

Commentary on James Chapters 3 and 4 by Chuck Smith 12.1.24

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November Memory Verse, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

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Chapter 3

Let's turn to James chapter three. James first of all warns against a desire to teach the Word of God that would stem or emanate just from your own desire to be in front of people or whatever.

My brethren, [he said,] be not many masters [or teachers] ([Jam 3:1](#)),

The idea of master there is a teacher,

knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation ([Jam 3:1](#)).

Teaching the Word of God is an awesome responsibility, because when I stand here to teach God's Word, than I am responsible to be teaching the Word of God correctly. For if I do not teach the Word of God correctly, then those people that I may be leading astray, will be people for whom I will have to bear a responsibility. It is a heavy obligation

A lot of times people want you to speculate on a subject and to me that is extremely dangerous. There is a danger always in approaching the scriptures with a certain mind set. "I have a particular doctrine that I have embraced, I adhere to, and though there are scriptures that would seemingly contradict the position that I believe in. I then feel the necessity of somehow explaining away those scriptures. That is dangerous. I don't think that we should meddle or tamper with the Word of God. I think that we should keep it just as pure as possible as we seek to teach the Word.

Now the Bible warns of those who handle the Word of God deceitfully, and I have met so many people who handled the Word of God deceitfully.

Now James is gonna talk to us about something of which we all have a problem now or then, and that's our tongue.

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For in many things, [he said,] we offend all. And if any man offends not in word, the same is a perfect man, and is able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horse's mouth, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body with that bit. 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 desires. Even so the tongue is a little member, but it boasts great things. Behold, how great a matter just a little fire can kindle! ([Jam 3:2-5](#)).

The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, it is capable of defiling the whole body, it sets on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire of Hell. [Now,] every kind of beasts, and bird, and serpent, and things of sea, is tame, and has been tamed by man ([Jam 3:6-7](#)).

It is interesting how that man has been able to tame all kinds of creatures. We can tame lions, we've seen the lion tamers and we've watched them in the circus. Birds can be trained to talk, and to say phrases. Even serpents can be trained and you see the... in India the guy with his flute and the Boa constrictor you know doing its thing. And of course you can go down to Sea World or over to Marineland and see how they have trained the fish. Man has learned how to train and to bring into control all these of these wild things in nature. One thing man hasn't been able to tame is his own tongue,

but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, and fully of deadly poison ([Jam 3:8](#)).

Jesus, one day, said something that is worth considering at this point. He said, "It's not really that which goes into a man that defiles a man, but that which comes out of a man that defiles him. For out of the mouth comes blasphemies and evil speaking." And then He said it is "out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks" ([Matthew 15:11, 18-19](#)). That doesn't speak too good for our hearts does it? The mouth is the voice piece of the heart of man. The man reveals what's inside of him by his tongue. And sometimes that frightens me.

With the tongue we bless God, even the Father ([Jam 3:9](#));

and isn't that the highest capacity of my tongue is when I use it to praise the Lord. We were singing tonight the praises unto God and that is the highest capacity for which I can use my tongue is use it to declare praises unto God. With our tongue we bless God even the Father,

but with the same tongue we curse men, who are made after the similitude or the likeness of God. Out of same mouth there proceeds blessings and cursings. Now this ought not to be. [James said there is an inconsistency here.] Does a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can a fig tree bear olive berries? can a vine bear figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh ([Jam 3:9-12](#)).

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And so there is a paradox in our tongue it's different from anything else. From the same mouth, there can come glorious praises unto God and horrible curses unto men. The tongue, God help us that we might be so yielded to the Spirit that He would do for us what we can't do for ourselves and that is bring our tongue under control.

Now he goes on to another subject and that is of true wisdom.

Who is a wise man endowed with knowledge among you? let him demonstrate it by his manner of life, by his works, with the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying or strife in your hearts, that's not wise, don't glory in it, and lie not against the truth. [That is a lie against the truth, the bitterness and striving and envy within your heart.] For this kind of wisdom descends not from above. It's not Godly wisdom, it's earthly, it's sensual, it's devilish. For where envying and strife is there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then it is peaceable, it is gentle, it is easy to be intreated, it is full of mercy and good fruit, it's without partiality, and without hypocrisy ([Jam 3:13-17](#)).

Oh, what a difference. That wisdom that is earthly, sensual, devilish, envying, striving, bitterness.

Now, what marks your life? What kind of wisdom comes forth from you? He says that you should show forth the wisdom by your manner of living. Demonstrate the wisdom. In reality our manner of life does demonstrate the source of our wisdom. And if I am constantly in strife, constantly in turmoil, constantly stirred up, constantly, you know, bad mouthing this person, that person, this thing, that thing, then that wisdom that I have is not of God. For the wisdom that comes from God has such marvelous characteristics, it's pure, it's peaceable it's gentle, easily intreated.

