

# CHAPTER 3

## INTRODUCTION TO JAMES 3

In this chapter the apostle cautions against censoriousness, and reproofing others with a magisterial air; advises to bridle the tongue, and guard against the vices of it; and shows what true wisdom is, and from whence it comes. He advises the saints not to arrogate too much to themselves, and take upon them to be the censorious reprovers of others; which he dissuades from, by the consideration of the greater damnation such shall receive, and by the frailty of all men, and a common proneness to offend by words; for he must be a very singular man indeed that does not offend by words, (~~SURE~~ James 3:1,2) wherefore he exhorts them to watch over their words, and bridle their tongues; which he illustrates by the methods used with horses to keep them in subjection, and with ships, to turn them as occasion serves, and the master pleases, (~~SURE~~ James 3:3,4) and though the tongue is a little member, and not comparable to a horse, or ship, for its bulk; yet it boasts of great things, has a world of iniquity in it, and much mischief is done by it, being influenced by the powers of hell; therefore care, and all possible means, should be used to restrain it, (~~SURE~~ James 3:5,6) though it is not tameable by man, only by the Lord, when all sorts of creatures are, even the most fierce and savage, and therefore are worse than they, being an unruly evil, and full of deadly poison, (~~SURE~~ James 3:7,8). And what is the most monstrous and shocking, blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth, are pronounced by the same tongue, which is used in blessing God, and cursing men made after his image, which by no means ought to be done, (~~SURE~~ James 3:9,10) and which is not to be paralleled in nature; no instance like it can be given, no fountain sending forth, in the same place, water sweet and bitter, salt and fresh, or any fig tree bearing olives, or vine figs, (~~SURE~~ James 3:11,12). And because all this evil springs from a vain opinion men have of their own wisdom, the apostle proceeds to give an account of true wisdom; and observes, that that shows itself in good works, in a holy conversation, attended with meekness and humility, and not in envying, strife, and lies, (~~SURE~~ James 3:13,14). Such sort of wisdom is not from heaven, but of the earth; it is not rational; it is no better than that of brutes; yea, no other than that of devils, since where the above

sins prevail, it is a hell on earth, there is nothing but confusion, and everything that is vile and wicked, (<sup><3015></sup>James 3:15,16) but, on the other hand, true wisdom is of an heavenly original, of a pure, peaceable, gentle, and tractable nature, and is full of good fruits or works in its effects, particularly mercy, and is clear of partiality and hypocrisy, (<sup><3017></sup>James 3:17) and as one of its fruits is righteousness, that is sown in peace by the peacemaker, and produces it, (<sup><3018></sup>James 3:18).

**Ver. 1.** *My brethren, be not many masters,* etc.] The apostle having dispatched the subject of faith and good works, which constitute the pure and undefiled religion mentioned in (<sup><3027></sup>James 1:27) which gave rise to this discourse, he proceeds to consider the evidence of a religious man, suggested in (<sup><3026></sup>James 1:26) who is one that bridles the tongue; and enters into an account of the use and abuse of the tongue: and which is introduced by this exhortation; and which seems to be opposed to an affectation among the Jews, to whom James writes, of being called “Rabbi, Rabbi”, or “Mori, Mori”, master, master, condemned by Christ, (<sup><3028></sup>Matthew 23:8,10). The words may be rendered, “be not many teachers”; or be not fond, and forward, and ambitious of being preachers of the word, but rather choose to be hearers of it, agreeably to the advice in (<sup><3019></sup>James 1:19), “be swift to hear, slow to speak”; not but that the office of a teacher is a good work, and a very desirable one; and spiritual gifts, qualifying for it, are to be coveted with a view to the glory of God, and the good of souls; and to have many teachers is a blessing to the churches of Christ and a large number of them is often not only proper, but absolutely necessary: but then this office should not be entered upon without suitable gifts, a divine mission, and a regular call by a church; and when entered into, should not be performed in a magisterial way, as lords over God's heritage, and as claiming a dominion over the faith of men, but as helpers of their joy, peace, and comfort; nor according to the commandments of men, but according to the oracles of God. Or it may be, this exhortation may have respect to censorious persons, rigid and severe reprovers of others, who take upon them, in a haughty manner, to charge and rebuke others for their faults; reproof for sin ought to be given; sin should not be suffered upon the brethren; to reprove is not blameworthy, but commendable, when it is done in a right manner, with a good spirit, and to a good end: in case of private offences, it should be privately given, and for public ones, men should be rebuked before all; but then this ought to be done in a gentle manner, and in a spirit of meekness; and when it is a clear

case, and plain matter of fact, and which ought not to be exaggerated and aggravated; mole hills are not to be made mountains of, or a man be made an offender for a word, or a matter of human frailty; and reproof should be given by persons not guilty of the same, or worse crimes, themselves, and always with a good end; not to screen and cover their own vices, or to be thought more holy and religious than others, or to satisfy a revengeful spirit, but for the glory of God, and the restoring of the person that has sinned.

*Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation:* should men enter into the office of teaching others without a call, or perform it negligently, or live not according to the doctrine they teach others, such would be judged out of their own mouths, and by their own words, and their condemnation would be aggravated; and should men judge rash judgment, they themselves will be judged at a higher tribunal; and should they be too censorious, and bear too hard on others, they will have judgment without mercy.

**Ver. 2.** *For in many things we offend all,* etc.] Or “we all offend”, slip and fall; no man lives without sin; in many, in most, if not in all things, a good man himself does, he sins; and this extends to the most solemn services, and best works of a good man; there is sin in his holy things, imperfections in all his performances; his righteousnesses are as filthy rags; hence no man can be justified by his works before God, nor is any man perfect in this life, so as to be without sin in himself: the apostle includes himself in this account, and that not out of modesty merely, or in a complaisant way, but as matter of fact, and what he found in himself, and observed in the conduct of his life: and now this is given as a reason why persons should not be anxious of teaching others, since in many instances, in common speech and conversation, men are apt to offend, and much more in a work which requires a multitude of words; or why men should be careful how they charge, censure, and reprove others, in a rash, furious, and unchristian manner; since they themselves are in the body, and may be tempted, and are attended with many infirmities, slips, and falls in common life.

*If any man offend not in word;* from slips and falls in general, the apostle proceeds to the slips of the tongue, and to the use and abuse of that member; and his sense is, that if a man has so much guard upon himself, and such a command over his tongue, and so much wisdom to use it, as to give no offence by it, to his fellow creatures, and fellow Christians:

*the same is a perfect man*; not that he is perfect in himself, and without sin, that is denied before; unless this is considered as a mere hypothesis, and by way of concession; that could there be found out a man that never, for instance, offends in word in anyone part of life, that man may be allowed, and be set down to be a perfect man; but no such man is to be found, and therefore none perfect: but rather the sense is, that he who in common is so careful of his speech, as not to offend his brethren, may be looked upon as a sincere and truly religious man; (see <sup><5026></sup>James 1:26) or he may be accounted a wise and prudent man, such an one as in (<sup><5013></sup>James 3:13) he is not a babe in understanding, a child in conduct, but a grown man; at full age; a perfect man; in which sense the word is used in (<sup><4016></sup>1 Corinthians 2:6 <sup><3814></sup>Hebrews 5:14).

*And able also to bridle the whole body*; either to govern the whole body, the church, to teach a society of Christians, and to feed them with knowledge, and with understanding; or rather, as he appears to be able to bridle that member of the body, the tongue, so likewise to be able, through the grace of God, to keep under the whole body, that sin shall not reign in it, or the lusts of it be in common obeyed.

**Ver. 3.** *Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths*, etc.] By this, and the following simile, the apostle not only expresses the smallness of that member of the body, which is like the bit in the horse's mouth, and the helm of a ship, but the good use of it, and the great influence it has over the whole body. Horses are without understanding, and need direction in what path to go, and are strong, and would be truly and ungovernable unless bits and bridles were put into their mouths:

*that they may obey us*; and go in the way we would have them:

*and we turn about the whole body* of the horse, this way, and that way, as is thought best, by the help of the bit and bridle; and of such use is the tongue to the natural body, that being bridled itself, bridles, directs, and governs the whole body; and its influence on bodies, and societies of men, and Christians, is like that of the bit in the horse's mouth; who, like horses, would be unruly and ungovernable, were it not for the force of language, the power of words, and strength of argument.

**Ver. 4.** *Behold also the ships, which though they be so great*, etc.] Of so large a bulk, of such a prodigious size, and are such unwieldy vessels:

*and are driven of fierce winds*; with great vehemence, rapidity, and swiftness:

*yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth*; the helm, or tiller of a ship, is a beam or piece of timber fastened into the rudder, and so coming forward into the steerage, where he that stands at helm steers the ship <sup>f29</sup>, who is here called the governor; or “he that directs”, as the word may be rendered; that is, that steers; the word for “helm” is translated rudder in (<sup><4274></sup>Acts 27:40), and the helm or tiller is sometimes, though improperly, called the rudder itself <sup>f30</sup>; and this is very small, in comparison of the bulk of the ship that is guided by it <sup>f31</sup>. Aristotle calls it *πηδάλιον μικρον*, “a small helm”, as the apostle here does, and accounts for it how large ships should be moved and steered by it. And so, though the tongue is to the rest of the body as a small helm to a large ship, yet, like that, it has great influence over the whole body, to check it when it is carrying away with the force of its appetites and passions; and so churches, societies, and bodies of Christians, which are large and numerous, and are like ships upon the ocean, tossed to and fro with tempests, driven by Satan's temptations and the world's persecution, and ready to be carried away with the wind of false doctrine, yet are influenced and directed aright by those that are at the helm, the faithful ministers of the word, who say to them, this is the way, walk in it.

