

# JAMES

## Chapter 3

### *Taming the Tongue*

**Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 4 Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.**

**3:1** *teachers.* Office in the Early Church. Its work, along with that of apostles and prophets, was eventually carried out by pastors (cf Ac 13:1; 1Co 12:28–29; Eph 4:11). Nevertheless, these warnings apply to all who claim to teach (cf Lk 11:45–46, 52). (TLSB)

*judged with greater strictness.* Because a teacher has great influence, he will be held more accountable (see Lk 20:47; cf. Mt 23:1–33). (CSB)

Because false teaching can destroy the faith of those being taught (cf Gal 1:8–9). Both a stricter standard of judgment and a harsher punishment. (TLSB)

God holds those who work daily in the Word to higher standards. “To whom much has been given, from him shall much be expected. (PBC)

Right views of the responsibility of religious teachers and guides, of the difficulties of their work, the strict account which they must render to God, and the awful ruin which will come on those who are unfaithful, tend effectually to prevent improper aspirations for power in the church. (Concordia Bible)

It seems that in many of the congregations, which were composed largely of Jewish Christians, the custom of permitting almost any man to speak that so desired had been taken over. This was a dangerous practice in more than one respect, and therefore the apostle writes: Become not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that we (as such) shall receive the more severe condemnation. In the Jewish synagogues, especially in the Dispersion, in the cities outside of Palestine, there was little restriction in the matter of teachers; almost any one would be listened to that desired to be heard. But whereas all believers are kings and priests before God and the Lord Jesus, they are not all teachers of the congregation, they may not all arrogate to themselves the office of preacher. But there was not only danger under such circumstances that the Gospel-message would not

receive its proper attention, but the speakers were also inclined to let personal matters sway them, the result being that the discourses in the common assemblies were anything but edifying at times. It was necessary, therefore, to remind the unauthorized teachers of the fact that the responsibility resting upon the office and the account which the teachers must give on the last day, Heb. 13, 17, would make the sentence passed upon them all the more severe. (Kretzmann)

**3:2-3** *teleios anēr*, “complete man.” The one who does not stumble (*ou paiei*) with his words is the perfect man and has control also of the things he does. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**3:2** *we all stumble* – We all offend in many things; of course in the office of teaching also, where there is especial danger of our offending in word. This ought to deter us from forwardness in arrogating to ourselves this work. (Concordia Bible)

None can avoid sin. (TLSB)

*what he says*. Reintroduces the issue of speech (1:19, 26). Because teachers speak often and authoritatively, they have greater opportunity and temptation to speak wrongly for their own benefit. (TLSB)

*perfect man*. Since the tongue is so difficult to control, anyone who controls it perfectly gains control of himself in all other areas of life as well. (CSB)

Luther: “Those who are truly righteous not only sigh and plead for the grace of God because they see that they have an evil inclination and thus are sinful before God, but also because they see that they can never understand fully how deep is the evil of their will and how far it extends, they believe that they are always sinners, as if the depth of their evil will were infinite” (AE 25:221). (TLSB)

The apostle now gives reasons for the sternness of his rebuke: For manifoldly we offend, all of us. If a man does not offend in word, that man is a perfect man, able to keep under the restraint of the bridle also the whole body. The general course of life may well be called a way and each individual action a step; therefore any offense or lapse or transgression may well be termed a stumble. All men without exception become guilty of such stumbling, even the best of Christians are subject to sins of weakness. And now James, in applying this general truth to the case in hand, states that a man who can control his speech at all times, never offending by so much as a single word, may well be considered a perfect man, since the ability to control the tongue argues at least for the probability of controlling the entire body and keeping all the members from sinning. If a man is able to perform the more difficult task, he will have little trouble with that which is comparatively easy. (Kretzmann)

**3:3** As a bit directs a horse or a rudder steers a ship, so the tongue can affect the entire person and others as well. (TLSB)

That little piece of steel in a horse’s mouth, when managed properly, can control a two thousand-pound animal. (PBC)

