

James 3 • The power of words and the meekness of wisdom

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We are going to read through the whole chapter. It is actually only eighteen verses, but we're going to read through the chapter, and then we are going to pray, and then we will see what the Lord has for us, all right?

Goes like this, James, Chapter 3: *“¹ 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.

“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.” (ESV)

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we unpack these verses and dig into this chapter, we need Your Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts. Well, first of all, Lord, we need hearts that can hear. We need ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts that will receive what You want to say to us today. So we ask You to do that work, Lord, in us, to remove any obstacle or barrier for us today hearing Your voice.

And we pray, Lord God, that You would speak to us and speak, Lord, about the areas of our lives that need to be addressed. You're very good to do that, and very faithful. And we pray that You'd help us, Lord, that we might live lives that are a blessing to You and to others. And we ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

As you look at this chapter– and you know, sometimes in your Bibles, they will actually put headings that are not part of the Scripture, they are just headings in the Bible– you will notice that there are two main headings or two main sections in James Chapter 3. And the first is contained in verses 1 through 12.

And that is where James talks to us about our words and the power that they can have in our lives. And then the second section, which is much more brief, there toward the end of the chapter– verse 13 through the end– is all about worldly wisdom as it is seen also in the light of heavenly wisdom.

You have worldly and heavenly wisdom that he is going to talk about. But you will notice that James begins this chapter with a rather sobering sort of reminder, I suppose, about anyone who would set their desire to become a teacher in the body of Christ. And it is a warning that involves the level of accountability that goes along with anyone who claims to teach God's Word, because you have to remember, when you teach God's Word, you're purporting to speak for God. And that is not a small issue.

James says, “¹*Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know, that we who teach (he says) will be judged with greater strictness.*” And you know, if you've read through the Bible, and you have noticed what it says, and you believe what it says, you are going to know that God takes very seriously this issue of those who represent Him. And those who misrepresent Him. And that is what the whole strictness is all about here. You know, the Apostle Peter wrote about the prophets of the past who were false, the teachers that are false of the present, and even who are to come. Let me put this on the screen for you from 2 Peter, Chapter 2:

2 Peter 2:1 - 3(ESV)

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even

denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

He says: *“¹But false prophets also arose among the people (speaking of the nation of Israel), just as there will be false teachers among you, who (will) secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing (look at this, bringing) upon themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. (Look at this last sentence.) Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”*

In other words, Peter is saying, God is going to have the last word because there is going to be a stricter judgment for those who speak for God, for those who say, “Well, you know, this...” and it is not just teachers. He's talking about teachers here, and teaching is what I am doing here right now. You all know what that is, but there is even just speaking, saying, “The Lord has a message for you.”

Whenever we speak for God, whether you are a teacher or whether you have a prophetic gifting, or whether you just feel like you have a message from the Lord to somebody, you had better know that what you are saying is really, truly from God, and you had better not be messing with people because God does not take it lightly when His people get messed with, particularly from those who are leaders.

You guys remember why Moses was not able to go into the Promised Land, right? He has traveled all through the wilderness for forty years with these people that just constantly got on his nerves. And after forty years of spending time with these people, they went into the Promised Land, and he did not get to go.

And you will remember that it all centered around this time at the conclusion of their wilderness wanderings when the people were once again without good, fresh water to drink (Numbers 20). And they started to complain, and not just like, “Man, I wish we had water.” They were complaining bitterly and speaking against Moses and speaking against the Lord's faithfulness and all this and that and the other thing.

And God basically told Moses to go out, take his staff, and speak to the rock, remember? And the Lord said, “I’ll take care of my people. Water will come out.” But if you remember that story, that is not what Moses did. He actually got angry, and he vented in front of the people with angry words.

