

Series: James

Lesson #7

Title: Peaceful Sowing

Scripture: James 3: 1-18

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James has encouraged the believer to: believe on the Lord counting our various trials joy. He has urged us to endure the trial unto the end, waiting on the promise of life which the Lord has promised. Whether rich or poor, the believer can rejoice in whatever state we are in, knowing that the Lord is working these trials to keep us from trusting in the flesh. Let us not look to ourselves, but ask God for wisdom. We are warned not to justify our rebellion by blaming God. Our sin is our own. Rather, knowing that every good and perfect gift comes down from God, for example: of his own will begot he us with the word of truth, therefore let us be swift to hear the word of Lord, slow to speak, slow to be offended. Put off the old man and receive the engrafted word with meekness. In short, the Holy Spirit says through James that pure religion and undefiled is to visit the helpless in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, not unbridling the tongue, not showing a respect of persons. James has reminded us to not only hear this word but to be doers of it. He has reminded us that faith without these works is dead, of no profit.

Now we come to chapter three. Here the apostle cautions the believer against setting ourselves up as judges. He warns us against taking too much to ourselves in reproofing others: of being critical, overly severe.

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

#### BE NOT MANY MASTERS

This may have a reference to becoming pastors. But in context, it seems rather to apply to all brethren within the church.

Satan's ambition is to have the power which belongs to God. His enticement in the garden was "ye shall be as gods." This is the ambition of all men born in sin. By nature we desired to be the authority, the master, the judge over men, making ourselves to be as god. That old nature is yet with the believer. So we need to be reminded continually. The Lord Jesus warned us about this. He used the vainly religious scribes and Pharisees as the example.

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.

#### WE SHALL RECEIVE THE GREATER CONDEMNATION

If we take this word "master" to mean preachers-teachers then the "we" is taken to mean "preachers" shall receive the greater condemnation. It is true to whom much is given much is required. But when "we", any

of us who are brethren, condemn another a far greater cause for condemnation is in us. The meaning seems to be the same as what the Lord said in his sermon on the mount and what James has already said in this epistle.

Matthew 7: 1: Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2: For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

James 2: 13: For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

There may be a splinter in our brother's eye, but if we set ourselves up as masters over our brother—as if we were the sinless Master himself able to effect obedience as only he can—there is a whole beam in our own eye.

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

### WE OFFEND ALL

The word "offend" means stumble, fail.

First, when we exalt ourselves in such a haughty spirit we offend all, in the Godhead, even our Savior. We offend our heavenly Father—one is your Father. We offend our Lord, Jesus Christ Jesus, the Son of God—one is our Master even Christ Jesus the Son of God. And we offend the Holy Spirit who works obedience in the heart through the word of truth.

Romans 14:4: Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

Secondly, in many things we offend all. We must always consider what we are. At our best state we are vanity, full of offenses. Paul said it this way:

Galatians 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.

Notice that James includes himself. Someone might hear as I preach and in their own defense, say to themselves, "Who is he to say these things to me? Clay needs to take heed to what he is saying himself!" I do. As I prepare, the word of the Lord first rebukes me, lays me low. The Lord causes me to remember the sin that I am in my flesh. He makes me to rejoice that all my righteousness is Christ Jesus the Lord. Thus the Lord prepares me to deliver the message to you in the proper spirit. But this is why we should be careful not to reprove in an over-bearing spirit—we are yet full of sin, full of infirmities, and in many things we offend all.

### THE SAME IS A PERFECT MAN

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

First, there is no believer, perfect in his flesh, so as to never have a slip of the tongue. But it seems the meaning here is: if the tongue is bridled, it is evidence of the work of grace in the heart.

Luke 6:45: A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

James is saying the positive version of what he said before in a negative way. Before he said:

James 1: 26: If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

Here he says: If any man offend not in word (if his tongue is bridled so that it is not his habitual habit) this man's religion is true, and this man is able also to bridle the whole body. Where Christ reigns in the heart, the old man no longer has dominion. The old critical spirit is kept in check by the grace of our God working in us.

Secondly, the believer who is careful with his words is a mature believer—one grown in the grace of God. He is not a child in conduct, in his deportment, and in his speech. This is how the word "perfect" is used in scripture.