But the difficulty of controlling the tongue is now shown by two examples. The apostle writes, in the first place: But if we put bits into the mouths of the horses to make them obey us, and we direct their entire bodies. This was an example with which his readers were familiar, which they

understood. Horses are driven and kept in control by means of the bits placed into their mouths, the driver merely pulling the reins in order to have the horses' head in any direction that he chooses. (Kretzmann)

**3:4** *a very small rudder* – That little shaped plank, mostly invisible beneath the waterline, enables a captain to control the course of an immense ship filled with cargo, crew, and passengers. (PBC)

In another case the ease of control is still more apparent and also wonderful: Behold also the ships, although they are so great and, moreover, tossed about with fierce winds, yet are guided with a very small rudder, whithersoever the mind of the steersman wills. This fact is apparent in our days even more than in the times of small vessels. Ships of many thousands of tons displacement obey the slightest pressure of the helmsman, or slight turn of the wheel on the bridge. Even when the sea is agitated, the pilot or officer has little trouble in directing the course of the vessel as he chooses, as he thinks best, so long as the steering apparatus is in order and the rudder does not break. It is a marvel of human ingenuity to be able to keep a large vessel in control with such tiny devices as compared with its great size. (Kretzmann)

**3:5-6** The tongue is characterized as a fire (*pur*) and as “unright” (*adikias*), being enflamed by the gehenna, or hell (*phlogizomenē hupo tēs geennēs*). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**3:5** *a small member* – The apostle now makes the application: So also the tongue is a small member, and yet boasts of great exploits. The writer speaks of the tongue as though it had a personality of its own and made use of its power by deliberate action. As small as it is among the members of the body, yet it can boast of performing great deeds. By way of comparison the apostle again calls out: Behold how small a fire, what a forest it does kindle! or: What an immense fire, what an immense forest the tongue does kindle! It takes only a small fire, a burning match carelessly thrown aside, to start a fire which may consume many square miles of forest. (Kretzmann)

*yet it boasts of great things* – As everlasting consequences depend upon the use of the tongue, all, and especially ministers of the gospel, should earnestly pray that they may always so speak as shall tend most to honor God and benefit their fellow-men. (CB)

*ablaze by such a small fire* – Under control, a spark can make a small fire to warm cold travelers and cook their food. Out of control, a spark can cause a conflagration that can reduce thousands of acres of mighty trees to blackened, smoking stumps. (PBC)

**3:6** *world of unrighteousness*. Like the world in its fallenness. (CSB)

The “world” in Jas is always opposed to God (1:27; 2:5). Words can reflect the fallen nature (cf Mk 7:14–23), which struggles against God. (TLSB)

*staining the whole body* – James thinks it urgent that people learn to control their mouths, not only to avoid hurting other people emotionally and spiritually. But an uncontrolled tongue can also turn on the uncontrolled talker, corrupting the whole person, poisoning his or her mind, and plunging the body into the dangers of the fires of hell. (PBC)

*set on fire by hell*. A figurative way of saying that the source of the tongue's evil is the devil (see Jn 8:44). (CSB)

We are tempted by our sinful nature, by the devil, and by this sinful world. (TLSB)

And such is also the destructive power of the tongue: The tongue also is a fire, a world of unrighteousness; the tongue steps forth among our members, and it stains the entire body and inflames the wheel of nature, and itself is inflamed by hell. Like the small firebrand that causes the devastating forest fire, so also is the tongue in its unbridled state. It is a world of unrighteousness, it works a world of mischief, its entire sphere becomes that of iniquity when it begins its transgressions. The tongue steps forth among the members, it assumes the leadership, among them, it rules them, it makes them do its bidding. Thus it happens that it succeeds in staining the whole body, in polluting all the members; it sets in motion and inflames the wheel of nature, the whole circle of innate passions, jealousy, backbiting, slander, blasphemy, and every vile deed. Truly the tongue, if permitted to pursue its course unhindered, is inflamed of hell, is in the control of Satan himself. (Kretzmann)

**3:7–8** Though all of creation can be controlled (Gn 1:26–28), no one is able to control the tongue (cf Jas 3:9). (TLSB)