And instead of speaking to the rock, you will remember that Moses struck the rock with his staff. And God was gracious, and water did come out, and the people were taken care of, and so forth. But you will remember that it was just after that, Moses had to go to the woodshed. God called him and said, “Listen, we need to talk. I wasn’t angry. You were angry. And I didn’t tell you to strike the rock. I told you to speak to the rock, and you misrepresented me, because you basically told the people— you showed the people— I was angry. I wasn’t angry. I was ready to bless.” And so that kind of misrepresentation caused Moses to be denied entrance into the Promised Land.

God takes those kinds of matters very seriously when He is misrepresented. And so when a teacher takes seriously the Word of God and stays true to the Word, we should never expect any kind of praise for that or any kind of congratulation for that. You don’t praise people for not being stupid, because veering away from the Word of God is really dumb in light of what we see throughout the Scripture, that God takes seriously those who misrepresent Him.

If you take that seriously, then anybody who teaches the Word of God is not going to do that if they believe the Word of God. So what is our attitude supposed to be? Let me show you what Jesus said. It is recorded in the book of Luke, chapter 17. He said,

Luke 17:10 (ESV)

...you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, “We are unworthy servants; We have only done what was our duty.”

We’re not looking for a pat on the back when we have been true to the Word of God, or when we have shared accurately what the Bible says to somebody. I’m not looking for all kinds of accolades. You are going to find this weird, but I get them. I do get them. I get notes almost every week of people thanking me for staying true to the Word, and I’m thinking to myself, “That’s not praiseworthy.” It is stupid to go against God, but it is not praiseworthy to go with Him. Are you with me?

It is the duty of the teacher to convey what the Word says, not what he wants to make it say, or what people want it to say, or whatever. He is to convey what

the Word says and no more. There is a remark the Apostle Paul made in his first letter to the Corinthians. Let me show you this.

1 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV)

I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written...

He says, “To not go beyond.” Let's stay right here. One of the funnest responses that I have for people when they ask me questions— because you have to know about 50% of the questions I get from people about biblical things are not answered in the Bible— And so I love to go, “Well, the Bible doesn't comment on that.”

And I leave it at that. But people sometimes will write me back and say, “Well, yeah, I know that, but...” No, I'm not going to go there. I'm not going beyond what is written. I am not going to play those games. That's where you get into trouble, when you go beyond what is written. Right here, James says, any teacher that goes beyond what is written is going to answer to the Lord Himself, and I have to tell you something: I fear God. I'm not terrified of God, but I fear God.

Now in verse 2 and following, James is going to go on here and speak of just how critical our words actually are. He says here in verse 2 that if any man is able to control his tongue, “*he is a perfect man.*” Now we know there is no such thing as a perfect man.

He is saying though, that if he were able to execute perfect self-control as it relates to the words that come out of his mouth, he would be a perfect man. Of course, he goes on to remind us that, “²*We all stumble in many ways.*” And that even though the tongue is a relatively small part of the physical body, it has incredible power over an individual's ultimate destiny. And it does. You can make or break your life with your words. You can get yourself arrested by just what comes out of your mouth. You can get in all kinds of trouble. You can ruin your marriage, and some of you have, with just simply the things that came out of your mouth.

Look at verse 3 again. It says, “³*If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.*” And those of you that have worked with horses, and you have seen even a bit, it is a small thing in relation to the size of this massive animal. A bit is really a small little apparatus, and yet it moves this huge animal to and fro and so forth.

And then he talks about a sailing vessel. Same thing. He says, you “⁴*look at ships.*” They're huge. They are driven also by huge winds. They have these massive sails. And yet the captain, or the “pilot” as he refers to him here, directs this massive ship with this relatively small rudder; it is relative to the size of the ship.

And so he is basically talking about how a small thing can direct a big thing. He says in verse 5: “⁵*So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.*(And think about) *How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!*” You can take a single match, burn hundreds and thousands of acres of land.

