

**CCF Study Notes**  
**Tuesday 7 AM Study**  
**24 October 2006**  
**James 3**

Before beginning to read from James let us spend time in prayer, considering the victory which God gives through faith in Jesus Christ. Let us ask God to do the following:

1. **Strengthen** and protect those who teach in our midst, that they might not stumble in words,
2. **Control** our words and use our words to lead us in right paths,
3. **Reveal** to us all the evil that is inherent in our words,
4. **Tame** our tongues that they not spread poison,
5. **Make** us faithful and consistent in our words, always praising and glorifying God,
6. **Discern** human wisdom by its source, nature and fruit, and
7. **Love** God's wisdom, embracing its qualities, eschewing conterefts, and yeilding fruit leading to peace.

God's word and God's wisdom differs from human words and wisdom. Teachers should bring God's wisdom but often stumble in their words. Our words often take us places we don't want to go. When we begin to boast we head down the wrong path. Sometimes we simply don't understand the force behind our words. Though many animals have been domesticated and trained the tongue, with its propensity for hurt and evil is not so easily tamed. The issue is that we are inconsistent in our words – sometimes cursing and sometimes blessing God. How inappropriate! Those who have and teach God's wisdom show it in their conduct. When we are motivated by envy and self-seeking our conduct demonstrates the truth as we boast and lie. The wisdom we share is earthly, sensual and demonic. The result is confusion and the proliferation of evil. The wisdom from above reveals itself in completely different motives and conduct. Partiality and hypocrisy have no place in the life of one who brings God's wisdom. The resulting fruit is righteousness sown in peace that makes peace instead of division.

(3:1-2) Teachers are a vital part of the body of Christ. But there is a basic issue with all people who would teach God's word: those who teach God's word receive stricter judgment. The issue is that our conduct often contradicts God's word. So teachers stumble in conduct and in word. Many of us are called to be teachers – if only in the confines of our families or committed relationships. Does our conduct always exemplify God's word? Do we sometimes stumble in our words or water down God's word so as to avoid the guilt arising from our own disobedience?

(3:3-5a) Our words have a way of directing our lives. We make promises and claims that we cannot live up to. Our mouths write checks our body cannot cash. We find ourselves in bondage simply because we foolishly and proudly promised to do something that was far beyond our ability. We become hypocrites when we represent ourselves to be something we are not. The result is that we enter a kind of bondage where we are going places that we never intended to go and are doing things we never wanted to do – all because of something we said.

(3:5b-6) Too often we do not know the power of our words or the damage they are causing. Our words are like sparks that start a massive blaze. The words that seem so sweet and clever are actually evil. It is the tongue that defiles the rest of our body by speaking evil words. We set the world ablaze around us because our tongues are set on fire by hell itself. What an indictment! Dare we remain ignorant of the harm our words have brought?

(3:7-8) At this very point many people get into trouble. People think that somehow they can tame their tongue and control their words. Yet even the most controlled and civilized speakers can do a world of harm. One need only consider what happens daily in many of the courtrooms in our land. Violence is done and justice is perverted by fine sounding words offered in a civil, respectful, disciplined tone. Our words are often deadly poison. Like unruly children they are released randomly against a world unprepared for their venom. Is a sharp tongue a good thing?

(3:9-12) Nor can the problem be solved merely by using our tongues to praise God. Yes, this is a good thing to do. How inappropriate is it to use our words to praise God one moment, then in the next moment to use our words to cut down our brother or sister? It just isn't right, because God hears everything that comes out of our mouth. The praise is rendered meaningless by our action in hurting our brother. A spring produces bad water or good water. A tree produces fruit after its kind. So our evil words reveal the darkness within us – what we really are.

(3:13-16) How do we know if a teacher is wise? James suggests that we look at their conduct. Wisdom will reveal itself in the meekness of a man's works. The issue starts with the motivation of our hearts. If we are motivated by bitter envy and self-seeking our works and our words will show it. We will boast and lie concerning the truth to avoid the guilt of our own sins. We will bring earthly wisdom, for our guilt would be revealed in the light of heavenly wisdom. This wisdom focusses on things below, on good feelings, and on things that lead to temptation, slavery, and destruction. Where the motive is envy and self-seeking the fruit will be confusion and all kinds of evil. Are we testing those who would be our teachers?

(3:17-18) What kind of wisdom should a teacher bring? The wisdom should come from God. Teaching should be pure and free of sensuality and sin. Good teaching brings peace and is merciful in every way. God's word is gentle and willing to yield to others – not strident and overly dogmatic. Good teaching produces good fruit. When God's word is taught in God's way it is available to all – there is no partiality. God's word is taught without hypocrisy. Above all, God's word is the fruit of righteousness sown in peace by those who make peace. Are we bringing the peace of God by our teaching? If so, then we are bringing God's word.

Many boast of the teaching of some particular man, believing they are somehow distinguished for having received it. God's word brings unity and peace among brothers and sisters. Satan's word brings division, hurt, impurity, and destruction. Lord help us to see the difference!

P.S. Recordings and notes for these studies are available at <http://www.jstoker.name> . A podcast is available at <http://feeds.feedburner.com/CCF-T-Podcast> .