and good fruits**

He visited us orphans and widows in our affliction.

He gives ears to the deaf and sight to the blind

He feeds us the Bread from heaven--a feast of fat things.

He clothes us in his garments of righteousness

He hedges us about as a flaming fire to protect and keep us as the apple of his eye.

6. Christ our Wisdom is **without partiality, and without hypocrisy**

He shows no respect of persons based on outward appearances

He does not prefer or despise men, because of their being of this nation or that nation.

Or because they are circumcised, or not circumcised

Or because they are high or low, rich or poor, free or bound, male or female

There is no deceitfulness in our Savior.

What he does is right, it is holy, no man can question him--shall not the God of the whole earth do right--he loves freely without a cause in us.

- He could look upon one like Nathaniel and say, "An Israelite indeed in whom is no guile" because in himself--being Nathaniel's perfect standing before God--in himself there was no guile and therefore none in Nathaniel....When we read in **Revelation 14: These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. 15; And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God--**we rejoice in our Holy Lord and Savior because as he is so are we in this world.

**James 3: 18: And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace**

A. He is the PeaceMaker--He Made Peace Between His People and their offended God. And through The Holy Spirit The Seed That Is Sown In Our Heart Is Christ--He Sows the Fruit of Righteousness into our Hearts In Peace

1Corinthians 1:30 But of [God] are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

Proverbs 2:10: When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; 11: Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: 12: To deliver thee from the way of the evil *man*, from the man that speaketh froward things;

1. Consider this: Those things which are not peaceful concerning our salvation are the result of the wrath of man.

- His crucifixion--we did that.
- The great opposition at our time of conversion--we did that.
- The wrath and rejection during times of trial--we do that.

2. When He speaks words of comfort in our heart; when he comes in power to convert us his words are words of grace.

- Words of peace like divine election and everlasting love--*I have loved thee with an everlasting love*
- Particular redemption--*I lay down my life for the sheep*
- Irresistible grace--*In loving kindness have I drawn thee*
- Preservation by his power--*I'll never leave thee nor forsake thee*

3. Being born of his Spirit, being a partaker of the divine nature, Therefore His People Sow This Seed--the Gospel of Christ--In The Same Peaceful Manner as our Master.

1. Only the man whom God has conquered in grace is a perfect man before God. Both his tongue and his body is bridled, kept in subjection, by the sovereign power of God.

- Lacking wisdom we ask of God, that giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not
- Brought low we rejoice for then are we strong, dependant upon his grace alone
- By his gracious spirit within us, **James 1: 19: Believer's are swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.**
- A sinner saved by free grace has no desire to show partiality to men based on anything in the flesh--but seek to show discernment with mercy.
- We want to see his people clothed and fed even as he has fed and clothed us.

Why? Philippians 1: 11: Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

1John 3:3: And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

**Illustration:** Those False Prophets Who Entered the Church at Galatia, Desired to Be Masters of Morality, Masters of Rules and Regulations, Oppressive Masters, Over God's Saints. The result was confusion and many evil works within the church at Galatia. Paul's admonition to the saints was with kindness:

Galatians 5: 22:...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23: Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24: And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25: If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26: Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. 6: 1: Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (instead of placing heavy burdens on your brethren like the Judaizers sought to do, Paul says) 2: Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. 3: For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. 4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

So likewise, James instructs us:

**James 3:1: My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.**

- The truly wise man will not be viewed as wise by this world because true wisdom is submissive.
- The whole conduct of a wise man--all his works within the church and without--are performed in meekness.
- He is not insistent, or overbearing, or demanding to have his own way.
- Because wisdom does not seek its own good but the good of others.
- His rejoicing is in what Christ has worked in him through the Holy Spirit and his rejoicing is not in the praise from another.