Again, he is making the point about your tongue. A pretty small part of your body can direct your entire life, and so it behooves us to be very careful. What does the Bible say? “Quick to listen, slow to speak” (James 1:19). Can you imagine if we all followed that one? I have been quick to speak too many times in my life, and it has never served me well.

And speaking of fire, James goes on to give us some insights into judgment related to the tongue. He says that “⁶*the tongue is a fire,* (It can burn. It says it is) *a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining* (or your Bible may say corrupting, or defiling) *the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and* (here he says, and the tongue itself is) *set on fire by hell.*”

Now that's interesting. It's interesting, particularly in light of the fact that– you'll remember– Jesus tells a story; it is recorded for us in the Gospels where he tells a story about this rich man and this poor man. And the poor man was constantly begging for food at the doorstep of the rich man.

But the rich man wouldn't give him anything. And ultimately both of the men died, you'll remember. And one went to a place of punishment, awaiting judgment, and the other one went to a place of comfort. And by the way, that was not just a parable Jesus told. And he goes on, and he talks about how the rich man was suffering particularly related to his tongue. Let me show you this.

Luke 16:24 (ESV)

And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’

“²⁴ *And he called out, (this is the rich man, and he called out) ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, (he says) and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in*

water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.” Have you ever seen that in the Gospels?

His tongue was on fire. That's exactly what James is saying here in this chapter. It is a world of fire. It is a world of unrighteousness, and it itself is set on fire. It is not a fun thing to think about, but the difficulty of controlling our tongue is highlighted in the next few verses. Look at verses 7 and 8. He says, “⁷*Every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, (whatever, they all) can be tamed... (In fact, they have been tamed) ⁸but no human can tame the tongue. (And here's why. He says,) “It is a restless evil, (and it's) full of deadly poison.”* James is making the point here that the tongue cannot be tamed by human effort.

Would you hear me please right now, because this is probably the most important thing I'm going to say about the tongue. It cannot be tamed by human effort. So if you've been trying to change the way you speak, I want to encourage you that it is a futile effort on your own part to try to do it in your own strength.

It is not by human effort that it is going to be changed. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit. You have to confess it. If you have reckless words, or even obscene words, or hurtful words that come tumbling out of your mouth on a semi-regular basis, you have to confess it to God: “Lord, this is me, and I confess that this is awful, and this shouldn't be, and I need your help, because, you know what? I can't change this. I can't change this.” That's the smartest thing you'll ever do in your life, is admit to God, you can't change you, while at the same time confessing that He can change you and that you're willing to let Him.

He says, “⁸*No human being can tame the tongue (try as he may). It (remains) is a restless evil.*” The New King James Version says, “*It is an unruly evil.*” Again the point here is that the human tongue is capable of great evil and destruction. The book of Proverbs repeats it to us over and over. Let me show you.

Proverbs 11:9 (ESV)

With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor.

Proverbs 15:4 (NLT)

...a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

Proverbs 10:19 (ESV)

When words are many, transgression is not lacking.

We all know these things, and Proverbs is nothing more than observations of life. Just observations. In our society, we are all too familiar with what we refer to as verbal abuse. We have learned, and we have learned rightly, that words can injure just as deeply and seriously as can fists. And it is especially serious—and I will tell you right now and speak directly to the men of this fellowship—but it is very, and especially serious, when those hurtful and damaging words come from a man. And I'm talking here specifically to husbands and fathers.

The reason I say that is because we who are husbands and fathers have been specifically given the task by God to protect our families. And when we are the ones who are actually doing the hurting, who is going to protect them? It's like when the law enforcement in a particular area becomes corrupt; they are the ones who are given the job of keeping the peace and keeping law and order. And if they are literally involved in lawlessness and disorder, who is going to protect? The whole society is going to tumble into chaos.

