



## James Chapter Three

### Summary of Chapter Three

Firstly James establishes that nobody is perfect and that all believers make mistakes. Those who are called to be teachers will be judged more severely for the mistakes they make, especially those who take on the role without being called to it by God.

James provides examples of how small things can produce extreme results and then likens the tongue to a small but powerful organ that can be such a danger if it is not kept under control and then used wisely.

The tongue makes great boasts; it also is used to praise God, curse men and corrupt human hearts. This, James says, is unacceptable for a follower of Jesus. James also calls the tongue a restless evil that cannot be tamed in the way man has managed to tame wild animals.

James challenges his readership to show the fruit of their supposed wisdom, but then states it is actually wisdom to do evil or fulfil selfish ambition. Such wisdom is not from God but earthly and of the devil. Such wisdom can only lead to dissention and division.

James calls on them to ask God for his wisdom which will bring peace, harmony and produces good fruit, a harvest of righteousness for God.

### **VI James 3:1-4:12 - The Sin of Dissension in the Community**

This section, the lengthiest of the letter, has an ABA pattern: A, danger of the tongue (vv.1-12); B, the solution, wisdom from above (vv.13-18); A, danger of the tongue revisited (James 4:1-12). The main issue is the problem of dissension (James 4:1), and slander (v.9 and James 4:11), perhaps beginning with the leaders and teachers (v.1), but also involving the whole body of the church (v.6).

#### **VI.a James 3:1-12 - Taming the tongue**

James establishes the general principle that small things can cause great results (vv.1-5a), then more specifically applies this to the power of the tongue to destroy

(vv.5b-12).

<sup>1</sup> Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

### James 3:1

Teachers were important in the early church: <<They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer>> (Acts 2:42), <<If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach>> (Romans 12:7), <<And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues>> (1 Corinthians 12:28), <<It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers>> (Ephesians 4:11), and those who were ambitious sought teacher status for the wrong reasons. Those who are not called to this ministry should not try to impose their own understanding on other believers.

However, with greater responsibility comes greater expectations by God: <<That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked>> (Luke 12:47-48), <<Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you>> (Hebrews 13:17), and teachers will be judged more strictly, since they are accountable for more, especially to ensure they do not lead anyone astray. The prophets had warned of this: <<Youths oppress my people, women rule over them. O my people, your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path>> (Isaiah 3:12), and: <<Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the Lord. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the Lord>> (Jeremiah 23:32), with Jesus confirming the likely judgement on teachers who do not teach the truth of the Gospel: <<And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck>> (Mark 9:42).

<sup>2</sup> We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

### James 3:2

We all stumble. Paul confirms that everyone is a sinner: <<This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God>> (Romans 3:22-23), and King Solomon, at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem,

acknowledges that God's people will do so again: <<**When they sin against you – for there is no one who does not sin**>> (1 Kings 8:48a).

In what he says. A person's words reflect his character and thus are a key to his whole being. James emphasises the importance of good works but also acknowledges that all Christians stumble, a metaphor for sinning, which translates the Greek *ptaiō*, which some translations have as falls. James' call for good works, therefore, must not be seen as expecting perfection.

In many ways. There are so many pitfalls for believers to fall into, some may be obvious, some are hidden and some do not even seem to be stumbling blocks at all, especially those where self-reliance and overconfidence come into a person's life when all seems to be going well.

Never at fault. It would take a foolish or arrogant person to make such a claim. It is unlikely that any true believer would do so as that would show a distinct lack of humility and the gift of grace in a believer's life.

When James says that a person who can control his mouth is a perfect man, he probably has absolute perfection in view. It is a perfection, however, that will be attainable only in heaven. Still, believers should always seek to grow in holiness, and to do all they can to avoid the pitfalls that are always waiting for the unwary.

**The Jewish understanding of perfection was not what western society may understand it to mean. For them perfection was more about continual growth and improvement in their life in general and their walk with God in particular.**

Keep his whole body in check. It will soon come to light that the part of the body that needs to be kept in check is the tongue. This is similar to what Jesus taught on other parts of the body that put the whole in jeopardy: <<**But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell**>> (Matthew 5:28-30).

<sup>3</sup> When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. <sup>4</sup> Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.

