

# “Who is a Wise Man?”

## 3:1-12 - CONTROL OF THE TONGUE

*James urged restraint in speaking while setting forth the virtue of hearing (Jam 1:19), before concluding chapter 1 with a warning about bridling the tongue (Jam 1:26). Through chapter 2 he showed that the believers' speech was not in accordance with the Law of Liberty (Jam 2:12) and that their tongues were active and not their faith (Jam 2:14). Now he addresses the issue of the tongue directly, particularly in regard to teachers. There was a danger that those who held the false belief concerning faith and works would actively promote it in the Ecclesia.*

Although the chapter mainly deals with teachers, the warnings and exhortations still apply to everyone. We must be careful about how we speak.

### 3:1-2 - Responsibility of teachers

*Teachers are the mouthpiece of the Ecclesia. James warns about the responsibility of teachers and the danger of seeking an office for which a person is not suited.*

**Verse 1: My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.**



Diag: “Do not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive a severer judgement”.

**Masters:** *didaskalos* (1320) - an instructor, teacher. It is a role that is suited to and solely for the men (at least publicly - 1 Tim 2:12). As the apostles showed, teaching publicly from the Word is an important and essential role in the work of the Truth, and although hardships may result from it, these too are to be gloried in (Acts 5:28,40-42; 1 Tim 4:10-11). James has no wish to discourage those who single-heartedly desire to serve the Ecclesia as a guide and instructor in the things of the Word. Such a work is encouraged in Scripture (cp 1 Thess 5:12-13; 1 Tim 5:17). However, some may seek this role for the wrong motivation - for pre-eminence and pride rather than a desire to serve to the glory of God (Num 16:1-3; Matt 15:3-9; 23:5-8; 3 John 9). We must all learn that although teaching is important, it is only one way in which we can serve the body of Christ. Other important duties exist for those who are unable to teach, or have abilities in other capacities (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:27-29).

The problem in the time of James was probably partly brought about by the influx of priests converting to the Truth (Acts 6:7). The priests were the religious instructors of the nation (Mal 2:7), used to a life of honour and respect. Their conversion to Christianity wouldn't change their expectation of receiving these things. Moreover, they could easily have brought old rabbinical ideas and methods of exposition and debate, which had largely been reprobated by Christ (e.g. Matt 23; Luke 14:7-11) - whose exhortation, in contrast, had been followed by Paul (Gal 1:15-17).



The result could have been a number of teachers in the ecclesia who were using their authority unwisely, to the point that James felt an urgent need to rebuke them, as Paul does later on (Rom 16:17-18; Tit 1:9-2:1), an example Peter follows (2 Pet 2:1-2,18), as does John (3 John 9-10) and Jude (Jude 4,8,10,16). The problem has NEVER BEEN SOLVED. It still exists today!

James, then, is exhorting against every man striving to set himself up as a teacher, without due regard to the qualifications needed or responsibilities involved in such a position. To be a true teacher of the Truth, one must have the qualifications, chief of which is an understanding of the Word of God (1 Tim 1:6-8), coupled with a keeping of the commandments of Christ and all Godly doctrine (1 Tim 6:3-5). One must also be an example of living the Truth (1 Tim 4:12-16), like Paul (1 Cor 4:15-17; 2 Tim 2:2), doing all in the spirit of meekness and service (2 Tim 2:24-25) - not puffing oneself up - remembering that Christ is our master (Matt 23:8-12) and that we ALL need to be taught and ready to hear the lessons and principles from the Word (Heb 5:11-14).

**We:** Most of the epistle uses the second person (you), but in this section (vs 1-12) James identifies himself as a teacher and includes himself in the warning (cp Heb 5:2). The only other places he includes himself are Jam 1:18; 5:11,17.



**Greater:** *meizon* (3187). Extra responsibility leads to extra accountability. See the references below:

Lev 10:1-3

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Eze 3:17-18

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Mal 2:7-9,12

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Matt 18:6

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Matt 23:14

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Luke 12:48

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John 3:10

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Rom 2:17-23

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1 Tim 4:16

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Heb 13:17

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**Condemnation:** *krima* (2917). A teacher's greatest responsibility lies in the use of his tongue (cp Matt 12:33-37). He may injure or heal (cp Prov 12:18). He has the opportunity to influence for good (cp 1 Tim 4:12-16; 2 Tim 2:24-26; Tit 2:6-8; 1 Cor 11:1) or for evil (cp Matt 18:6; 1 Tim 1:6-7; 2 Tim 4:1-4; 2 Pet 2:1-2). Any who aspire to be teachers in the ecclesia ought to take earnest heed to the things which James now writes.

## Verse 2: For in many things we offend all.



Diag: "For in many things we all are faulty".

**We:** James acknowledges that he also is not perfect.

**Offend:** *ptaio* (4417) - to trip, err, stumble, fall. All humans, apart from Christ, sin (cp 1 Kings 8:46; Prov 20:9; Ecc 7:20; Rom 3:23; 1 John 1:8-10). This is emphasised by man's inability to control his tongue. Even Moses had this problem (see Psa 106:32-33).