And so it goes also in the home when a man is reckless with his words and hurtful with the things that he says. That is why the Apostle Paul wrote these words to the church in Colossae:

Colossians 3:19,21 (ESV)

Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Fathers do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

And the way we are harsh and the way we provoke is by our words, the words that we speak. Now, I want you to be careful, guys, and listen with me. I'm not trying to condemn. There isn't a man alive in this room or anywhere in the world who has not foolishly spoken a reckless word to his family. We all have, myself included. I've been married 43 years. You have to know that in that time, I've said some stupid things for which I had to go to my wife and apologize, or go to my children and apologize.

As James said earlier, “*2We all stumble in many ways.*” Okay? So let's get that out of the way. I'm not saying that if you have ever said something wrong, “You're a dirty, rotten dog; you can't be forgiven,” and so on. I'm not saying that at all. I am talking this morning about the man who regularly and consistently speaks demeaning and cruel words to his family. I'm talking about the man who constantly criticizes, never has a kind or good word to build up. He is always sarcastic. He is degrading in his speech. James actually goes, “And then, calls

himself a Christian.” He says, “⁹ *With it* (and “it” means our mouths) *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* (he says) *come blessing and cursing.*” In other words, we praise the Lord in church. And then on the way home, I berate my wife. He says, “*My brothers, these things ought not to be so.*”

And then he goes on in verses 11 and 12 and so forth, to talk about things that are contrary to nature. He starts by talking about a spring of water. He says, is it possible for a spring of water to spring forth “*both fresh and salt water?*” At the same time? No, it's impossible. It is either going to be a saltwater spring or it is going to be a freshwater spring.

He talks about trees. He says, “¹² *Can a fig tree... bear olives?*” Well, no. Of course it can't. Why? Because it is contrary to nature. It is unthinkable in the natural world to go to an apple tree and find bananas. Or pears. I mean, it's something that...nobody would even do it. It's stupid. And yet we put up with our mouths doing things that are contrary to our life in Christ all the time. It is just as unnatural and just as inappropriate for us who are born again and filled with the Spirit of God to allow words to come out of our mouths that are hurtful or demeaning toward others, even if you don't know the person.

Can I show you a sobering reminder by our Lord Jesus Christ from Matthew 12? He says:

Matthew 12:36 (ESV)

I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak.

God is listening. It's a very common thing when you hear –or see– people get involved in some kind of an emotional row, and they, in the heat of that emotion, say something that is hurtful or demeaning or whatever. It is very common for them to settle down later on and say, “Oh man, I don't know where that came from. I don't know where those words came from.” Jesus has an answer for you:

Luke 6:45 (ESV)

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Well, that'll bust you in the chops, won't it? Right now, you might not know where it comes from, but God does. It's not a problem with your mouth. This isn't something that washing your mouth out with soap is going to help, as if it ever did. It is a heart problem. It starts in the heart. It emanates from the heart.

And I understand this because, before I started walking with the Lord, I had a filthy mouth. And I'm ashamed to tell you that, but it's the reality. Before I started walking with Jesus, I had a filthy mouth. And when I got mad, I lost all self-control and would say all manner of obscene, vile things. And I hated it even while it was happening, and I'm so glad that eventually, at some point in my life, I realized I didn't have a mouth problem. I had a heart problem, and I had to bring it to Jesus and say, "You know what? I am a wicked, vile man, and I can't change this. But you can."

So let me end this section by saying that, if you are living with someone who daily demeans you, threatens you, and causes you to live in fear, if you ever think of telling someone, you need to come and talk to us; if that's you, if you live with someone like that, you need to come and tell us, because it needs to stop, especially if there are children involved. It needs to stop.

Now the final section of this chapter deals with wisdom, both worldly and godly. James says in verse 13: "*Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness (or your Bible may say gentleness) of wisdom.*"

So we have been dealing with wisdom as it is conveyed or expressed through our words. And now James is going to turn a little bit, and he is going to talk about wisdom or the lack of wisdom or worldly wisdom as it is conveyed— or even contradicted— through our actions and attitudes. He begins with the contradiction of wisdom.