**3:7** It may seem, perhaps, that the orator is here carried away by his subject; but any one that has observed the terrible effect of slandering and defaming which is done in our days, as it was hundreds of years ago, will say only that the apostle speaks by way of comparison. In holy indignation he cries out: For every kind of beast and bird, of reptiles and of marine animals, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but the tongue can no one of men tame; that restless evil, full of death-bringing poison. The patience and the ingenuity of man has worked effects approaching the miraculous in taming and in training animals of every description, mammals, birds, reptiles, and various animals that live in the sea. Though the divine promise of the dominion of man, Gen. 1, 28, has suffered somewhat in consequence of sin, yet the mastery of human beings over the animals cannot be questioned, the latter being kept in subjection both by subtlety and by force. (Kretzmann)

**3:8** *no human being can tame the tongue* – The tongue does not operate itself. What James is really getting at is that it is the brain that regulates the tongue. Here is another example of real faith for real life – people who claim to be believers must not let their mouths get out control. Real faith in the Savior welcomes the power of the Spirit to bite back lies, sarcasm, ridicule, gossip, evil suggestions, and praise for evil deeds. Real faith uses the Spirit's real power to build up other people, speak the truth, compliment, forgive, and comfort. Real faith also knows when to command the tongue to be silent. (PBC)

Talk is not cheap. Words do wound. Words can build up or destroy a person's self-confidence. Words can turn someone's proud achievement into humiliation. Words can create or destroy relationship. Words can spread hate or love. Words can spread truth or plant lies. Words can cause suspicion or build trust. (PBC)

But the tongue seems to be beyond the ability of man, to keep in subjection and to tame; all the immeasurable evil that it has caused since the fall of Adam, all the innumerable warnings that have been uttered by the servants of God since that time, have not yet succeeded in curbing its pernicious activity. An unruly, a restless evil, the apostle calls it, one that causes restlessness and disorder, that, upsets all established rules for its control. It is full of death-bringing poison, Rom. 3, 13; the evil which it causes has the same effect as the venom of asps, corroding and killing. (Kretzmann)

*full of deadly poison.* Profoundly capable of harming others (cf vv 5–6). (TLSB)

**3:9** *with it we bless our Lord* – Words are also God’s means to rescue people from hell. A sermon, a Bible study, a catechism lesson, or an evangelism visit over coffee all look tame and ineffectual. But God’s power to save people, to create and sustain saving faith, rides with words. And so the believability of the church’s word – its people and teachers – will have an enormous impact on the believability of the church’s message. (PBC)

In what way this is true, the apostle shows by citing one single instance: With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who are made in the likeness of God; out of the same mouth comes forth blessing and cursing. Matters are here represented as they are found in the world and, sad to say, also in the midst of those that bear the name of Christ and confess His holy name. The tongue being the instrument of speech, it is used by believers and even by others for the praise of God, who is our Lord and Father in Christ Jesus. That is as it should be; for we can never adequately sing the praises of Him who has brought us out of the darkness of spiritual death into the marvelous light of His grace. (Kretzmann)

*in God’s likeness.* Since man has been made like God (Ge 1:26–27), to curse man is like cursing God (see Ge 9:6). (CSB)

All people deserve respect because they are made in the image of God. (TLSB)

**3:10** James calls for consistency. The righteous have received the implanted Word (cf 1:20–21) and should live lives that reflect what God has made them to be. (TLSB)

But the sad side of the picture is this, that the same mouth is also used in personal abuse, in cursing a fellow-man, who was created originally in the likeness of God. For God made Adam in His image, and although the spiritual part of this likeness has been lost as a consequence of the Fall, certain external characteristics still proclaim that man is the crown of created beings. Thus the tongue is made an instrument of evil in calling down God’s wrath and punishment upon a fellow-man. There is no excuse for this, neither loss of temper nor heated controversy. It is a vile transgression, an evil habit, aggravated by the fact that blessing and cursing come forth out of the same mouth. Surely the contradiction should at once strike every man that is guilty of such behavior; he ought to feel that such a condition of affairs cannot possibly be reconciled even with common decency. (Kretzmann)