## If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.

**Word:** *logos* (3056) - reasoning, teaching. Teachers must ensure that they understand and practise what they preach to avoid adverse judgement against them (cp Matt 5:19; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 1 Cor 2:1-5). This also includes teaching the right things at the right time (cp Heb 5:11-14; 1 Cor 3:1-2), and learning to refrain from speaking when the words are evil (cp 1 Pet 3:10).

**Perfect:** *teleios* (5046). This is the same word as Jam 1:4. Control of the tongue is a mark of maturity (cp 1 Pet 2:21-23; Isa 53:7), and is especially important when teaching the Word that we do not lead others, or ourselves, astray (2 Pet 3:16). If we teach others nothing but the perfect Word of God, including the hope of glory offered in Christ, then they too will reach spiritual maturity (cp vs 18; Col 1:25-29).

**Bridle:** *chalinós* (5469) - (cp Jam 1:26).

If we are able to control the tongue then we have gathered sufficient moral strength to control the rest of our carnal impulses (cp vs 3,6). Likewise, mature teachers will be able to bridle the ecclesial body, especially if they have sound doctrine, and know when to administer milk and when to administer meat. Man alone, without the help of God through His Word, is unable to do this (cp vs 8).

The more we mature as a hearer and doer of the Word, the better we will be able to control our tongues. Our tongues reflect our true spiritual condition (cp Matt 12:34). Christ was able to control the tongue through the influence of his Father (cp Isa 50:4; John 7:46; 12:49).



### Thought to think about and do

Is our tongue under control?

Are we firmly enough rooted in the Word that we can see a clear, logical and biblical way ahead in every strife or problem?



### 3:3-5 - Small things can control large objects

*James gives two illustrations of how powerful small things can be in steering larger objects. This power can be used for good or for evil.*

**Verse 3: Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.**

**Bits:** *chalinós* (5469). These are hidden in the mouth.

**Horses:** *hippos* (2462). These are a symbol of proud strength and fleshly power (see Job 39:19-25).

**Turn the whole body:** Although the bit is so small in the mouth, yet by it the whole horse is able to be controlled. We are counselled to have more understanding than the horse (cp Psa 32:9; 39:1).

The internal unruly elements in the Ecclesia can be directed by those in control.

**Verse 4: 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.**

**Governor:** *euthuno* (2116) - helmsman, steersman, pilot, one who makes straight.

**Listeth:** *boulomai* (1014) - wills, intends.

Likewise a large Ecclesia can be guided through the external pressures caused by trials (Matt 7:24-27) and wrong doctrine (Eph 4:14) by the sound education of its teachers.

**Verse 5: Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.**

**Tongue:** *glossa* (1100). The tongue is generally described as a tool for evil (cp Job 15:5; Isa 3:8; Jer 9:3-9; Rom 3:13-14). It has the power of life and death (cp Prov 18:21; Matt 12:36-37).

**Little member:** The tongue is not even noticed until someone speaks.

**Boasteth great things:** *megalaucheo* (3166) - suggests haughty speech which stirs up strife. The tongue boasts constantly but leaves it up to the other members of the body to carry out its boasts. The rest of the body becomes tired in performing the work but the tongue continues to boast. Speaking great things is a characteristic of the apostasy (cp Psa 73:8-9; Dan 7:8,11,20,25; 11:36; Rev 13:5; 2 Pet 2:18; Jude 16; cp Rev 16:13-14). It was the serpent's use of the tongue that encouraged sin initially (cp Gen 3:1-5). God hates boasting (cp Psa 10:3; 12:2-4).

In both of James' illustrations there is a force controlling the small thing (a rider controls the bit, the governor decides which way the rudder will turn). Likewise it is the mind that controls which direction the tongue moves. We must remember that our speech comes from our hearts (Matt 12:34-35; cp Jam 1:26). If the teachers control their tongues for good then the whole body will follow.

**Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!**



RSV: "How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!"

**Matter:** *hule* (5208) - wood, forest, fuel. Representative of the ecclesia - composed of "the planting of the Lord" (cp Jam 1:18,21).

**Fire:** *pur* (4442). A destructive influence, see vs 6.

**Kindleth:** *anapto* (381) (cp Luke 12:49).

Speech has been used to stir up crowds to do good and evil. Teachers especially can influence the Ecclesia by their words. A careless word or comment can be the cause of terrible destruction to others. Many years of labour can be destroyed in an instant, and often the person causing the carnage is supremely unaware that it is they who ignited it (just like the notorious Australian bushfires).



Find some examples in Scripture where speech has been used for good or for evil. For each of your examples, note down the consequence, whether good or evil, of their speech (Hint: Genesis is always a good place to start).

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**See Prov 12:18.** Can you think of any times when you may have offended someone due to rash or thoughtless words? Can you think of times when you had the opportunity to say something good, but didn't? Have either of these things happened to you? How did you feel when they said what they did, or failed to say anything? How do others feel when you do the same to them?



## 3:6-8 - The tongue is a dangerous force

**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.**

There are two parallel ideas about the tongue in this verse. These can be seen in the box below:

A fire	is	A world (a microcosm) of
set on fire by hell		iniquity which
(which) setteth on fire		defileth
the wheel of nature		the whole body

If a start bracket is placed after the word "fire" and before the word "a", and an end bracket after the word "body" and before the word "and", then the flow of thought in this verse becomes easier to understand.