He says in verse 14, "*If you have bitter jealousy...*" What is bitter jealousy? Well, in a short version, it means that, "I want something that you have, and I'm mad that you have it, and I don't." That's bitter jealousy. He says. Or if you have "*selfish ambition in your hearts....*" What is selfish ambition? Those are aspirations and goals that are all about me.

Can I just stop you for a moment here and tell you that we actually program our kids to be selfishly ambitious. We do. When we talk to our children, when they're getting ready, like going through their high school years and we're talking about college and stuff like that, do we talk to them about what they're going to go out and do in the world for the greater good or for other people?

No. We talk about how to get a good education so they'll make good money and be able to live comfortably when they retire one day. That's selfish. That's selfish ambition. What parents ought to be saying to their kids is, "Why has God put you on this planet? Why did God put you here? Let's talk about that. Let's

talk about what role he has you to play in the kingdom of God. Maybe you should adjust your college or your plans for the future based on where God wants you to be and not just how much money you want in your bank account.”

We teach our kids to be selfishly ambitious. So he says, if you've got selfish ambition, again self-directed concerns for the future and your own goals, he says, “*do not boast or be false to the truth.*” In other words, don't deny it. Don't think that it is normal Christian behavior, because it's not. We're not put on this world to live for ourselves. We are here to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who said, “*I am among you as the one who serves*” (Luke 22:27 ESV) Remember that? That's what Jesus said at the Last Supper. “I am among you as the one who serves.”

He proved it on the very night that he was betrayed (John 13) by taking off his outer garment, wrapping it around his waist, and washing the feet of the disciples, including Judas Iscariot. He washed Judas' feet too. That was before he dismissed him to go do the betrayal. That's the example.

We've been given how to live our lives. Remember what Jesus said, “*The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life ...*” (Mark 10:45 ESV). That's our model. So don't be selfishly ambitious and don't pretend like it is just the most normal thing in the world.

What does he say in verse 15? You know what selfish ambition is? He says that, “*this is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly ...*(you and I would say worldly. It's worldly wisdom, right? He goes on to say, it's very) *unspiritual...*” to be completely focused on myself and how much money I'm going to make and the things I'm going to buy and where I'm going to go, and how I'm going to make myself happy.

That's the way the world thinks. It is earthly, it is unspiritual. In fact, he says it is even “*...demonic.*” Now, there's a strong word for you, but by calling it demonic, James is basically saying that it reflects the influence of Satan, not God. You guys do know that the whole world is under the control of the enemy, right?

The world. The world, the system of mankind, is under the control of the evil one right now. That is what the Bible tells us. I'm not making that up. And so there are philosophies and emphases and ideologies and goals and plans and desires that are very worldly. And there are also those things that are godly, and that is what James is talking to us about here: the difference between the two. See, the problem, especially when we are raising kids or even trying to think

through this stuff on our own, is that these things like jealousy and selfish ambition, this is the fuel the world runs on. This is what makes them get up in the morning.

Bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. The world runs on these things, and we're affected by them. We are very much affected by them, and you can't deny it. The world even promotes it. But there's a huge downside. Look at verse 16. This is where he gives us the consequences of living a life full of jealousy and selfish ambition. He says, "*For where (those things exist) jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder, (lack of order) and every vile practice.*" Let me ask you something. Do you see any jealousy or selfish ambition in modern American politics? I know, you all laugh. Me too. Me too. Do you see it in your own home? Yeah.

Yeah, I do. We can— easily— and even chuckle when we admit that it lives in the political world. It is a little bit uncomfortable to admit that it is actually in our home, in my heart. But I can pray all day for politicians and look really spiritual. "Oh God, I pray for those rotten politicians full of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. Amen, Lord." You know? But what am I going to do when I see those things in my home? First thing I'm going to do is repent, and then I'll give it to the Lord. But first, I have to repent. I have to turn away from it. I have to recognize it as even an issue, and then turn to the Lord for forgiveness and the power to change.

