

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 18TH, 2022 // BOOK OF JAMES

### A DESTRUCTIVE FIRE (JAMES 3:1-6)

#### "NOT MANY SHOULD BECOME TEACHERS"

James warned those seeking the limelight and prominence of teaching in the Church to evaluate their motives.

- He wasn't discouraging people from assuming a teaching position **if they were called to it**. Instead, he wants teachers to be informed about the strict scrutiny received from the position.

### CHARACTER IS GREATER THAN CHARISMA

Teachers are under scrutiny not only from the body they preside over but also from God, who placed them in authority.

- At judgment, everyone will give an account for every careless word spoken (Matthew 12:36). However, **teachers will be judged with a greater strictness because of our influence on others**.

### ENCAPSULATING JAMES' STATEMENT

"Their case is awful; **they shall receive greater condemnation** than common sinners; they have not only sinned in thrusting themselves into that office to which God has never called them, but through their **insufficiency**, the flocks over whom they have assumed the **mastery** perish for lack of knowledge, and their blood will God require at the watchman's hand." –Adam Clarke

### INCLUSIVE TO ALL, NOT JUST TEACHERS

James says, "there are many ways that we stumble, but the person who does not stumble by what they say is mature and in control of their whole body."

- **Our words reveal our inner character** (Matthew 12:34-35). **We display our imperfections and sinfulness when we speak evil, but we show maturity when we control our tongue.**

### THE TONGUE'S POWER OVER THE BODY

To show the tongue's power over the entire body, **James uses illustrations of a small object's ability to control or influence a much larger object.**

- **A bit in a horse's mouth** gives the rider the ability to turn a horse in any direction, the same way a **small rudder at the stern of a ship** gives the captain ability to direct the entire ship.

### A VITAL QUESTION

Without a rudder, a ship is out of control. Without a bit in a horse's mouth attached to reigns, a horse is out of control. Having a captain directing the rudder is as important as the rudder itself, the same way a rider holding the reigns is as important as the bit in the horse's mouth.

- **Who or what is holding the reigns? Who or what directs the rudder?**

### "A WORLD OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS"

Just as a small flame, if not contained, can destroy an entire forest. The tongue, if not controlled, can be a source of great destruction.

- **The potential for an individual to be "engulfed in flames" along with every relationship in their life exists without the Spirit's guidance.**

### A DEADLY POISON (JAMES 3:7-12)

#### "NO ONE CAN TAME THE TONGUE"

God, at creation, gave humankind dominion over all animals and creatures of the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). However, it is easier for humankind to tame and subdue the animals of the earth than to tame the tongue.

- James says, "**no one can tame the tongue,**" but we can **bring it under the power and control of the Spirit.**

### "A RESTLESS EVIL"

James calls our tongues "**a restless evil full of deadly poison.**"

- Our words are a poison that kills reputations through slander and gossip. Like the fangs of a venomous serpent, our words penetrate the flesh wreaking havoc on the person our venom afflicts, and **it deals out death** (Psalms 140:3).

### AN UNNATURAL INCONSISTENCY

In one breath, we fulfill our highest calling and bless God, then with the next breath, we commit the lowest evil by cursing people made in the image of God.

- This should not be the case for those claiming to be born again. It's an impossible contradiction, much like bitter water from a fresh spring or a grapevine producing a fig.

### FINDING WISDOM (JAMES 3:13-18)

#### "WHO IS WISE AND UNDERSTANDING?"

In this section, James transitions from how we should speak to how we should live. James wants the person who claims to have wisdom and understanding to ask himself, "What or who is the source of my wisdom and understanding?"

- The same way good works are evidence of saving faith, **a person who has godly wisdom should produce fruit as evidence.**

### THE CHARACTER OF EARTHLY WISDOM

Earthly wisdom, which contradicts the meekness of godly wisdom, will reveal itself through "**bitter envy and selfish ambitions.**"

- It manifests itself in the desire to promote one's opinion and cause, even if it creates factions. **These characteristics will destroy the mentality of "looking out for another and their interest"** (Philippians 2:4).

### RESISTANCE TO TRUE WISDOM

James says, "**don't boast and deny the truth**" to the person who is willing to steamroll others to further their options and cause.

- This person celebrates their supposed victory over nonexistent competition and rivalry. This denial of truth, which is **the denial of the true wisdom of God, is a denial of God and the truth of the gospel.**

### THE TRUE SOURCE OF FALSE WISDOM

This type of wisdom is **earthly, unspiritual, and demonic.**

- With false wisdom, we **can't see past this life** to the eternity that is promised to us. We are **unable to see past our carnal desires** to what lies beyond this world. This false wisdom is **of the enemy and will be used as a tool for our destruction.**

### THE CHARACTER OF GODLY WISDOM

In contrast, true wisdom from God will be pure, free of self-seeking intentions and divisions.

- There will be evidence of godly wisdom displayed through being "**peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense.**"

### EVIDENCE WILL BE DISPLAYED

- The reality of our character will be displayed through the fruit we bear.
- **Does the fruit we bear testify we are full of earthly wisdom or the wisdom of God?**
- True wisdom will result in a harvest of righteousness, conforming to God's will, and producing peace in the life of those who have sown it.

### DO OUR WORDS BUILD UP OR TEAR DOWN?

- Through grace, our tongues will be used as an instrument of joyous blessing (Colossians 4:6), or our tongues will be used as a destructive and divisive instrument of evil.
- **Are we stirring up destruction, division, and dissension with our tongues, or are we encouraging and edifying?**