

James

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish
January 25, 2023



James 3:13-18

Vss. 13-14

- James began this chapter cautioning people who would desire to be teachers. The pastor concludes this line of thought by digging deeper, pointing up people who should never be teachers and showing what is that makes a great teacher.
- Basically, James' argument is that a teacher must prove his/her words by demonstrating "the gentleness of wisdom". If you were to read Paul's speech on love in 1 Corinthians 13, I believe James would say, "Yes, that's it. If you want to show you have the knowledge and truth to speak then this is the lifestyle people should see in you." To put another way, "If you're going to teach auto mechanics, you need to know how to fix a car. And if you're going to teach about The Way of Jesus, then you need to be able to confidently walk in that Way."
- On the other hand, if you are teaching Jesus out of jealousy, to prove that you are better than someone else, or if you're teaching out of "selfish ambition", then you're demonstrating arrogance and not love and by your actions are lying against the Truth.
- A teacher then must always be on guard against arrogance. That was the primary sin of the rabbis. To be perhaps the only educated person in town could easily lead to one believing they were simply better than everyone else. But "if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge...but do not have love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2). Gratiano was a Shakespeare character in "The Merchant of Venice". "I am Sir Oracle," he says, "and when I open my lips let no dog bark". He is claiming here to speak words straight from God and all others should remain quiet so as not to be a distracting nuisance, interrupting his great words.
- Such a teacher is also apt to fall into bitterness. James uses the Greek word for "zeal". Used in the right way, zeal can be a great thing. But because zeal produces passion, another trap a teacher may walk into is making every point a Win/Lose scenario. When one's zeal and passion makes it where it's more important to be RIGHT than it is to be RIGHTEOUS, then bitterness is often the result. But "love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). One who is fanatical, bitter, arrogant, and fueled by selfish ambition never, ever needs to be a teacher of Jesus and His Way.

Vss. 15-16

- The so-called wisdom of these people is not a wisdom given by God. First because theirs is an earthly wisdom. It functions with earthly standards and measures success in worldly terms. For these people, success is measured not by the purity of what is taught but by how many people were in attendance. Success is measured in the same way the corporate world measures success, whereas Jesus knew He was being successful when the crowds abandoned Him and His enemies multiplied. Second, James says this wrong teaching is “natural”. The word he uses is difficult to translate. About the closest we could come would be to say it is animalistic. Dog eat dog. Crush and destroy your opponent, those who disagree with you. Give no thought to the carnage. Third, this kind of teaching is downright demonic. Truly, the source is from Hell, not Heaven. In this teaching the seeds of division, hate, disorder, and destruction are sown. It is a lethal poison to the church.

Vss. 17-18

- The true wisdom, which does not come from a book other than the Bible, is from Heaven. This is the Wisdom that helps to teach the Bible to us, that interprets all that we see and hear and read or watch or listen to. Is there Truth to be found here? Does this point to The Way? Does this tear down or does it build me as a disciple? Does it tear down or build up the Church of Jesus Christ?
- James uses eight words to describe the elements of teaching with a Heavenly source. This list sounds very much like Paul’s list of spiritual fruits. It is pure, with no outside elements mixed in. It is peaceable, from the Greek word “*eirenikos*” meaning to be in right relationship with people and with God. Like a triangle with people at the bottom corners and God at the top, the closer we travel up toward each other, the closer we are to God and the closer we travel to God the closer we are to each other. This teaching is gentle/considerate. It is justice beyond justice. Matthew Arnold translates it as “sweet reasonableness”. In short, this teaching leads to fulfilling the moral code Jesus lays out in The Sermon on the Mount. This teaching is “*eupeithes*”, “reasonable”, meaning that it is willing to listen, to be merciful, gracious, and patient. This teaching is “full of mercy and good fruits”, meaning that it is caring and concerned for any who are hurting, even if it is a self-inflicted hurt and we respond with “good fruits” that are practical and meaningful. This teaching is unwavering, meaning that its path is not vacillating, not divided, always walking the narrow Way. It is a teaching free of hypocrisy, meaning that in it there is no deception, it is honest, never acting for personal gain, never trying to be something it is not. And it is the “seed whose fruit is righteousness and is sown in peace by those who make peace.” These teachers are the embodiment of Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be the sons of God.” Only those with good seed can sow good seed and only good seed can produce good fruit.