### James 3:3-4

Bits in the mouths of horses and the very small rudder on a ship are examples of very small things that control large objects. It would be a wise man who would bridle his mouth in order to control his tongue. King David had that wisdom: <<**I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred**>> (Psalm 39:1-2 KJV), where the NIV prefers muzzled. The whole essence of this passage is not so

much steering but maintaining control over the tongue, which has potential to do so much damage when uncontrolled.

The two analogies used here are to do with steering and this is not a coincidence, for James is alluding to how the issue of controlling the tongue links in with how a person steers their whole conduct in life.

James starts the message off on a positive note, for speech has great potential for good but he goes on to show just how much damage an uncontrolled tongue can do in so many different circumstances. In essence, James is saying that a positive application can and should be made; that learning godly ways of speaking will help believers to learn godliness in other ways. Therefore the issue of speech should not be put off while a believer works on other areas of behaviour. If a believer is striving for purity, i.e. to be Christ-like, here is a valuable strategy - start with the tongue!

Turn the whole animal. Likewise, as already alluded to, if a person can control what they say, they will have control over much more of their lives, but to do so they would need to get their heart right with God, and their spirit in tune with the Holy Spirit.

The pilot here refers typically to the ship's captain rather than the role of a modern pilot who would help steer a ship into port or through a particularly treacherous navigational seaway.

### James 3:5-12

In the following passages, James' predominant emphasis is more negative, warning that judgment is real and that all believers fall into error at some point, intending that they should humbly repent of their impure speech. He dwells then on the potential for evil rather than the potential for good with the tongue.

Three dangers are specified:

- The tongue spreads evil (vv.5-6).
- The tongue is impossible to tame (vv.7-8).
- The tongue makes believers liable to judgment (vv.9-12).

<sup>5</sup> Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.

<sup>6</sup> The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

### James 3:5-6

The tongue, one of the smaller organs of the body, has a similar control over everything a person is and does, similar to the analogy of the bit or rudder discussed in vv.3-4. Here it is described as being as dangerous as a naked flame in the midst of a pile of combustible material. It seems to be the origin of sin, for from it sin comes in abundance in many instances, although in reality it stems from the heart. King Solomon gives sound advice: <<***Do not let your mouth lead you***

*into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, “My vow was a mistake.” Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?>> (Ecclesiastes 5:6).*

Makes great boasts. Pride, envy and selfish ambition in v.14, are major causes of the misuse of the tongue. These great boasts no doubt come from those who are producing their works without having faith as the interlocutor stated in the previous chapter: *<<But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do>>* (James 2:18). This can come from a lack of self-control, but is also a sign of an insincere Christian. Those who truly believe have a different mindset from the world as called for by Paul: *<<Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will>>* (Romans 12:2).

In a progressive series, framed by the imagery of fire, the tongue is presented with all its terrible potential. The small spark is the proud boast or other careless use of the tongue, and the great forest fire is the resulting conflagration. James has used imagery to great effect in his letter so far. Here, he could have used the analogy of a small tool like an axe that is used to chop down large trees. However, that would indicate individual instances of destruction, whereas the imagery of a spreading forest fire gives a much more dramatic image of just how dangerous the tongue can be! The destructive spreading that James has in mind is no doubt the damage caused in church by gossiping, slanderous accusations and continual criticism, either of individuals or the church in general. The apostle John writes of a specific instance of this type of behaviour within one of his churches, in his third epistle: *<<I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church>>* (3 John 9-10).

A world of evil or unrighteousness. The tongue represents and puts into expression all the wickedness of the world. This evil can have a devastating impact among the parts of the body, i.e. the church, as Paul confirms: *<<I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf>>* (1 Corinthians 10:15-17), and: *<<It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ>>* (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The whole course of his life, literally the cycle of existence, likely means the ups and downs of life. The tongue turns upside down every aspect of life in the community as well as in the individual. James is also indicating not just the damage the tongue can do to others but also to the believer himself. If he gossips

no one will trust him; if he slanders or complains, people will avoid him; and worst of all if he sins through lack of control of his speech, he will almost certainly fall into sin in other areas of his life as well, i.e. it corrupts the whole person.

Set on fire by hell. Evil speech destroys because it comes from Satan himself. The antidote to this can be seen in the imagery of Pentecost: <<***They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them***>> (Acts 2:3). Therefore, if believers allow themselves to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, they will be able to resist the temptations of the devil to loose their tongue inappropriately.