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that makes peace ([Jam 3:18](#)).

So this is just good practical advice for getting along with people.

Chapter 4

This chapter could be entitled how to win friends and influence people. Guard your tongue, bring your tongue under control, use it for good, use it to encourage to build up, don't use it to tear down, to destroy, to cut, to hurt. Your wisdom, let it be Godly wisdom let it be demonstrated in your manner of life, that is your life let it be pure. Let your life be peaceable, merciful. Now this fruit of righteousness that we desire is actually sown in peace and that fruit of righteousness will come. It is sown in peace of them that make peace. So seek to live in peace with each other, and that fruit of righteousness will come forth.

But in contrast to the peace,

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Where does the wars come from the fighting's among you, [the strife]? do they not come from your own lust that is warring in your members? You lust, and have not: you kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not ([Jam 4:1-2](#)).

Here James is declaring that most of the problems of man come basically from man's greed, and I would have to concur with this. I think it is the failure of our society. I think it is the failure of our government. Man's greed sooner or later gets in and corrupts. How corrupting is the greed of man, how it corrupts governments, the horrible thing of greed, and it's behind the wars. It is behind the fighting. It's behind the striving. That desire to have what belongs to someone else. The fighting, the wars among us. And yet we have not because he said,

because we ask not ([Jam 4:2](#)).

You know a lot of these things that we desire, if we would just ask the Lord about them, and if it is right, God will give it to us. If it is not right he won't, because you can ask and receive not because you ask amiss, just to consume it on your own lusts. You see, people misunderstand the purpose of prayer. The purpose of prayer is never to get your will done upon the earth. And yet, how often we think of prayer as just that, the agency by which I can get my whims and wishes accomplished. "Now Lord I want you to do this and I want you to do that and I've got this list of things I want you to do before Friday." And we think of prayer as a marvelous agency by which I can get all my wishes and all my desires accomplished.

you ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, to consume it upon your own lusts ([Jam 4:3](#)).

I prayed for some of those beautiful custom cars that use to drive around Santa Ana when I was in High school. Man, how I prayed for some of those cars.

Now speaking in a spiritual sense he says,

You adulterers and adulteresses ([Jam 4:4](#)),

This is speaking in a spiritual sense not physical in this particular passage. There are other passages that speak about in a physical sense but this happens to be spiritual because it is dealing with the love that is in your heart, the love for the world and the worldly things. You have been joined to Christ as His bride. Your chief love is to be directed towards Him. He is the one to whom you have been joined in marriage and if you begin to love something other than Him, more than Him, than you have committed spiritual adultery in your heart.

As God in the Old Testament was constantly accusing the people of Israel of adultery when they began to worship the other gods, so God speaks here against your love for the world.

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Know ye not that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? and whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do you not think that the...do you think that the scriptures speak in vain?" [The question mark should be there. And probably the second should also be a question.] do or does the spirit that dwells in you lust to envy? ([Jam 4:4-5](#)).

But God gives more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resists the proud but He gives grace to the humble. Therefore submit yourselves to God and resist the Devil ([Jam 4:6-7](#)).

Now it is the Devil that seeks to entice us to find fulfillment in the world by lying to us and telling us that we can find all the contentment, and joy and happiness that we desire if we will just turn from God's path and walk after our own desires of the flesh. Satan's appeal is so strong because he appeals to that, which I am interested in, my flesh, the desires of my flesh. And he is basically saying, "Hey, go for it. You'll find that fulfillment, you'll find that excitement, you'll find what you're looking for, just go for it. Go for the flesh." And God is saying, "No, that's death. If you really want life, spiritual life, then seek after the Spirit, and the things that are of the Spirit. Walk after the Spirit."

There is a warfare between your flesh and your spirit. And Satan is there to encourage you to go after the Spirit and the Lord is there to encourage...I mean he is there to encourage you to go after the flesh and the Lord is there to encourage you to go after the Spirit. So submit yourself to God, and resist the Devil, and he will flee from you ([Jam 4:7](#)).

I like that. I think that many times our problem is just that we really aren't standing up for right. We're not really resisting, as we should, the Devil. I think that there are important keys in life and in this spiritual life and this warfare that we are in. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against these principalities and powers" ([Ephesians 6:12](#)). And I think the first thing is the recognition that they do exist. And I think that we need to recognize the source of the attack against us. Many times we can't deal with it because we don't recognize that is a spiritual battle and I'm really involved a battle against this force of evil, this spirit of evil, Satan himself or one of his emissaries. Once I recognize the source of my problem, than I can begin to deal with it. But so many times we are told to pass it off. "Well I'm just irritable today. I'm just miserable. I'm just ready to chew up anybody that gets in my way. Out of sorts, didn't get enough sleep last night. But you know." But we don't recognize that this is a real spiritual conquest. This whole thing that I feel, this heaviness and all is actually a satanic source, a power that is trying to defeat me.