The same tongue is capable of both a “good word” (eulogoumen) concerning God and a curse (*katarōmetha*) against God’s most precious creation, another person. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**3:11–12** Creation itself cannot be two different things at once; neither can a person who is re-created by God serve Him and curse others at the same time (cf Mt 7:15–19). (TLSB)

**3:11** Solemnly, therefore, the apostle adds: It should not be, my brethren, that these things happen; the mouth which blesses God in fervent prayer should not heap curses upon men at other times; such behavior cannot be reconciled with the Christian profession. (Kretzmann)

**3:12** How utterly unreasonable and contradictory the attitude of men is that still are guilty in the manner described, the apostle shows by a few examples: Surely a spring out of the same opening does not send forth sweet and bitter water! A fig-tree, my brethren, surely cannot bring forth olives, or a grape-vine, figs! Neither can salt water yield fresh. Nature itself teaches that the

behavior of men as just characterized by the apostle is unnatural, unreasonable. For the same fissure, the same opening of a spring or fountain, cannot bubble up sweet, fresh water, and bitter, brackish water at the same time. A fig-tree will not bear olives, nor a vine, figs, neither can a sweet-water fountain yield salt water and a saltwater spring, or the salty sea, sweet water. How much more does it behoove Christians to watch over their tongues, lest the good and the evil, the wholesome and the foul, be poured forth from the same mouth! (Kretzmann)

*Wisdom from Above*

**13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**

**3:13** *wise and understanding.* Refers to the teachers of v 1, who claimed to be faithful but were acting otherwise. Cf Dt 1:13–15. (TLSB)

*meekness of wisdom.* Both are attributes of a righteous person (cf 1:5; Mt 5:5). (TLSB)

The apostle now makes a direct application of the lessons contained in the first part of the chapter: Who is wise and intelligent among you? Let him show his works out of an excellent conduct in the meekness of wisdom. Christians should make use of proper wisdom, prudence, and common sense; they should show that their intelligence, controlled by their obedience to the Word of God, is well able to direct their actions in life. Such wisdom is not boastful and proud, vaunting itself at the expense of others, but it is modest, humble, meek. It does the right thing, it behaves itself in a conduct which agrees with the will of God, not with the purpose of seeking its own glory, but only that of serving the Lord, this in itself being a sufficient reward for the believer. In this spirit he performs the works which the Word of God teaches him as pleasing the heavenly Father. (Kretzmann)

**3:14** *jealousy and selfish ambition.* Sins frequently singled out in the NT, for they destroy the community created by God (e.g., 1Co 3:3). (TLSB)

*boast.* Cf 4:16. (TLSB)

*false to the truth.* Denying one's sinfulness also denies God's Word. (TLSB)

**3:15** *not wisdom that comes down* – But if all that theoretical wisdom is yielding a life full of bitterness, envy, and selfish ambition, it is no wisdom at all but pompous gas. (PBC)

Gift from God that makes us alive in faith and guides us to live by His Word (cf Pr 2:1–9). (TLSB)

*from above.* From God (see 1:5, 17; 1Co 2:6–16). (CSB)

*earthly, unspiritual, demonic.* Sin is not from God but from the world, which is controlled by evil. (See a similar contrast in 1:13–15.) (TLSB)

**3:16** Just as the small tongue can start a great fire (v 5), so desire leads to sin that can destroy the self (cf Mk 7:20–23) and others. (TLSB)

*jealousy* - *dzaylos* – To have jealousy that is fervent, zealous and includes malice.

Disorder, evil practices, fights, and quarrels result from envy and selfish ambition. It is the inner motives of the heart that result in these outward actions. James turns his attention now to these motives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The word *zēlos* can mean “zeal” in the good sense (2 Cor 11:2), but in the New Testament it usually means “envy, jealousy” in an evil sense. V 14 describes it as “bitter” (as opposed to fresh or sweet, 3:11–12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The word for selfish ambition (*eritheia*) was used by Aristotle to denote “a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means” (BAGD 309b). It denotes concern for oneself at the expense of the people whom one should be serving. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

Where these attitudes reside, there you may also expect to find disorder. Things are thrown into disarray because people begin to think only of their own private causes. Disorder leads to “every evil practice.” So it is when people (and some factions in the church) are so puffed up with their own wisdom that they are unable to listen to God (1:19–22). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

*selfish ambition* - *erithiah* – At that time it had the meaning of being self-seeking for political purposes.