1 Corinthians 2:6: Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

### THE TONGUE HAS MUCH POWER

**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.**

Our tongues can do much good. When the believer's tongue is bridled by the grace of God, it is a small instrument used of God to do great things for perishing sinners, for the body of Christ. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God which is spoken with the tongues of his messengers. Through the use of sanctified tongues the Holy Spirit bears witness of the righteousness of God in the faithfulness of Christ our Lord. Through the preaching of the gospel with the tongues of his messengers, the Spirit of Christ creates life in dead sinners, converts and comforts and keeps his people.

Our tongues can also cause much damage.

**James 3: 5: Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 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.**

Proverbs 16:28 A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends;...26:22: The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly;...22:10: Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease;...26: 20: Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.

### ONLY GOD CAN TAME THE TONGUE OF SINNERS

**James 3: 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. 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.**

Remember that James is speaking to believers. What a convincing argument of the depravity of the old nature that is yet with us brethren. With the same tongue we bless God, even the Father. Then curse men who are made after his image. Brethren, can you say guilty? Can you agree with James that these things ought not so to be? Our own tongues make us to see our continual need of our Father's tender mercies. Only God in effectual, sovereign grace can bridle--tame--the tongue of his people. Brethren, let us continually ask God for wisdom. We must continually flee to our Savior for grace to speak as we ought to speak.

### CURSING COMES FROM THE FOUNTAIN OF OUR FLESH

**James 3: 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.**

If God has given us a new heart, why then do we do speak in this manner? Remember before what James said?

James 1: 13: Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 16: Do not err, my beloved brethren. 17: Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

We bless God from a heart made new in spirit and in truth, it is all to the glory of God. But the cursing is of us; we get all the glory for our sin. It is not hard to understand how this can be said of a believer if we know what we are in the flesh and what we are in the new nature. This is what James says next.

**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. 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.**

The Lord said in his sermon on the mount

Matthew 7: 37: But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

It is excess. The excess James says to put off:

James 1: 21: Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

### WISDOM FROM ABOVE

**James 3: 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.**

Wisdom God gives is:

Pure-- it is not of man, not earthly, carnal, or sensual, or devilish; God makes a pure heart within. We know that no good thing is in us and that every good and perfect gift is from God.

Then peaceable--Christ said the believer is a peacemaker. Christ has given us his peace--peace with God and peace with our brethren. The believer delights to cover the sins of our brethren, not uncover them, not unbridle our tongue upon them but to speak words of comfort.

Gentle and easy to be intreated--the opposite of the arrogant spirit, of the self-righteous spirit, that obstinate overbearing spirit. James said that our Father does not upbraid those who come to him--so it is with the believer in whom the Spirit of God abides.

Full of mercy and good fruits: those who have been shown mercy delight to show mercy, to visit and to help the helpless, to be a helper of one another's joy. The spirit within the believer is meek knowing that our fruit is of God, of Christ, of the Spirit.

Without partiality: not with respect of persons.

Without hypocrisy: it is not a show to be seen of men to gain favor with men; nor is it a show to gain favor with God.

### THE RIGHTEOUS SEED

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

All this is a description of our Savior who is the perfection of Wisdom, the good and perfect gift that came down from above from the Father of lights. Christ is the Seed sown of the Father, the righteous Branch who grew up a tender plant, a root out of dry ground. His was a life of peace. There was no guile in him. When he was reviled he reviled not again. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. In his faithfulness we behold the righteousness of God. He purged our sin and robed us in his righteousness. This peace was sown in peace and he made peace for us between his people and our God.

Isaiah 32:17: And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

This Seed was sown into our hearts, not by might nor by power, but by his Spirit, through the preaching of the gospel. The effect his righteousness has upon us, brethren, is quietness and assurance forever. Therefore true believers go forth sowing this peaceable fruit of righteousness in peace. Not as lord's over God's heritage but peacefully as we wait on our Husbandman to break up the fallow ground, to plant the Word in the hearts of sinners. By his grace, we sow in peace. And by his effectual grace making the word not return void, we make peace.

Proverbs 12:18: There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise *is* health....15:4: A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life: but perverseness therein *is* a breach in the spirit...25:11: A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver. 12: As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, *so is* a wise reprovcr upon an obedient ear.