<sup>7</sup> All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, <sup>8</sup> but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

### James 3:7-8

This is a saying that remains true and in evidence today. All kinds of animals have been tamed and even domesticated that were once wild, whether as pets, for entertainment or for food, but the way some people speak to or about others remains just as destructive as ever. King David cries out to God: <<***Rescue me, O Lord, from evil men; protect me from men of violence, who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up war every day. They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's; the poison of vipers is on their lips***>> (Psalm 140:1-3), and speaking generally of all people, Paul quotes from another of David's writings: <<***Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit***>> (Psalm 5:9). Such talk is very damaging to those who are on the receiving end and if those speaking the words claim to be Christians then they are damaging the reputation of God by doing so.

The tongue is a restless evil, untameable because it is inherently unstable and therefore, even when brought under some sort of control, it remains prone to further evil. This requires that a believer be ever vigilant over his tongue, never thinking he has successfully altered the nature of his speech.

Further, James advises that the tongue is full of deadly poison, again showing what a deadly evil he sees it to be.

From all three images: wild animals, restless evil, and deadly poison, the application is the same - discipline. Self-discipline is to be practiced actively and diligently, in recognition of the constant danger. It takes discipline to be: <<***quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry***>> (James 1:19b). And, looking ahead to the next verse, it will mean a believer controlling what he says to stop verbally abusing people who are made in God's own image.

<sup>9</sup> With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

### James 3:9-10

It is both hypocrisy and folly to praise God, our Lord and Father, during a worship service and then, after the service, to curse someone, who like them, is made in God's likeness: <<*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them*>> (Genesis 1:26-27). If the curse implies the common practice of invoking the name of God against the person, then this is doubly heinous.

Praise uses the Greek word eulogeo, which is high praise to God used also in the LXX for David's praise: <<*Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits*>> (Psalm 103:1-2).

My brothers, this should not be. James' concluding statement speaks loud and clear for itself! Some scholars have written that James is using the strongest possible Greek, spoken with all the force of protesting condemnation. James is not just addressing the contradictory product of the tongue of praise and cursing, but he is warning that the outcome will be divine judgement unless the believer takes positive action to change his ways.

<sup>11</sup> Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? <sup>12</sup> My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

### James 3:11-12

In three illustrations of ridiculous natural contrasts, James drives home the point that blessing God, while cursing his people, should be seen as totally unnatural and cannot be countenanced in any way.

Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? If a person claims to be a disciple of Jesus they cannot behave in the way an unbeliever behaves. The two lives are incompatible and mutually exclusive.

Springs were the key to survival in dry Judæa and the surrounding region, and the placement of villages and towns tended to depend on their presence.

Can a fig tree bear olives. Just as no tree would produce two kinds of fruit, so also a true believer would not produce both blessings of God and curses toward others. Only the first should ever be in evidence.

Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. By placing the analogy in what may at first appear to be the reverse order is showing believers that a corrupt heart will not produce anything that is good, and such a person should spend some time soul searching to determine the true nature of their own faith.

All of these examples clearly demonstrate that there can be no contradictions within the true faith that believers are to maintain in God through Christ.

Those who clearly and consistently display other characteristics in the way they choose to live their lives have probably never submitted themselves to Christ and therefore cannot claim to be his. They will face the condemnation that goes with their choices.

## VI.b James 3:13-18 - Two Kinds of Wisdom

These verses could be called ‘the tale of two cities’ – the realm of wisdom by framing the passage in v.13 and v.17, and contrasting it with that of selfish ambition.

The wisdom from heaven leads to peace and similar positive attributes, while the earthly wisdom, i.e. that which comes from within a person’s own heart, is of the devil, has nothing good in it and leads to disorder.

<sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

### James 3:13

Who is wise. This is a double-edged sword. Those who are pretending to be wise in their own strength and for their own ends will be convicted of their folly by James’ questioning. Those who are genuinely seeking wisdom from God will be encouraged to accept James’ teaching and seek true wisdom from God.

Wise and understanding, deeds done in the humility. Wisdom for James is not merely intellectual but also behavioural, there has to be an evidential product of its existence and appropriate application.

