**Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**James Chapter 3**

**Verse 1**: *“My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”*  The ASV 1901 and the NKJV translate this verse in a way that is clearer than the KJV:

ASV 1901: *“Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment.”*

NKJV: *“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.”*

The word “master” in the KJV means “teacher”.  James is certainly not discouraging qualified teachers from teaching.  The Bible show us that we are to grow to be able to teach (Hebrews 5:12-14).  James is showing the problem with teachers who are lacking in knowledge and he also points out that teachers will be judged more heavily for errors they may teach.  A false teacher not only leads himself in error, but also those whom he is teaching (II Peter 2:1-2).  In a like manner, one who studies to know the truth can lead themselves and others to Heaven (I Timothy 4:16).  It is very important not teach until we learn ourselves, so that we do not just use a bunch of empty talk and let our desire to teach others blind us to our inability to teach (I Timothy 1:6-7).

In teaching we must also never teach what we ourselves will not live and obey (Romans 2:21).  The old saying: “Gospel Preachers live in glass houses” is true.  In light of Matthew 5:14-16 anyone living their life right should not have a problem with that fact.  A teacher must also take into consideration that he will be judged not only for what he does teach, but what he will not teach (Ezekiel 3:18 and Acts 20:26-27).

**Verse 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.”* James taught Them that they were stumbling.  If any man does not stumble he is perfect.  Perfection is what God expects (Matthew 5:48 and II Corinthians 7:1).  For this cause we must continue to examine ourselves (II Corinthians 13:5), as did Paul continually (I Corinthians 9:27).  It is very clear throughout the N.T. that we can fall away (I Corinthians 10:12, Galatians 5:4, and Revelation chapters 2-3).  It is our recognition of our wrongs, repentance (Luke 13:3; 5), and confession of those sins that allow Christians to know Heaven will be their home (I John 1:7-9).

**Introduction to verses 3-12**

Notice the few following passages throughout the Bible that speak towards the danger in what and how we speak: Psalms 39:1, Psalms 52:2-4, Proverbs 18:6-8, Proverbs 18:21, II Thessalonians 3:11-12, and I Timothy 5:13.  The Bible tells us not to allow our tongues to speak bad and evil things: Psalms 34:13-14, Ephesians 4:29, and Colossians 3:8.  The Bible does show the good things the tongue can do: Psalms 19:14, Psalms 51:15, Psalms 109:30, Matthew 10:32-33, Romans 10:10, Matthew 28:19, Titus 2:1, I Peter 4:11, and Ephesians 5:19.  We must heed to what we tell our children: “be careful what you say” (Proverbs 21:23).

**Verse 3**: *“Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.”*Here James uses an illustration to show that the mouth of a horse controls the whole horse’s body.  The implication is great in how our mouths have so much control over us.  If our religion seems true, but we cannot guide our tongue then our religion is in vain (James 1:26).

**Verses 4-5**: *“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.  Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!”*  Ships large in size, but they are guided by a small rudder.  This leads us into verse 5 which shows us how our little tongues can do large things.  Our tongues can talk big.  Then James states: “Behold, how great a matter [forest] a little fire kindleth [sets on fire]”.  One little match or one little piece of wood can cause a huge fire.  The tongue is a little member that can cause great damage.  Teachers must keep this in mind.  For example, when teaching a Bible class I often have to be careful of not only what I say, but what direction I allow the class to go from the comments of others (II Timothy 2:23 and Titus 3:9).

**Verse 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.”*  The Bible affirms that the tongue is a place of destruction.  Fire consumes and destroys as it spreads.  The tongue does this as well (Proverbs 16:27).  The tongue can defile our whole person.  Then James says it can catch fire to the course [wheel] of nature, pointing to us that our tongue can affect all parts of our lives.  The unrestrained tongue is compared finally in the verse to the fires of hell [Gehenna].  The tongue can truly spark a lot of destruction.

**Verses 7-8**:  *“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: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”*  Man has been able to tame wildlife, but the tongue is much more difficult to control.  Notice the following words of wisdom: (Proverbs 13:3) “He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.”

**Verses 9-12**: *“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and 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 ought not so to be.  Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.”* The best explanation of these passages was given by our Lord Jesus Christ: (Matthew 12:33-36) “Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.  O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.  A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.  But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

**Introduction to verses 13-18**

True wisdom comes from God (Proverbs 2:1-6).  However, we must be willing to listen to and learn from the word God has given us (Proverbs 1:5).  God alone is wise (I Timothy 1:17).  Will we learn from His wisdom?

**Verse 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.”*Here James asked a rhetorical question of which he would later provide the answer.  True wisdom is not found in one’s words, but in our works.  We can profess to know God all day long, but our works will show our faith and obedience (James 2:21-23 and Titus 1:16).  To provide our works with meekness of wisdom is to allow our works to be done without an arrogant disposition.  Christ is our perfect example of meekness.

**Verses 14-16**: *“But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.  This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.  For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”* If a person is full of envy [jealousy] and has a heart that desires faction they certainly are not able to do that which is right.  That person is guilty of the works of the flesh known in the KJV as emulations and strife (Galatians 5:20).  These actions are worldly actions, not spiritual actions.  Those which do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21).  People of envy and strife bring about division (I Corinthians 3:3).  We are told to avoid such things (Titus 3:9).  These things are not from God, they are earthly and devilish.  James says where these things exist there is every evil work.  That is plain and clear.

**Verse 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.”*  The wisdom that comes from God is pure, unlike the sinfulness of the devilish wisdom that surrounds envy and strife.  We must learn to think differently if we will walk away from the worldly wisdom we know and gain godly wisdom (Romans 12:1-2 and I John 2:15-17).  This worlds wisdom is foolishness with God (I Corinthians 3:19).  God’s wisdom is peaceable [brings peace / relates to peace].  The contrast is that the wisdom of the world brings strife.  The wisdom we can have from above is easy to be intreated [willing to yield].  When we accept godly wisdom we will submit, opposed to the worldly wisdom of disobedience.  Godly people recognize the duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13).  Wisdom that comes from above is full or mercy and good fruits.  God’s wisdom is without partiality [uncertainty] and is not of hypocrisy.  The wisdom of this world is uncertain and is surely full of hypocrisy.  For example; people of the United States are supposed to value life and freedom, but the unborn has no freedom and is not valued as life.  Teachers of God’s word need the wisdom from above not from this earth.

**Verse 18**:  *“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”*  The truly wise person will not sow division, but peace.  The result of us having the wisdom from above will be good fruits for the Lord.  The peace we will sow will come from the seed of the Gospel we plant in those who will obey.  The world will always be divided.  Christians will always be divided from the world.  Light and darkness are naturally divided (Colossians 1:13).  The Bible shows us how to have the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3-6).

**James Chapter 3 Study Questions**

1. In verse 1 did James discourage people from teaching the Gospel of Christ?

2. Give four passages that should cause us to consider how we talk.

3. What control does our tongue have over our bodies?

4. What comparison is made with the tongue and fire?

5. What is the major difference between the wisdom from above and the wisdom of this earth?