**The tongue is a fire:** It has an incredibly destructive influence (cp Prov 16:27; 26:20-21). Yet the spirit Word is also likened to tongues of fire (cp Acts 2:3; Jer 20:9, 23:29; Psa 39:3; Isa 30:27; Luke 24:32). In one case it is driven by the flesh, in the other it is motivated by the spirit. In one case it is driven by earthly wisdom (see vs 5,14-16), in the other it is motivated by heavenly wisdom (vs 17-18).

**World:** *kosmos* (2889) - arrangement - expressive of magnitude and variety. Unrestrained, the tongue is an environment of evil. It is a microcosm of unrighteousness, because unrestricted, no element of evil is absent from it. James' brother Jude likens the fleshly world to a defiling fire (Jude 23).

**Iniquity:** *adikia* (93) - injustice, wrongfulness. Unfortunately, expressions of the tongue cannot always be taken at face value. Sometimes things are said (for example - in anger, or in flattery) that are not meant, or that are simply not right, and so some discernment is necessary (cp Ecc 7:21-22).



**So is the tongue among our members:** - "The tongue is so set among our members" (NKJV). This applies both personally and ecclesially. The ecclesia, as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27) has many members, each with their own role which God has appointed (1 Cor 12:18). It is wrong to seek roles to which we are not physically or mentally constituted. In the body of Christ, the speaker (the tongue) bears a great responsibility because of his influential position - thus the warning in vs 1.

**Defileth:** *spiloo* (4695) - to stain, spoil, spot. A corrupt mind is outwardly manifested in the defiling of the body through the use of the tongue (cp Mark 7:20-23). An undisciplined tongue can stain characters and bring disrepute to the whole body of Christ (cp Jude 23 with Psa 106:32-33).

**The whole body:** Note the repetition and train of thought of this term:

vs 2 - "control of the tongue" - "bridle the body"

vs 3 - "hold the reins" - "turn the body"

vs 6 - "lose control" - "stain the body"

**Course of nature:** "course" - *trochos* (5164) - wheel, cycle, circuit, "nature" - *genesis* (1078) - generation (cp Matt 1:1). James is referring to the cycle of man's existence. The damage (or help) done by the tongue may have serious repercussions. It may drive someone away from the Truth (or keep them there), so affecting not only the individual directly involved, but also the rest of their family down to the generation that could have been (or is) in the Truth when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. Truly, we hold the power of life and death in our tongues (Prov 18:21; cp vs 18).

**Hell:** *geenna* (1067). This is the place where the apostate kings of Judah made their sacrifices (cp 2 Kings 23:10; Jer 7:31; 19:5-6). It became the constantly burning rubbish dump for Jerusalem. Being identified with defilement, disease and death, it was used figuratively for the judgement seat of Christ (cp Matt 5:22; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 12:5). So sure is it destined for judgement for having these filthy characteristics that James describes the natural tongue as being set alight by the flames of Gehenna in which it will end (compare the stories of Num 11:1-3; 16:1-3,35; Psa 106:18).

The use of the tongue to express false impressions, envy, jealousy, wrath and other such emotions can turn a person's whole life into a destructive force that leaps out and devours those around them. That force is to be judged at the judgement seat (cp Matt 12:36-37). James is to consider this "wisdom" in vs 14-16.

**Verse 7: 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:**

**Beasts:** *therion* (2342).



There are five words used for "beast" in the New Testament. Look them up in Vine's and write down what the significance is of James choosing this word.

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**Birds:** *peteinon* (4071).

**Serpents:** *herpeton* (2062).

**Things in the sea:** *enalios* (1724).



Find some examples in Scripture of man taming each of these four things.

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**Tamed:** *damazo* (1150). Compare Gen 1:28; 9:2.

**Mankind:** *phusis anthropinos* (5449, 442) - "nature of man" (mg) in contrast to "the nature (kind) of beasts". Man is able to tame the nature of animals due to his superior ability of the mind (cp Gen 1:26), but if he lacks knowledge of God, or fails to bring his mind into conformity with God's will, he becomes worse than the most brutish of beasts (Psa 92:6; Jer 10:14; 2 Pet 2:12; Jude 10).

### **Verse 8: But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.**

**But the tongue can no man tame:** In spite of his superiority over the animals, man is unable to tame such a small member. The tongue, like a fire, is so easy to ignite, but so difficult to extinguish (cp vs 5-6).

**Unruly:** *akataschetos* (183) - unrestrainable, restless (cp Jam 1:8). The tongue never sits still. It always wants to speak without restraint.

**Evil:** *kakos* (2556). The tongue is representative of the mind of the flesh, and so it is always struggling with the mind of the Spirit within (Rom 8:5-8). We may never fully tame it in our present fleshly life, but if we elevate our spiritual mind, the mind of the flesh and the power of the tongue as used in an evil way will gradually be excluded from our lives, as a taste of what will come in the Kingdom Age.



**Poison:** *ios* (2447) (cp Gen 3:1-5; Psa 58:4; 140:3; Rom 3:13-14; 2 Cor 11:3-4). Like the serpent, the tongue is hidden, ready to bite any who disturb it (cp Ecc 10:11).