This was used by Aristotle to denote a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means. It denotes concern for oneself at the expense of the people for whom one should be serving. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 1, Part 4)

This, in fact, is the only fruit that can be expected where emulation and party-strife, jealousy and rivalry, exist, where every one insists upon having his own ideas accepted, regardless of the views of others. Naturally, there will be disturbances, disorders, everything will be upset in such a congregation, a condition will result which will give rise to every evil deed, the passions finally having free and full sway. (Kretzmann)

*disorder*. “God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (1Co 14:33). (CSB)

*akatastahsee* – Instability that leads to confusion and tumult.

Evil practices, fight and quarrels result from envy and selfish ambition. It is the inner motives of the heart that result in these outward actions. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 1, Part 4)

Caused by those with their false wisdom and wind up troubling the group of believers by demanding their own rights and exercising a party spirit. When used with political associations, the word speaks of anarchy. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

*vile practice* – Evil is fowlos – To have a wicked and foul intent. Practice is pragmah which means a deed, affair, or a way of doing business.

**3:17** The Father wishes to give us the gift of true wisdom from above—revealed wisdom versus the so-called wisdom of this world. Moses taught the Israelites who were about to enter the Promised Land that God’s laws contained wisdom found in no other nation on earth. By obeying and observing these laws they would evangelize the world. They would show other peoples that God had revealed his gracious wisdom and knowledge (Dent 4:5–8). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

Similarly for the Christian, wisdom is more than a set of rules and laws. Wisdom personified has become flesh in Jesus Christ. He is both the power and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24). In him all the fullness of God now dwells in bodily form (Col 2:10). So believers are encouraged to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom” (Col 3:16). Like the Israelites, as Christians live according to the wisdom of God, they are an evangelistic witness to the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

In contrast to the wisdom of this world which leads to quarrels and division, James now outlines what God’s wisdom produces. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

*first pure.* Our hearts are purified by Christ (4:8) and therefore unstained by the world (1:27). (TLSB)

This wisdom is first of all pure (*hagnē*, related to “holy”). The fact that God is holy means that he is separate, unlike the “gods” and the people of this world. In his purity and majesty he is therefore worthy of veneration and worship. So it is with the wisdom that comes down from God. It too is holy, pure, chaste, spotless, and undefiled by the ways and the thinking of this world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 1, Part 4)

*then.* Good works flow from a heart that has been purified by Christ. The traits listed enable us to build others up. All contrast with cursing and boasting (vv 9–10, 14). (TLSB)

*open to reason.* Or, “humane.” (TLSB)

Wisdom is also considerate (*epieikēs*, in contrast to being callous or unreasonable. Peter urges believing slaves to submit not only to good and “considerate” masters, but also to those who are harsh and unjust, causing them to suffer. Thus they follow the example set for them by Christ (1 Pet 2:18–23). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

Further, wisdom is submissive (*eupeithēs*), another word unique to James in the New Testament, from the verb “to be persuaded.” Wisdom teaches the believer to be submissive and obedient out of love for God and concern for others, including the unity of the church. Paul uses a different word but the same concept when he teaches believers to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

*mercy.* Cf 2:13. (TLSB)

This wisdom is also “peace-loving” (*eirēnikē*). The word is used elsewhere in the New Testament only in Heb 12:11, where it is called the fruit of God’s discipline. In Prov 3:17 we learn that all the paths of wisdom are *shalom*—“shalom, peace”—implying far more than freedom from war. It connotes security, safety, and wholeness for all who are in the covenant with God. It is a gift of God and a sign of his grace (Is 54:10). For the Christian, shalom is that relationship which has been made possible by Jesus, the Prince of peace. He is our peace (Eph 2:14–17). Because of him we have peace with God (Rom 5:1). He, who is God’s wisdom, produces within his followers this same peace as they relate to others. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

