

The Book of James Part 7 – James 3:1-5

We continue our study today in the book of James chapter 3. Last time we left off, we had completed chapter 2. While you're getting your Bible, let me remind you to look at our Website, www.LRWM.org. On the Website, you'll be able to download other broadcasts of "It's a Good Life," and you'll be able to download this broadcast on James chapter 3. Now, we're not going to get through the entire chapter today, but we're going to look at several verses.

Let me remind you that you can also write to me, Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, Florida 34731. And it's a joy each week that I can come to you and share with you the Word of God.

Today, by way of introduction, let me say this. James begins this chapter, that's chapter 3 of James, with a caution against many becoming teachers. In view of the stricter judgment that awaits teachers, that is, teachers who are teaching and preaching the Word of God, these teachers should be sure they possess the maturity and self-control necessary to control the tongue. And James then provides in this chapter a series of illustrations to demonstrate the power and danger of the tongue and how we can easily be inconsistent in our use of it. We see that in James 3:1-12.

Perhaps some sought to be teachers in this early church so as to appear wise; yet, James writes that wisdom and understanding are to be shown by one's conduct done in meekness. James defines the contrast, the difference between two kinds of wisdom here.

First, there is wisdom which is earthly that causes confusion and every evil thing. Secondly, there is a wisdom which is heavenly

that produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness. We see this in James 3:13-18.

Well, now, let's look at the book of James chapter 3, and in verses 1-12 it speaks of the tongue. James 3:1 talks about teachers. He seems to be asking a question. "Teacher, are you sure?" Verse 1 says, *My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.* In other words, I would ask the question today: "Teachers, are you sure?" And all are not teachers according to verse 1 of James chapter 3. Teachers are held to a higher standard.

If you look in Luke 12:48, it says, *But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

And John 1:38 says, *Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? Well, teachers, even in Jesus' day, were held to a higher standard, and in John 3:10, Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? And, of course, that's speaking of Nicodemus who came to Jesus and he was wondering what can a person do to inherit eternal life, to have everlasting life. And, of course, Jesus told him, "You must be born again." And then Nicodemus didn't seem to understand, and Jesus said, "You're supposed to be a teacher. You're supposed to understand the things of God, and yet, you don't understand what I'm saying?"*

Well, that's the way it is today when we have teachers who stand and claim to be men of God and they teach something contrary to what God has said in his book in the Word of God.

Now, in Jewish custom, a rabbi or a master was a teacher of the Jews. This teacher would be a well-respected, learned man. When the Jews received Christ as Savior, they quite naturally regarded anyone who was a teacher of the things of God as an important person. And they were evidently those saved Jews, whom we're reading about as James is writing here, evidently, saved Jews whom James was referring to in James 3:1. They had a great desire to be revered as teachers of the Word of God, and I believe that what James is trying to say is that not all saved people are teachers in the sense of being a teacher in the local assembly.

Notice with me in I Corinthians 12:28. It says, *And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*

In Ephesians 4:11, it says, *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.* I believe James is saying here, "Do not attempt to do something that you are not qualified to do." Evidently, there were those people who wanted to have the preeminence in this local church that James is speaking to here. There were some who wanted to have the preeminence, but the Word of God is sure. The Word of God gives direction, and the Word of God says that all are not teachers.

In fact, in II Timothy 2:15-16, it says, *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. ¹⁶But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.* James is telling us

that all are not teachers, and if you want to be a teacher, if you simply want to be a teacher, that does not make you a teacher of the Word of God. God calls teachers, pastors, preachers, evangelists, and so forth, as we've already read. So everyone is not a teacher.

Now, on the other side, you're a teacher that in the sense that, when you witness to someone, you are actually teaching them the Word of God in the sense of helping them to understand that they need to be saved. They're lost; they need a Savior. And in that sense, it's being a teacher, but not standing in the pulpit teaching or in a Sunday school room teaching. The Word of God is actually very clear on this, simply because you want to be a teacher standing in front of other people does not make you qualified to be that teacher. You must be called of God.

Now, notice James 3:2-4, and we'll read verse 2 first here. We see under these verses 2-4 controlling power. Verse 2 says, *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 all stumble, according to what James is saying here in the first part of James 3:2. He says, "For in many things we all offend." We all have problems at times. We all stumble. And if a man does not stumble in word, he is mature and able to control what he does, according to the rest of that verse.

And then we read in verse 3, *Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.* James is saying we control a horse with a small thing in his mouth called a "bit." In Psalm 32:9, it says, *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.*

In other words, we need to have our mouth controlled by the Word of God. We need to watch what we say. We need to be careful. The words that come out of our mouths can offend. It can hurt, and you've heard the old saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Well, that's really not true. Words can cut. Words can cause people problems, and I'm sure if you've been around for any length of time, you've either experienced that or maybe you've been guilty of hurting someone and you need to ask God, "Forgive me for that and help me not to do that. Lord, control my tongue."

James 3:4: *Behold also the ships...* Now he continues on here about something. *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.* Huge ships are driven by fierce winds but are controlled by small rudders, according to James here. And then we read in verse 5, *Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!*

If I would look at these verses and title these verses 5 and 6, I would say, "Danger, tongue." We've got to be careful with that tongue. The tongue is small and it exercises great power. The tongue will overemphasize possessions or accomplishments. In other words, we embellish. And let's face it. Sometimes there are lies that are forthcoming because we want to build ourselves up.

James says, "Look, a small match can cause a whole forest to burn." I remember growing up I would hear the commercial Smokey Bear: "Only you can prevent forest fires." And they would show that little match that would strike and burn on there. Well, that's what James is saying about the tongue. He's talking about the tongue here. It's small, but it can cause

much trouble. "Look, a small match can cause a whole forest to burn." And you see that in verse 5 in the last part of that verse.

Now we look at verse 6. He says, *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.* If the tongue is not controlled, it's destructive as a small match. It's extremely sinful if it's not controlled. It's able to destroy, and "world" here signifies a mass, a great collection, an abundance. Notice what it says there: *And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.* It's something that is an abundance. It causes great harm if it's not controlled.

We're going to pick up here in verse 6 of chapter 3 the next time as we get together, and I pray that today you know Jesus as your Savior. If you do not know Him, remember, it's not enough to know about Him but you must receive Him into your heart if you want to go to Heaven. *For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved, and that means you if you've never trusted Him as your Savior. You need to do that right now.*

"Lord Jesus, come into my heart. I receive you as my Savior."

If you are saved you need to be living for Him today. Ask Him to help you and guide you in the path that you need to be taking as a child of God.

Until the next time when you hear me say, "It is a good life," may the Lord bless you richly is my prayer.