Man is unable to control the tongue without the help of God. The only answer is to put to death the flesh and concentrate on higher principles (cp vs 2,17; Rom 6:13; 8:5,7,13; Gal 5:16-24). Only then can the tongue be used for good (see vs 2; Prov 15:4; 10:20; Isa 30:27).

### 3:9-12 - Inconsistencies of speech unacceptable

*Having shown the nature of the tongue, James next shows that we cannot be satisfied with half an effort to control it. "A man cannot serve two masters". We must be single-minded.*

**Verse 9: Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.**

**Bless:** *eulogeo* (2127) - to thank, praise, speak well of.

**God, even the Father:** It is a basic principle that like produces like (cp Gen 1:11,21,24). We should be manifesting His character after His kind (cp vs 11-12; Jam 1:17-18).

**Curse:** *katakaomai* (2672). How inconsistent it is to praise God, and then curse His children.



What do these references say about our relationship with others?

Matt 5:22-24

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Matt 5:44

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Rom 12:14

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1 Pet 3:9

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1 John 4:19-21

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**Similitude:** *homoiosis* (3669) - resemblance, likeness - denotes mental capacity (cp Gen 1:26; 1 Cor 11:7). If we understand this then it will be a restraining influence in our speech, especially as we are endeavouring to develop His moral image (cp 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:1-17).

**Verse 10: Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.**

**My brethren:** This is a tender appeal from James, rather than condemnation. His rebuke is made more powerful by his restraint (he is outworking the very principles he is expounding).

**These things ought not so to be:** A man made to reflect the moral and mental character of God should not show results that are out of character with that purpose (cp Prov 10:31-32).



James now gives three illustrations from the natural world to show how inconsistent human nature is with creation.

## Verse 11: Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?



**Fountain:** *pege* (4077) - "the fountain" (Diag, RV, Roth). This is descriptive of God (see Jer 2:13; 17:13; Psa 36:9); Christ (see John 4:10) and the believers (see John 4:14; 7:38). Fountains are also used to describe corrupt sources (see Jer 6:7).

**Bitter:** *pikros* (4089). Even a bitter fountain can be changed to sweetness by the power of the spirit of God (see Exo 15:23-25; 2 Kings 2:19-22).



We may feel that our relationship with God is fine, and that our attitude to our brethren is of no great significance (vs 9). However, praise to God is worth nothing if we do not care for our brethren (Jam 1:27), and if our praise is driven from human emotion rather than being motivated by the refreshing sweet water of the Word (Prov 25:25).

## Verse 12: Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?

Absolute consistency is seen in the natural world because it reflects God's character. Christ used similar illustrations (cp Matt 7:16-20; 12:32-37), although the tree and its fruits has an even earlier historical background in the Old Testament (cp Psa 1:3; Jer 17:7-10). All three trees are symbolic of natural Israel (see Jer 24; Isa 5:7; Rom 11:17), and therefore also the Israel of God (Gal 6:15-16). As the fruit of each tree is appropriate to the particular tree, so a believer in Christ is expected to act and speak as his Lord would have him act and speak.

**so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.**



Diag: "Neither can a salt spring produce sweet water".

The Divine principle is that kind begets kind (cp Gen 1:20-25). Neither should a man "made" to reflect the moral and mental works of God show forth results that are inconsistent with that purpose (Gen 1:26-27). James goes on to say that a wise man endued with knowledge should show forth out of a good way of life his works with meekness and wisdom (vs 13). As James has already written, the tongue can no man tame (vs 8). Of itself it will not produce fresh water (cp John 4:14). What is needed is wisdom from above (cp Jam 3:17; Psa 141:3).

Despite James telling us that we ought only to use our tongue for good, so often we also use it for evil (vs 10). In Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the words "tongue", "lips" and "mouth" are used synonymously, and are used to show both the positive and negative attributes of our speech.



Below is a list of all relevant uses of these three words in Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes that are associated with or indicative of a person's character. Look up all the references in the table and write the relevant phrase(s) in the space provided. Find the key theme or common characteristic directly involved in all quotations within the section, and write it in the space provided at the top of each section. If you have time, further your understanding and conviction of these attributes by looking up some of the other references that have been provided at the bottom of most sections. (Note: This exercise may take some time, but is highly helpful in understanding how the tongue is used, and how we ought to use it).

**Negative Attributes:**

Attribute:	
Prov 12:13 (lips)	
Prov 19:28 (mouth)	
Ecc 5:6 (mouth)	

See also Psa 17:3 (mouth); 36:3 (mouth); 39:1 (tongue); 59:12 (mouth); 107:42 (mouth); Prov 16:10 (mouth).

Attribute:	
Psa 34:13 (tongue)	
Psa 50:19 (mouth)	
Prov 16:30 (lips)	

See also Psa 140:11 (tongue); Prov 15:28 (mouth).

Attribute:	
Prov 10:32 (mouth)	
Prov 11:11 (mouth)	
Prov 15:28 (mouth)	

See also Psa 109:2 (mouth); Prov 8:7 (lips); 10:6,11 (mouth); 12:13 (lips); 17:4 (lips); 19:28 (mouth).

Attribute:	
Psa 63:11 (mouth)	
Prov 6:17 (tongue)	
Prov 12:22 (lips)	

See also Psa 31:18 (lips); 59:12 (lips); 62:4 (mouth); 78:36 (tongue); 109:2 (tongue); 120:2 (lips); 144:8,11 (mouth); Prov 10:18 (lips); 12:19 (tongue); 17:4 (tongue); 17:7 (lips); 21:6 (tongue); 26:28 (tongue).



