

- 1) Thanks to Gloria for asking about James the Just.
- 2) James the brother of Jesus and the writer of this letter is also known as James the Just.

James the Just was a title given to James, the brother of Jesus, primarily due to his reputation for righteousness and strict adherence to Jewish law. Early Christian and historical sources describe him as a man of exceptional piety who was known for:

- His devotion to prayer (reportedly so much that his knees became calloused "like a camel's")
  - His strict observance of Jewish law and traditions
  - His fair and righteous character
  - His ascetic lifestyle
- 3) I looked back over all my notes from the introduction and somehow I obviously missed that name and its connection to James.
  - 4) However, I will point out that as we discussed in the introduction, James did have a great concern for his Jewish brothers.
    - a) One other comment that I read indicated that he had this reputation not only with the Christian community but with the non-believing Jews as well.

### **Questions/comments?**

- 5) Ok moving on...

### **James 3:5b–12 (NASB 2020)**

See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of unrighteousness; the tongue is set among our body's parts as that which defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup> For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. <sup>8</sup> But no one *among* mankind can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse people, who have been made in the likeness of God; <sup>10</sup> from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brothers *and sisters*, these things should not be this way. <sup>11</sup> Does a spring send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*? <sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree, my brothers *and sisters*, bear olives, or a vine *bear* figs? Nor *can* salt water produce fresh.

- 6) Examples – one after another – all showing how seriously we should take this whole teaching on control of our tongues.
- 7) One in particular is his first example.
  - a) I see in this the possibility that James is talking about gossip though it does not have to be.
  - b) It is not the quantity of words that we say sometimes that is the problem – it can be a single sentence, perhaps a single word.

## James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025

- c) Then the consequences become much larger – the small flame and the forest fire.
  - d) A wrong word spoken in haste can, as we discussed a bit ago, cause massive amounts of pain in peoples lives.
  - i) “For the tongue often outruns thought”<sup>10</sup> (Boyd Carpenter)
- 8) I know I shared this with you before but it seems appropriate to do so once more. James is in good company with feeling and teaching as he has here.
- a) Jesus speaks to the absolute seriousness of this same situation and its eternal consequences.

### Matthew 12:35–37 (NASB 2020)

<sup>35</sup> The good person brings out of *his* good treasure good things; and the evil person brings out of *his* evil treasure evil things. <sup>36</sup> But I tell you that *for* every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on *the* day of judgment. <sup>37</sup> For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

- 9) I know this is a hard subject for us to look at this deeply but it is really one of the things that James features in this letter which are absolutely part of **FAITH DEMONSTRATED!**
- 10) We have talked about the bad stuff the tongue can do. So, let’s brainstorm for a minute.

### **What are some things the tongue can do that are right and proper? (let’s name as many as we can)**

- 11) Obviously, our goal should be to make as many of these good things a part of our lives as we can and, at the same time, eliminate as many of the bad things associated with the tongue as we can.

### **Any further thoughts, comments or questions?**

- 12) James now switches topics once more. In this next passage he speaks of wisdom and the source of wisdom.

### **Before we read this passage, let’s get your ideas of exactly what wisdom is?**

**Oxford Dictionary** = the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment; the quality of being wise.

**Webster** = wisdom is the ability to use knowledge and judgment to make good decisions. It can also refer to the accumulation of knowledge through learning.

- 13) Ok let’s hear what James has to say about wisdom...

### James 3:13–18 (NASB 2020)

#### **Wisdom from Above**

<sup>13</sup> Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup> This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For

---

<sup>10</sup> W. Boyd Carpenter, [\*The Wisdom of James the Just\*](#) (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1903), 192.

## **James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025**

---

where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, free of hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup> And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

14) James begins here with a rhetorical question – who is wise and understanding?

- a) He then explains that that person (and us) will show that wisdom in the way we behave.
- b) He ties it back to the works/deeds we have discussed.

15) When he then speaks of bad behavior – jealousy, selfishness, arrogance.