Humility that comes from wisdom. Humility, the Greek word *prautēs*, means meekness but is translated as gentleness in the list of fruit of the Spirit: <<***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law***>> (Galatians 5:22-23), and it was considered weakness by the Greeks, but Jesus elevated it to a primary Christian virtue: <<***Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth***>> (Matthew 5:5), and: <<***Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls***>> (Matthew 11:29), both of which use the same word. Humility comes not from cowardice or passivity, but rather from trusting God, and therefore being set free from anxious self-promotion.

Humility is the character trait underlying the Christian behaviour, as described in the entire letter; this is the trait James wants his readers to cultivate if they would wish to take James’ teaching to heart. What James is saying in his letter is that a believer requires humility in order to be teachable by the Word; he needs humility to then put the Word into action; and he needs humility to properly interact either with other believers or indeed anyone else, i.e. to love his neighbour.

Show it by his good life. For many people a good life may mean success, pleasure, affluence, social status, financial security and other such trappings of the world that normally go with its imagery. For others though it may be taken as a life full

of moral goodness that can be attained with or without wealth. There is no conflict between being a disciple of Christ and having a pleasurable life, as Jesus confirmed: *<<The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full>>* (John 10:10). Disciples of Christ can have an extremely fulfilling life, even if it seems packed with trials and suffering of the sort already discussed in the letter.

**This is not the Good Life that was portrayed in the popular British sitcom that ran in the mid 1970's for that had the key theme of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, whereas the Christian life is one of acknowledging total reliance on God.**

Deeds. Once more James is not claiming that salvation comes through doing good works but that they are a product of a life lived in genuine faith to God, which the wisdom spoken of here will help to cement.

<sup>14</sup> But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

#### James 3:14

Bitter envy and selfish ambition are the antithesis of true wisdom as characterised by the humility or meekness of v.13. They are also far different from the righteous character of a jealous God: *<<You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me>>* (Exodus 20:5), *<<Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God>>* (Exodus 34:14), *<<For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God>>* (Deuteronomy 4:24), and: *<<Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?">>* (James 4:5 NASB), who appropriately yearns for his own honour and the loyal devotion of his people, while the envious yearn for what does not belong to them.

Selfish ambition is a divisive willingness to split the group in order to achieve personal power and prestige. Paul refers to this unpleasant attribute as well: *<<The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains>>* (Philippians 1:17), and: *<<Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves>>* (Philippians 2:3). Elsewhere, it is translated rivalry in some translations: *<<But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God>>* (Galatians 5:18-21 ESV).

Do not boast about it. Having the traits described are ungodly and anyone who is or wishes to become a believer in God needs to come before him in repentance. To openly boast of such things could only mean the person has a total disregard for God as his Saviour.

In your hearts. James recognises there is a difference between what many people portray their lives to be outwardly and what is actually going on in their hearts. Such people need to be aware of what this means for them: <<***But, O Lord Almighty, you who judge righteously and test the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you I have committed my cause***>> (Jeremiah 11:20), <<***Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God***>> (1 Corinthians 4:5), and: <<***For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart***>> (Hebrews 4:12).

Deny the truth does not need to be seen in the light of false teaching as warned against by others such as Paul, Peter, Jude and even Jesus. James problem is not that they are spreading false doctrine. Instead, he is addressing the problem of arrogance, which can be present even when correct doctrine is being taught. By not doing what the Word of God says, not speaking in the way it commands and not interacting with others with all humility, then a believer is denying the truth of the Gospel: <<***"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me"***>> (John 18:37). An alternative interpretation of this phrase would be the person is denying the truth of their own depravity, self righteousness or desire for self control. This self-delusion is a dangerous game to play with so much at stake i.e. that person's eternal destiny.

<sup>15</sup> Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.

### James 3:15

Wisdom, come down from heaven. By association, the opposite of what James is saying is that true wisdom can only have divine origin. The wisdom claimed by some people is of themselves and is being used for their own selfish ambitions.

Earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. James describes worldly behaviour in terms that progress from bad to worse, recalling the list in vv.5b-6. Such behaviour is ultimately earthly, absolutely sensual as opposed to spiritual, and its origin is in the cosmic powers of darkness.

Paul warns against setting new Christians in positions of leadership or authority in the church to guard against such temptations: <<***He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil***>> (1 Timothy 3:6).