Attribute:	
Psa 50:19 (tongue)	
Psa 52:4 (tongue)	
Prov 24:28 (lips)	

See also Psa 10:7 (mouth); 17:1 (lips); 34:13 (lips); 35:20-21 (mouth); 36:3 (mouth); 52:2 (tongue); 62:4 (mouth); 109:2 (mouth); 120:2-3 (tongue); Prov 20:17 (mouth); 26:24 (lips).

Attribute:	
Prov 4:24 (mouth and lips)	
Prov 8:13 (mouth)	
Prov 17:20 (tongue)	

See also Prov 6:12 (mouth); 8:8 (mouth); 10:31 (tongue); 10:32 (mouth); 15:4 (tongue); 19:1 (lips).

Attribute:	
Psa 52:2 (tongue)	
Psa 140:9 (lips)	
Prov 24:2 (lips)	

See also Psa 10:7 (tongue); Prov 17:4 (tongue); Ecc 10:13 (mouth).

Attribute:	
Psa 31:20 (tongue)	
Prov 18:6 (lips)	
Prov 25:23 (tongue)	

See also Psa 15:3 (tongue).

Attribute:	
Psa 12:3,4 (tongue and lips)	
Psa 17:10 (mouth)	
Prov 27:1-2 (mouth and lips)	

See also Psa 59:7 (mouth); 59:12 (lips); 73:8-9 (mouth); 73:9 (tongue); Prov 14:3 (mouth).

Attribute:	
Prov 10:6,11 (mouth)	
Prov 11:9 (mouth)	
Prov 18:7 (mouth)	

See also Prov 30:10 (tongue).

This attribute (above) can be manifested in the three following attributes.

Attribute:	
Prov 16:27 (lips)	
Prov 26:23 (lips)	

Attribute:	
Psa 140:3 (tongue and lips)	
Ecc 10:11 (tongue)	

Attribute:	
Psa 57:4 (tongue)	
Psa 59:7 (lips)	
Psa 64:3 (tongue)	

See also Psa 55:21 (mouth); Psa 64:8 (tongue).

Attribute:	
Psa 78:36 (mouth)	
Prov 7:21 (lips)	
Prov 28:23 (tongue)	

See also Psa 5:9 (tongue); 12:2 (lips); 12:3 (lips); 55:21 (mouth); 62:4 (mouth); Prov 5:3 (lips and mouth); 6:24 (tongue); 14:23 (lips); 20:19 (lips); 26:28 (mouth).

Attribute:	
Prov 6:2 (mouth)	
Prov 12:13 (lips)	
Prov 18:7 (lips)	

Attribute:	
Prov 15:2 (mouth)	
Prov 26:7 (mouth)	
Ecc 10:12 (lips)	

See also Prov 10:8 (lips); 10:14 (mouth); 14:3 (mouth); 14:7 (lips); 15:14 (mouth); 17:7 (lips); 18:6 (lips and mouth); 18:7 (mouth and lips); 24:7 (mouth); 26:9 (mouth); Ecc 10:13 (mouth).



## Positive Attributes:

Attribute:	
Psa 34:1 (mouth)	
Psa 35:28 (tongue)	
Psa 40:3 (mouth)	

See also Psa 30:12 (tongue); 51:14 (tongue); 51:15 (lips and mouth); 63:3 (lips); 63:5 (mouth and lips); 66:17 (tongue); 71:8 (mouth); 71:14-15 (mouth); 71:22-23 (lips); 71:24 (tongue); 89:1 (mouth); 109:30 (mouth); 119:108 (mouth); 119:171 (lips); 126:2 (mouth and tongue); 145:21 (mouth); 149:6 (mouth).

Attribute:	
Psa 54:2 (mouth)	
Psa 66:13-14 (lips and mouth)	
Psa 66:17,19-20 (mouth)	

See also Psa 21:2 (lips).

Attribute:	
Psa 119:43 (mouth)	
Psa 119:103 (mouth)	
Psa 119:172 (tongue)	

See also Psa 50:16 (mouth); 78:1-2 (mouth); 119:13 (lips); 119:131 (mouth).

Attribute:	
Prov 15:7 (lips)	
Prov 16:21 (lips)	
Prov 20:15 (lips)	

See also Psa 45:1 (tongue); Prov 2:6 (mouth); 5:2 (lips); 14:7 (lips); 15:2 (tongue); 16:23 (lips); 22:17-18 (lips).

Attribute:	
Prov 10:21 (lips)	
Prov 16:13 (lips)	
Prov 23:16 (lips)	

See also Psa 37:30 (mouth); 40:9 (lips); Prov 8:6 (lips); 8:8 (mouth); 10:11 (mouth); 10:20 (tongue); 10:32 (lips); 12:6 (mouth); 24:26 (lips).

Attribute:	
Prov 8:7 (mouth)	

Attribute:	
Psa 37:30 (tongue)	
Psa 119:13 (mouth)	
Prov 16:10 (lips)	

See also Prov 31:9.