- a) As we display these things, we are displaying a wisdom which is within our selfish selves and not in any way which is remotely from God.
- b) To the contrary, according to James here, those kinds of behaviors are demonic which I take to mean being of Satan.

16) Another point he makes here which I think we can definitely see playing out in our world today is that when jealousy and selfish ambition do exist chaos follows – he calls it “disorder and every evil thing.”

17) He concludes his thoughts by a fruit basket list of the good things that come from living with wisdom from God and not our own self-imposed “so called” wisdom.

- a) Pure, peace-loving, gentle, reasonable full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, free of hypocrisy.
- b) This is all about how we deal with people – not just our Christian brothers and sisters but all people.
- c) All of this begins with 1:19 – being quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

18) Does that all come together for you? (Assume a yes answer)

19) Now comes the final statement of this passage.

<sup>18</sup> And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

20) You may or may not recall, but we talked about the phrase fruit of righteousness in our study of Philippians. There, Paul says:

<sup>11</sup> having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.

21) We talked about this and basically concluded that “fruit of righteousness” was in truth a combination of all the fruit of the Spirit listed in Gal 5:22.

### **Do we agree with that?**

22) I want to read this passage again and then ask a question.

### **James 3:13–18 (NASB 2020)**

#### **Wisdom from Above**

<sup>13</sup> Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup> This wisdom

## **James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025**

is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, free of hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup> And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

**Does all of what James says here change your definition of wisdom or does it add to it?**

**So, given that, what conclusion do you draw here – How is what James says here to affect our lives?**

23) From good wisdom and how it effects our lives, James moves on once again to our selfish side.

### **James 4:1–4 (NASB 2020)**

#### **Things to Avoid**

<sup>1</sup> What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is the source not your pleasures that wage war in your body's parts? <sup>2</sup> You lust and do not have, *so* you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain, *so* you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend *what you request* on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup> You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

24) He opens with another rhetorical question; What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?

25) He then supplies the answer – to boil it down to a single word again, self.

- a) Actually, the answer here is a little more detailed and he brings out a point that we many times do not really consider which is the root of self – the parts of our body.
- b) When we really consider it, we see that it is the parts of our being that are really what is driving self.
- c) If we were only heads and had no hands to hold things, no parts of our bodies that gave pleasure, no need for things because we could not use them we would be much more easily satisfied.
- d) In one translation the answer reads; Do they not come from here, from the desires at war in your organs?<sup>11</sup>
- e) Of course, one of the biggest troublemakers is what we call the heart – not the organ but the emotion.

---

<sup>11</sup> A. K. M. Adam, [\*James: A Handbook on the Greek Text\*](#), ed. Martin M. Culy, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 75.

## **James – Faith Demonstrated – 2025**

---

- f) In this case, what that means is our mind being a slave to the rest of the parts of your body including our emotions – wanting to feel good – so it provides the desire behind all that.
  - i) The eyes see things and because they are desirable to the heart (mind or other parts) we want them.
  - ii) Then we have to control that desire and properly evaluate whether what we see and want is proper for us to have and at what cost.
- 26) In all this, James provides some pretty strong results, murder, fights, and quarrels.
- 27) Then he really calls out a problem – asking God to give us income so we can spend it to acquire all these things we desire. “PROSPERITY GOSPEL”?
- 28) He finally calls those who are this way adulteresses.
- 29) This whole passage is a super strong inditement of living as Christians but, as James puts it, “having a friendship with the world.”

### **What’s your reaction to all that? – O.k.? Strong? Totally over the top?**

- 30) We all set here and say to ourselves “that’s not me – I’m not like that” and I would absolutely agree.
  - a) To the degree that James describes these folks, we are not them.

### **However, do you think we could raise our hands just a little bit and maybe some small areas?**

- 31) This is one of those places where James is doing what I call “starting to meddle” or perhaps “hitting where it hurts”.
- 32) Of course, the real gut punch here is that those who fall into this category are “enemies of God”.
- 33) I can’t speak for you but for me, I never want to be there!