<sup>16</sup> For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

### James 3:16

With regard to the false wisdom, it can be understood why bitter envy and selfish ambition are the characteristic attitudes, for they are the opposite of the humility required of a believer who freely admits his dependence on God for all his needs, especially for the wisdom he lacks. If a person is driven by such emotions, the final result of such Satan-driven conflict can only be disorder and every evil practice.

Disorder, Greek akatastasia, connotes a chaotic frenzy of fighting in the church that James refers to in the next chapter: <<*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?*>> (James 4:1). The related adjective, Greek akatastatos, means unstable in James 1:8 <<*he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does*>>, and restless in v.8 <<*but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison*>>.

<sup>17</sup> But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

### James 3:17

The answer to the disorder of v.16 is to seek wisdom that comes from heaven, which produces character qualities beginning with purity and concluding with peace, where Godly qualities are the fruit of the Spirit: <<*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law*>> (Galatians 5:22-23). Heavenly wisdom is without partiality. The original Greek word, adiakritos, signifies it to be without suspicion, or free from judging, making no undue surmises nor differences in a believer's conduct towards one person more than another.

First of all pure; then. Purity or blamelessness is the primary virtue, with the rest providing aspects of this moral purity. Being pure means it is free of all the human traits that pollute so much of the world. Therefore, we can conclude that such wisdom is a gracious free gift of God, bestowed on those who ask him for it.

Peace-loving is the polar opposite of envy and selfish ambition and the discord it produces, the disorder and every evil practice of v.16. True peace, further emphasised in v.18, is dependent on purity and is one of the critical attributes of the pure believer: <<*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God*>> (Matthew 5:9), and: <<*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it*>> (Hebrews 12:11).

Peace is also a free grace given to us by a peace-loving God and concludes the well-known Hebrew benediction: <<*The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace*>> (Numbers 6:24-26).

Paul could well have been summarising this issue when he wrote to Corinth: <<*Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted*

*ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace>> (2 Corinthians 1:12).*

**Considerate.** This is an attribute that believers are to display at all times to other people, irrespective of their position in society: *<<Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men>> (Titus 3:1-2), <<Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh>> (1 Peter 2:18), and: <<Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers>> (1 Peter 3:7).*

**Submissive.** Believers are called to be submissive to many different people. First and foremost they are always to live in full submission to God. They should also be submissive to their leaders in the church on matters of faith, providing they are being served by good leaders, and they are called to be submissive to each other in love, no matter what their personal relationship may be: *<<Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you>> (Job 22:21), <<We submitted to Egypt and Assyria to get enough bread>> (Lamentations 5:6), <<Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God>> (Romans 13:1), <<You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labours at it>> (1 Corinthians 16:15-16), <<For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands>> (1 Peter 3:5), and: <<Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble>> (1 Peter 5:5).*

**Full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.** Mercy, impartiality and sincerity are all attributes of God and it should be the objective for all the disciples of Christ to acquire them. As they do so, as it has been demonstrated with true faith, the product will be the good fruit that is pleasing to God.

<sup>18</sup> Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

### **James 3:18**

Once again in the letter, James draws on Jesus teaching from the Sermon on the Mount: *<<Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven>> (Matthew 5:9-10).*

The legacy of those who bring peace rather than conflict is **a harvest of righteousness**. The fruit that comes from **peacemaking** in the Christian

community will be the righteous conduct that God will bless, but this is not produced by the anger of man as commented on, see James 1:20.

We can see from this concluding verse just why James found the disorder, envy and selfish ambition so distasteful and even obnoxious. The opposite of this disorder is not a morally neutral order but a morally significant peace. James wants peace for the church because peace is the context in which righteousness can flourish. This is the positive side of what James wrote earlier: <<*for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires*>> (James 1:20). Again, James writes out of a passion for the righteousness of God to be evident in the churches of Christ, his Lord and Saviour.

Sow in peace. The prophet also laid down a similar challenge to the unfaithful northern tribes of Israel more than 700 years earlier, before they were taken into captivity by the Assyrians: <<*Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you*>> (Hosea 10:12).

Here, James produces similar imagery to that which Christ did in his Parable of the Sower: <<*While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear"*>> (Luke 8:4-8). See the comments made on this passage in Luke Chapter 8.

Matthew Henry concludes: 'For light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart; and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever'.