Attribute:	
Psa 5:9 (mouth)	

Attribute:	
Psa 45:2 (lips)	
Prov 22:11 (lips)	
Ecc 10:12 (mouth)	

Attribute:	
Psa 71:23 (lips)	
Psa 126:2,5,6 (mouth and tongue)	
Prov 15:23 (mouth)	

See also Psa 63:5 (lips).

Attribute:	
Prov 31:8 (mouth)	
Prov 31:9 (mouth)	
Prov 31:26 (tongue)	

See also Prov 10:21 (lips); 12:6 (mouth); 25:15 (tongue).

Attribute:	
Psa 49:3 (mouth)	
Prov 14:3 (lips)	
Prov 31:26 (mouth)	

See also Psa 37:30 (mouth); Prov 10:13 (lips); 10:31 (mouth); 12:18 (tongue); 15:2 (tongue); 15:7 (lips); 16:23 (mouth); Ecc 10:12 (mouth).



## Neutral/Both Positive and Negative Attributes:

Attribute:	
Psa 139:4 (tongue)	
Prov 16:1,9 (tongue)	

Attribute:	
Psa 106:33 (lips)	
Ecc 5:2 (mouth)	

The following attribute is the opposite of the previous one.

Attribute:	
Psa 39:2-3 (tongue)	

Attribute:	
Psa 39:1-2 (mouth)	
Prov 10:19 (lips)	
Prov 21:23 (mouth and tongue)	

See also Psa 32:9 (mouth); 38:13 (mouth); 38:14 (mouth); 39:9 (mouth); 141:3 (mouth and lips); Prov 5:2 (lips); 13:3 (mouth and lips); 17:27-28 (lips); 30:32 (mouth).

Attribute:	
Prov 12:14 (mouth); 12:18 (tongue)	
Prov 13:2 (mouth); 13:3 (mouth and lips)	
Prov 18:20 (mouth and lips); 18:21 (tongue)	

This attribute (above) is expressed in the following two attributes.

Attribute:	
Prov 10:11 (mouth)	
Prov 15:4 (tongue)	



Attribute:	
Prov 10:14 (mouth)	
Prov 11:9 (mouth)	
Prov 18:7 (mouth and lips)	

See also Prov 22:14 (mouth).

Summary Attribute:	
Psa 19:14 (mouth)	



Now that you've found all the characteristics of the tongue (or at least the ones found in Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes), look over them once more and examine yourself. Circle any negative attributes that you have and need to remove from your speech. Circle any positive attributes that you lack and want to start using more in your speech. Be proactive and start making a change in the way you think and speak, while it is called today. (One way to do this may be to write a list of all the attributes you've circled, then stick it to the wall above your bed so you can review each night how you've progressed or failed that day).



## 3:13-18 - WISDOM FROM BELOW AND ABOVE

Having dealt with the fundamental problem of the tongue, James returns to those who wish to be teachers (cp vs 1) and shows how they should conduct their lives. Their use of the tongue was just a symptom. The cause was where their wisdom came from (cp Matt 12:34-35). James now reveals that the reason why they are not attaining to the ideal is because they lack God's wisdom (cp Jam 1:5-8; 3:17-18) and are motivated by their fleshly nature (cp Jam 1:14) and fleshly wisdom (Jam 3:14-16). True wisdom is manifested in a peaceable way of life, not in the strife, confusion and division that they were creating through their rivalry with one another.

### 3:13 - Wisdom shown in way of life

True teachers will display their wisdom by their actions and not by the tongue. Their works will declare where their wisdom comes from (cp Matt 7:17-27; 5:16).

**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.**

**Wise:** *sophos* (4680). God provides this (cp Dan 2:21; see Jam 1:5). We are only wise if we know and come to an understanding of our Father (Psa 107:43; Jer 9:12,23-24), and learn to put our trust in Him (Matt 7:24).



**Endued with knowledge:** *epistemon* (1990). Knowledge and understanding is associated in Scripture with wisdom (cp Prov 3:13; 4:5-7; 9:10).

**Let him shew:** A true teacher (vs 1) will have both of these qualifications - works and meekness. These will be demonstrated in his way of life.

**Conversation:** *anastrophe* (391) - behaviour, way of life (cp Jam 2:14-18).



**Compare** 1 Pet 1:15,18; 2:12; 3:16; Gal 1:13; Eph 4:22; Heb 13:5,7; Phil 1:27; 1 Tim 4:12.

**Works:** These are referring to his works of faith which he has shown (cp Jam 2:18). His speech will be consistent with his actions.

**Meekness:** *prautes* (4240) - (cp Jam 1:21; Eph 4:1-2; 2 Tim 2:25; Gal 5:23; Matt 5:5; see Num 12:3). Contrast this to the noisy boastful arrogance of the tongue (cp Ecc 9:17).

When men were appointed to positions of responsibility, three main characteristics were needed. (1) Wisdom - to deal with people and situations, (2) Knowledge and understanding of God's Word and Spirit - to control the tongue and guide other members of the ecclesial body, and (3) A good reputation - showing that his way of life was consistent with his teaching (cp Deut 1:13; Acts 6:3).