Now the second part of this is draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you ([Jam 4:8](#)).

You see here I am, in the midst of the battle here. Resist the Devil, he'll flee, but on the other hand draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. I love that. All I have to do is just start drawing near to the Lord.

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It's so important it's how we program our minds. It's so important what we're feeding into our minds. And God help us in this corrupt age in which we are living. With all of the technology that has brought into our homes such filth. The television has been a purveyor of such evil. It can be good; television itself I mean it's a thing. It's not evil in itself, but it has the capacity to bring evil into your mind into your life, and it also has the capacity to bring good but it's how you control it, where your dial is turned. But I think of the evil that we will program into our minds as we sit there and watch the TV. And it's terrible. No wonder we're having all of these marital problems and immorality just flooding our nation. It's being planted into the minds of people day after day as they watch TV. Murders, thievery, adultery, the whole thing, it's all there. And Paul when he made the list there in Romans of these horrible things that people were doing, he said not only do they do them but they take pleasure in those that do. And how is it that a person takes pleasure in watching someone snuff someone out you know. We see these TV and on movies. People pay to see that kind of filth. Pay to pollute your mind.

And then we get caught up in the law of nature "whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap" ([Galatians 6:7](#)). I'm sowing to the flesh and I begin to reap of the flesh, envying, striving, seditions, murder. How well if we would just get good inspiring music and play it in our homes. What a difference it makes. What a difference it creates within the atmosphere you see we're sowing now to the Spirit. If in the morning as your children are getting ready for school they come in for breakfast there's praise music on or maybe one of the kids albums on. You're planting into their minds and into their hearts the things of the Spirit. God knows when they get to school they're going to get all kinds of crud thrown at them. We need to counterbalance it within the home. And rather than allowing them to listen to a lot of this junk music with filthy lyrics. That we would actively encourage them by ourselves playing and listening to inspiring music. Again whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap. And if you have that kind of atmosphere, sowing to the Spirit you're going to reap the Spirit.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you double-minded ([Jam 4:8](#)).

You know, that's the problem. David said, "Lord, unite my heart to serve thee" ([Psalm 86:11](#)). The divided heart that's the problem of so many people. Yes, I want to serve the Lord. Yes, I want to follow Him. Yes, I want to spend eternity with Him, and yet there is another side of me that wants to go after the flesh and indulge the flesh.

The afflicted and mourned, weep let your laughter be turned to mourning, your joy to heaviness. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up. Speak not evil one of another brethren. He that speaks evil of his brethren judges his brother, speaks evil of the Law and judges the Law, but if you are a judge of the Law than you are not a doer of the Law, but a judge. And there is one lawgiver that is able to save and to destroy, and who are you to judge another? ([Jam 4:9-12](#))

So forego that condemnation or judgment on another. You're not a judge of the Law. We're to be the doers of the Law, obedient to the Law.

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Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain. Because you don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is only a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Therefore you ought to say, if the Lord wills, and if we live, we will do this or that ([Jam 4:13-15](#)).

So that exhortation, by James to us, to take into consideration, God's will in all of our planning, to make that a contingency to every plan. It isn't that you should not plan for the future, but you should always have the contingency of the Lord's will, if it's the Lord's will. Because I don't know what tomorrow holds. I don't know whether or not I will even be here tomorrow, but if the Lord wills this is what I desire, this is what I plan to do. If the Lord doesn't will it, than I don't want to do it, but that should always be a contingency to every plan I make. I need to realize that my life is short. It's just a vapor that appears for a short moment and then vanishes. I'm here for just a short time, that I need to spend the time that I'm here in something that is worth while, in something that will last eternally. Too much of our life, too much of our effort, too much of our time is spent on things that are not eternal, things that are going to pass away.

But you now rejoice [he said] in your boasting, and you now rejoice in that which is evil. Therefore to him who knows to do good, and doesn't do it, to him it is sin ([Jam 4:16-17](#)).

In other words, sin isn't just something that I do that I shouldn't, sin is also something that I don't do that I should. Oh, I know I ought to do it, oh, I know I ought to go over there and help him out, but I don't. To him that knows to do good and doesn't do it, that's sin. The sin of omission, the failure to do that which I ought to do.