*impartial*. Theme of 2:1–13. Luther: “It is certain that no man who is busy with commandments or righteousness performs this true service [true religion]. They cannot even comprehend it intellectually. For it is a teaching revealed from heaven which does not arise from the human heart or mind. The Holy Spirit must be the Teacher and Guide. Since He reaches men only through faith in Christ, whereas the work-righteous reject faith and retain the Law, it is impossible for them to perform this service. Therefore the Christian religion is easy, as I said, if you regard only the outward acts. But if you consider this spiritual service, it is most difficult, for you cannot perform this unless your heart is changed” (AE 12:87). (TLSB)

Finally, wisdom is “impartial and sincere.” (Both are alpha privative words—words formed by adding the negative prefix *a-*, like English *a-social*, etc.) The impartial man looks at all sides fairly and does not show favoritism (on which see the previous sermon study). The second word is the negative of “hypocrite.” The term originally described an actor, the person who interpreted or explained the story. Later, the word then came to imply a pretender, phony, fake, fraud—all of which a sincere person is not. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

*submissive* – *yoopithace* – to be compliant.

Peter urges believing slaves to submit not only to good and considerate masters, but also to those who are harsh and unjust, causing them to suffer. Thus they will follow the example set for them by Christ (1 Peter 2:18-23) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 1, Part 4)

This is another word unique to James in the NT, from the verb “to be persuaded.” Wisdom teaches the believer to be submissive and obedient out of love for God and concern for others, including the unity of the church. Paul uses a different word but the same concept when he teaches believers to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 1, Part 4)

The word is used of submission to military discipline and for observance of legal and moral standards in ordinary life (e.g., one who willingly submits to a fatherly will). He has a ready ear for the please of others. Does not this sound like a description of Christ in the Gospels! (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

*good fruits* – Good is *agathos* and means to do something that is of benefit to others. Fruit is *karpōs* which is fruit that can be plucked.

Wisdom is also “full of mercy and good fruit.” Once again this phrase describes God. “God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Rom 11:32–33). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

*impartial*. See 2:1–13. (CSB)

adeekreetos – To treat people in a manner that shows no distinguishable difference.

*Sincere* - anoopokreetos – To be without hypocrisy and nothing fake.

**3:18** *harvest of righteousness*. Bounty of righteous actions. The list in v 17 is only representative; there is no limit to the benefits others receive from our righteous actions. (TLSB)

Repeated for emphasis. Contrasts with the cursing, poisonous tongue (vv 6–10) and echoes Mt 5:9. (TLSB)

One doesn't just do rightly because one makes peace. Rather because one is righteous in Christ, he or she produces peace. Fro fruit of righteousness see Is. 32:16-18; Amos 6:12; Prov 11:30; 2 Cor 9:10; Phil 1:11; heb 12:11. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

sow - spiro – To scatter the seed.

Those who work for peace are planters and sowers; their seed will take root, grow, and spread. The harvest produced will be righteousness and peace. Once again, James echoes Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. This is James' version of "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they will be called the sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). It also reflects Proverbs 11:30, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life," and Isaiah 32:17, "The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever." Vv 17-18 portray the wise Christian in stark contrast to the persons described in v 16. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 1, Part 4)

*who make peace*. Contrast v. 16. Discord cannot produce righteousness. (CSB)

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Truly wise teachers are pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, merciful, impartial, and sincere, and that kind of leadership and teaching bears a wonderful harvest: many more new Christian who are like that. (PBC)

**Ch 3** There are only two ways to live: by the "wisdom" of the world or by God's wisdom. James condemns the worldly pattern of selfishness, deception, hurtful words, and other evil behaviors. Christians, too, struggle with such sins and are even tempted to present themselves as holier than others. How different is the wisdom of God! He has purified us in Christ and freed us from the stain of the world. We now walk in the works He has prepared for us to do. • O Lord, purify me so that my words may uplift, strengthen, bring peace where there is strife, and bring sincerity where there is falsehood. Use my lips to speak Your glory, to tell of Your wonderful deeds, and to proclaim Your salvation. Amen. (TLSB)