A man's wisdom and knowledge is outwardly seen in his life to the glory of God (Ecc 8:1-5). However, it is so easy for human pride and praise from others to dominate our minds rather than the work of furthering God's message. This becomes particularly relevant when we become involved in the work of the Truth. This leads to comparisons of lectures, exhorts, Bible classes etc and wrong attitudes show themselves in the way our brethren are treated. James is saying that true wisdom must be associated with a meek spirit (cp Prov 11:2; 8:11-13; Jer 9:12,23-24; compare Christ's example - Matt 11:29; Luke 22:26-27; Phil 2:3-8).

### 3:14-16 - Wisdom from below brings envy and ambition

**Verse 14:** But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth.



RSV: "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth".



**Envy:** *zelos* (2205) - zeal, jealousy (cp vs 16; 4:2; Prov 14:30; 27:4; 1 Cor 3:3; 13:4; Rom 13:13; Gal 5:15,21,26).

**Strife:** *eritheia* (2052) - faction, angry contention, desire to put one's self forward, seeking to win followers (cp vs 16; Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 3:3; Gal 5:20). The way to overcome this is by meekness (vs 13; Phil 2:3; Tit 3:13).

There was competition and rivalry among the self appointed teachers which originated from within. This was the source of their problems. They were motivated by their flesh (cp 2 Cor 12:20; Phil 1:14-17). This leads to personality conflicts and ecclesial factions (cp 1 Cor 1:10-17; 3:3-4; 1 Tim 6:3-5). If it happened at the time when the guidance of the apostles was still available, how much more should we be wary of it in these days.

**Glory:** *katakauchaomai* (2620) - to boast, rejoice against.

**Lie:** *pseudomai* (5574) - to utter an untruth or attempt to deceive by falsehood (cp Psa 66:3). There were obviously people in the ecclesia who only pretended to be part of the Truth, and who went around spreading discord (probably Judaist infiltrators).

**Truth:** *aletheia* (225). This term is used to include all elements of the gospel in doctrine, principle and practice, and this is the way we use it today (i.e. we have "accepted the Truth") (cp Jam 1:18). God is the God of truth (Isa 65:16), Christ himself is "the truth" (John 14:6; Eph 4:21), and John

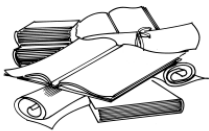


uses the term in a general sense (1 John 1:6; 3:19; 2 John 1; 3 John 1,8,12). These men were contravening all the principles of the gospel of salvation and destroying the very Truth they were claiming to teach (cp Rom 1:21-32).

### Verse 15: This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.



**This wisdom:** The wisdom of the flesh (cp Jer 4:22; 1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 1:12; Gal 5:19-21).



See *Elpis Israel*, Pg 93-101 ("The Carnal Mind") for more information on the "thinking of the flesh".

**Above:** *anothen* (509). Their wisdom was actually from hell below (vs 6), yet they were claiming that it was from above (cp Rom 1:21-22). Singleness of mind is required for Godly wisdom (cp Jam 1:5-8). True wisdom from above is described in vs 17, and comes down from God above as a perfect gift (Jam 1:17).

**Earthly:** *epigeios* (1919) - from man (cp 1 Cor 15:47; Phil 3:18-19).

**Sensual:** *psuchikos* (5591) - base passions of animal nature, soulish - the antithesis of the Spirit (cp Jude 19; Rom 7:5-6; 1 Cor 2:14; Heb 4:12; 1 Pet 1:22).

**Devilish:** *daimoniodes* (1141) - madness. They were acting like demoniacs who cause strife and contention (cp Jam 2:19). Later, these same demonic people, who spoke lies (cp vs 14) and hypocrisy (cp vs 17) - and who, in the days of James were known as Judaisers (Acts 15:1-2) but whose seducing spirit later became associated with the Catholics - would depart from the Truth, and lead others astray also (cp 1 Tim 4:1-3). This same unclean demonic spirit is present in our world today and is the cause of many who stray from the Truth.



What is this unclean demonic spirit? Where in Scripture can we read about it? Do we recognise it for what it is in our lives and in the world around us? Have we removed its thinking from our minds, or have we allowed it to fester?

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The increasing force of these descriptions shows that in stark contrast to what Paul would do, these teachers were sinking lower and lower in their wisdom to become as wise as madmen (cp 1 Cor 14:23) and no better than the wise of this world (cp 1 Cor 1:10 - 2:16; 3:18-21).

### **Verse 16: For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.**



Diag: "For where rivalry and strife are, there disorder is, and every vile deed".

**Confusion:** *akatastasia* (181). Agitation and an unsettling atmosphere exist when this wisdom prevails. No one can trust another and suspicion hinders unity. God is not the God of confusion (1 Cor 14:33).

Just as the patriarchs were moved with envy and an evil work against Joseph - a type of Christ (Acts 7:9), so the Judaisers now envied those of the body of Christ, and created confusion and evil works against them (Acts 13:45,50; 17:5).

## **3:17-18 - Attributes of wisdom from above**

*The teachers had been exposed for what they really were. Now James presents the ideal to strive for. The fire, bitterness, strife, envy and confusion is contrasted with peace, gentleness, meekness, love and unity (cp Gal 5:22-26).*

### **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.**

**But the wisdom that is from above:** It is not until we are born from above (cp John 3:3) that we can possess this wisdom (cp Jam 1:17-18). It is gained by asking God (cp Jam 1:5). (See 1 Cor 2:6-16).

