



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Catholic Epistle of St. James

Chapter 3

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Introduction

- St. James begins with a caution against many becoming teachers
- In view of the stricter judgment that awaits teachers, one should be sure they possess the maturity and self-control necessary to control the tongue
- St. James then provides a series of illustrations to demonstrate the danger of the tongue (1-12)
- Some sought to be teachers so as to appear wise



Introduction

- Yet St. James writes that wisdom is to be shown by one's conduct, done in meekness
- He then defines and contrasts the difference between two kinds of wisdom
- There is wisdom which is earthly that causes confusion and every evil thing
- On the other hand, there is wisdom which is heavenly that produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness (13-18)

The Untamable Tongue (3:1-12)



- The office of public teaching in the church is meant here
- Those who teach others will be judged more strictly than those of humbler professions (Mt 7:1)
- Of those who have much, much is required (Lk 12:48)
- A lesson is to be given on the tongue
- He who teaches will be held strictly to account for the manner in which he uses it

The Untamable Tongue (3:1-12)



- All are liable to stumble and make mistakes, these can hardly be excused in the teacher
- He who controls his tongue gives proof of his ability to maintain entire self control
- The word bridle (Jam 3:2) suggests a figure. The bridle bit controls the whole horse
- This is to illustrate how man turns about his whole body with the little tongue
- Ships are controlled by a small thing, the helm

The Untamable Tongue (3:1-12)



- Though the tongue is so small it can control the body like a bridle, or the helm of a ship
- It claims great powers
- As a spark may burn a house, a little thing like the tongue may stir up great trouble
- The tongue will kindle up anger. A word often causes a war
- It can stir up a world of sinfulness. The tongue moves man, and he can makes a world of sin

The Untamable Tongue (3:1-12)



- It leads all the body into sin
- The idea is probably puts nature in a blaze, referring to the wars due to its influence
- It is often inspired by hell itself. A bad tongue is the organ of the devil
- Four orders are named: beasts, birds, reptiles, fish
- All of these have been subjected and controlled
- Man has never tamed this organ as a whole

The Untamable Tongue (3:1-12)



- Some may have ruled their own, but the organ itself still does its evil work in the world
- Not only an evil, but unruly, often charged with malice, envy, anger, slander, etc
- Its opposite uses are shown
- We use it to pray and to bless God, and, sometimes, the same tongue will be used to curse his creatures
- St. James rebuked evils that he had observed

The Untamable Tongue (3:1-12)



- These inconsistency come out of the same mouth
- A mild appeal to their consciences by their brotherhood in Christ to understand that such conduct deserves the most severe punishment
- In nature such inconsistency is not shown
- A fountain does not give out two kinds of waters
- Neither a tree bears two opposite kinds of fruits
- Nor should the mouth bear blessing and cursing, good and evil

Heavenly Versus Demonic Wisdom (3:13–18)



- Discretion and wisdom must be shown in a good conduct, that is both words and deeds
- True wisdom will not speak boastfully
- If there is bitterness in the heart, let there be no boasting of your goodness
- That would be to lie against the truth
- False wisdom gives rise to envy and strife; and is not from heaven
- It is of the passions, of the devil, not of God

Heavenly Versus Demonic Wisdom (3:13–18)



- Where envy and self-seeking exist in the heart, every evil work and confusion will follow
- The divine wisdom imparted by communion with God is put in contrast with the false, sensual wisdom named in Jam 3:15
- The other is sensual; this is pure
- The other is full of strife; this seeks for peace
- Gentle: Not too rigid and exacting

Heavenly Versus Demonic Wisdom (3:13–18)



- Willing to yield: Not stubborn, but capable of persuasion
- Full of mercy: Not unforgiving and unkind
- Good fruits: The other shows evil works; heavenly wisdom is full of good fruits
- Without partiality: Not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34)., without hypocrisy: Sincere
- The fruit of righteousness is produced by peacemakers (the truly wise) who sow in peace



Conclusion

- Why does St. James caution against many becoming teachers?
- Who is a perfect man?
- List from verses 6-8 how St. James describes the tongue.
- Give the example that St. James uses to show how the tongue is often misused in verses 9-10.



Conclusion

- How does a wise and understanding person reveal himself?
- What are the characteristics of wisdom that does not descend from above?
- What exists when there is envy and self-seeking?
- What are the characteristics of wisdom that is from above?
- Who produces the fruit of righteousness?