Finally, you'll notice that James, in verses 17 and 18, ends by defining the kind of wisdom that comes from God. And now we are going to talk about what it produces. He says, "*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And (a harvest comes from these things. He says it is) a harvest of righteousness (that) is sown in peace by those who make peace.*" So you can see here that both worldly wisdom and godly wisdom have their own fruit. And on the one side, the fruit is disorder and every vile practice, and on the other side, the fruit is good.

But what is crazy about the fruit of worldly wisdom is how quickly we become accustomed to it. And even familiar with it, even though it produces disorder; it produces moral confusion. We grow up with it. You know, kids today are just...it's funny— I've got grandkids— and it's amazing. My two-year-old grandkids— when they're like two— they flip through a computer or a tablet or something like that, like they were born for it. Have you ever noticed that? And then, my dad, who's 94, can't hit the right button, and is constantly, "Oh, it just went away, and I can't..." because he wasn't raised with it.

But you know what? We see the same sort of thing when it comes to morality. The kids today are being raised among moral confusion, and they have become accustomed to it. It's no big deal. It is just what it is. Guy doesn't know whether he is a male or a female, or maybe he identifies as something else. "Oh yeah, of course. Whatever." And for those of us who are a little bit older and sporting some gray hair, we're like, "Are you joking?" That's confusion, but not to some people it isn't. We become very acclimated. We just learn to live with confusion. You live in confusion for long enough, and you learn to live with it.

And there is a great deal of the wisdom of this world that believers operate under, and don't even stop to question it. Don't even stop to think about it. Seeps into every aspect of our lives, seeps into our marriages, our homes, our businesses, our finances, our words, our thoughts, our plans, our goals.

But on the other side where there is godly wisdom, look again at what James says: you'll find purity. Purity. That's wholesomeness. That's healthy relationships. Healthy business practices, healthy habits. He says: you find peace. The world thinks you find peace by sitting in the lotus position and humming; you find peace by walking after godly wisdom.

He says also— here is another interesting thing that you get from godly wisdom— you find that there is an openness to reason. The world is increasingly unreasonable, unwilling to reason. We are very emotional today. We call it science, but it is emotion. And we are not open to reason— and I'm talking about as a world— but godly wisdom is open to reason.

He says, there you will also find mercy. Isn't that interesting? You find mercy where there is godly wisdom. Where there is worldly wisdom, you are going to find the opposite. You are going to find an unmerciful spirit. Do you know why mercy emanates from godly wisdom? Because godly wisdom tells me that I'm just as bad as everybody else.

That is what it tells me. That is what the Bible tells me, that my heart is just like everybody else's heart. I'm no better than anybody else. And so you see, that changes my whole perspective about how I look at other people. I look with mercy now because I know exactly the way you are made. You are made just like me with all the faults and wrinkles and warts.

He says that the outgrowth is also sincerity from godly wisdom. And can I just tell you, this is where godly wisdom comes from, right here. (he holds up the Bible) That's where you're going to gain that godly wisdom: be influenced by the Word and not the world. Therein is godly wisdom. Amen. Amen.

Let's stand together. Do you feel like you just got spanked? Well, then we must have gone through the book of James, because that is what the book of James does for us. You end up going, "Ow! (rubbing your backside) That hurt." Well, so be it. If you need prayer this morning, come on down front. We'd love to pray with you.

Father, thank You so much for our time together this morning in the Word. Thank You for Your Spirit. Thank You, Lord, for making that Word come alive. Thank You for teaching us, instructing us, guiding us, directing us through the Scriptures, and we pray, Father, that You continue to speak to us about what is right and true and good. And that the wisdom from above would touch our hearts and illuminate our minds, and that we would begin to see these positive elements from the wisdom of your Word coming forth in our life. Be with us, we pray, Father, in Jesus' precious name. And all God's people said together, amen.