**Pure:** *hagnos* (53) - chaste, clean, pure from defilement (cp 2 Cor 11:2). The Truth is completely pure in itself and is purifying in its influence (cp Psa 19:7-9; Prov 30:5; 1 John 3:3). It comes from a single-minded source. It cannot be adulterated with the world's wisdom (cp Jam 4:4) - only a double-minded man can be (cp Jam 4:8).

**Peaceable:** *eirenikos* (1516) - from a root word meaning "to be at one" (cp Prov 3:13,17; Rom 12:18; Heb 12:14). It is equivalent to the Hebrew word "shalom". Those who are peaceable don't need to strive or be envious because they are confident that the wisdom they now have is pure. True peace cannot be obtained without purity first (cp Heb 7:2; Isa 32:17; Matt 5:8-9).



**Gentle:** *epieikes* (1933) - appropriate, moderate, reasonable, forbearing, patient. It is a quality showing an even-tempered attitude in the extremes of life (cp Phil 4:5; 1 Tim 3:3; Tit 3:2; 2 Cor 10:1; 1 Thess 2:7; 2 Tim 2:24). Having purity and peaceableness means that we are able to gently lead others (not strive with them).



**Easy to be entreated:** *eupeithes* (2138) - compliant, persuadable, "open to reason" (RSV). True wisdom will win its way by gentleness, which characterises the person whose simple motive is the triumph of the Truth and not personality or self-vindication.

Those with these qualities show meekness and are willing servants.

**Mercy:** *eleos* (1656) - pity, compassion. This is the outworking to others of God's mercy to us (cp Eph 2:4; Tit 3:5; Matt 9:13; 12:7; 23:23; Luke 10:36-37; Jam 2:12-13). Those with wisdom from above are conscious that all fall short of God's glory, including themselves.

**Good:** *agathos* (18) - beneficial. The word denotes intrinsic goodness.

**Fruits:** *karpos* (2590). Good fruits are the proof that the wisdom is from a good tree (cp vs 11-12; John 15:4-5; cp Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:9; Phil 1:11; Col 1:10; contrast Jude 12). The quality of fruit depends on the water that the tree drinks and the amount of exposure to the sun (cp Jam 1:17-18). All those who fail to bring forth good fruit will suffer the same fate as the destructive tongue (cp vs 6; Matt 3:10-12).

**Without partiality:** *adiakritos* (87) - a cognate word, meaning both "without uncertainty" (RSV), doubting or wavering (Jam 1:6), and without division, bias or prejudice (Jam 2:4; 1 Tim 5:21).

**Without hypocrisy:** *anupokritos* (505) - sincere. He is not play-acting a role (cp Psa 55:21; Isa 32:6; Matt 23:3,28; Luke 12:1-2; 1 Pet 2:1-2; 1 John 3:18). Actors may fool men, but they never deceive God (Heb 4:12-13).



Using a concordance and other study aids, find quotations that show that Christ possessed these attributes of wisdom from above.

Attribute:	References:
(Wisdom)	
Pure	
Peaceable	
Gentle	
Easy to be entreated	
Mercy	
Good fruits/works	
Without uncertainty/division	
Without hypocrisy	





## Verse 18: And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

**Fruit of righteousness:** We reap what we sow (cp Gal 6:7-8; Prov 11:18; Hos 10:12-13). The fruit of righteousness will only develop if the seed of the Word is sown (cp Luke 8:11,15; Rom 10:8-10; 1 Pet 1:23), watered by the washing of the Word (cp Jam 5:7,18; Eph 5:26; John 4:13-14) and ripened by the power of the sun (cp Jam 1:17; Mal 4:2). It is the result of manifesting wisdom from above. It is God who gives the increase (cp 1 Cor 3:6; 2 Cor 9:10).



**Heb 12:11; Phil 1:11; Isa 32:16-17.**

**Sown:** *speiro* (4687) - to scatter.

**In peace:** These fruits will only be produced if they are sown in the right ground (cp Matt 13:3-8). Unity needs to be established with God and our brethren (cp Mark 9:50; 2 Cor 13:11; 1 Thess 5:13; Rom 12:18). This is in contrast to vs 14-16.

**Make:** *poieo* (4160). Blessed are the peace makers, not the peace promoters (cp Matt 5:9; Psa 34:14). The Greek indicates that this is a continual action. Peace must be maintained.



Notice that it is the FRUIT of righteousness that is sown, not the SEED of righteousness. Seed for the next harvest comes from fruit that is ploughed back into the ground. The fruit of righteousness is a person manifesting the character of God in his thought, speech and actions. New life will be brought about through the wise use and bridling of the tongue (Rom 10:8-10; 1 Pet 3:10). This is what a true teacher will be doing. His fruit will be sown back again into an environment of peace, bringing forth further fruit. This is the work of a teacher (cp Gal 6:9-10).

Christ, the ultimate teacher, taught the peace of God to all who heard him during his life (Acts 10:34-38), then passed this peace on to his disciples (John 14:27), so that if they continued in him, they too would bring forth the fruit of righteousness (John 15:1-6). A person who makes peace will have his fruit increase in a peaceful environment until the ultimate fruit is harvested - eternal life (Prov 11:30; John 4:36).