**Ver. 5.** *Even so the tongue is a little member*, etc.] Like the bit in the horse's mouth, or like the helm of a ship.

*And boasteth great things*: and does them; for this word may be taken in a good sense: a bridled and sanctified tongue, that is influenced by the grace of God, and directed by the Spirit of God, as it speaks great and good things, it has great power, weight, and influence: the tongue of the just is as choice silver, and the lips of the righteous feed many, (<sup><2000></sup>Proverbs 10:20,21), the Gospel, as preached by Christ's faithful ministers, who are the church's tongue, when it comes not in word only, but in power, is the power of God unto salvation: faith comes by hearing it, and hearing by this word; by it souls are convinced, converted, and comforted, enlightened, quickened, and sanctified.

*Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth*; what vast quantities of wood, large forests, stately buildings, and populous towns and cities, are at once seized on by a little fire, a few sparks, and in a short time burnt down,

and utterly destroyed. One of the proverbs of Ben Syra is, ``burning fire kindles great heaps;”

suggesting, that an evil tongue does great mischief, as did the tongue of Doeg the Edomite, as the gloss upon it observes: from hence the apostle passes to consider the abuse or vices of the tongue.

**Ver. 6.** *And the tongue is a fire*, etc.] It is like to fire, very useful in its place, to warm and comfort; so is the tongue in Christian conversation, and in the ministry of the word; the hearts of God's children burn within them, while they are talking together, and while the Scriptures of truth are opening to them; but as fire should be carefully watched, and kept, so should men take heed to their ways, that they sin not with their tongue, and keep their tongue from evil, and their lips from speaking guile; for as fire kindles and rises up into a flame, so unchaste, angry, and passionate words, stir up the flame of lust, anger, envy, and revenge; and as fire is of a spreading nature, so are lies, scandal, and evil reports vented by the tongue; and as fire devours all that comes in its way, such are the words of an evil tongue; and therefore are called devouring words, (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 52:4) they devour the good names of men, and corrupt their good manners, and destroy those who make use of them; and what wood is to fire, and coals to burning coals, that are whisperers, tale bearers, backbiters, and contentious persons to strife, (~~Proverbs~~ Proverbs 26:20,21)

*a world of iniquity*; that is, as the world is full of things, and full of sin, for it lies in wickedness, so is the tongue full of iniquity; there is a world of it in it; it abounds with it; it cannot well be said how much sin is in it, and done, or occasioned by it; as blasphemy against God, Father, Son, and Spirit; cursing of men, imprecations on themselves, their souls, and bodies, and on others, with a multitude of profane and dreadful oaths; obscene, filthy, and unchaste words; angry, wrathful, and passionate ones; lies, flatteries, reproaches, backbitings, whisperings, tale bearings, etc. And the Jews say, that he that uses an evil tongue multiplies transgression, and that it is equal to idolatry, adultery, and murder <sup>f32</sup>, and the cause of all sin; and which they express by way of fable, in this manner <sup>f33</sup>:

“when Adam sinned, God laid hold on him, and slit his tongue into two parts, and said unto him, the wickedness which is, or shall be in the world, thou hast begun with an evil tongue; wherefore I will make all that come into the world know that thy tongue is the cause of all this.”

The Syriac version renders this clause thus, “and the world of iniquity is as wood”; or the branch of a tree; the tongue is fire, and a wicked world is fuel to it.

*So is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body*: the body politic, a whole nation, filling it with contention, strife, division, and confusion; and the ecclesiastical body, the church, by sowing discord, fomenting animosities, making parties, and spreading errors and heresies, whereby the temple of God is defiled; and the natural body, and the several members of it, even the whole person of a man, soul and body, bringing upon him a blot of infamy and reproach never to be wiped off; as for instance, the vice of the tongue, lying, does; and oftentimes through the tongue, the actions done in the body, which seem good, are quite spoiled:

*and setteth on fire the course of nature*, or “wheel of nature”: the natural body, as before, in which there is a continual rotation or circulation of the blood, by which it is supported; this is the wheel broken at the cistern at death, in (<sup><2116></sup>Ecclesiastes 12:6) or the course of a man's life and actions, yea, of all generations, and the vicissitudes and changes which have happened in them, on which the tongue has a great influence; and so the Syriac version renders it, “and sets on fire the series of our genealogies, or our generations, which run like wheels”: or it may intend the frame of nature, the whole fabric of the universe, and the general conflagration of it, which will be owing to the tongue; or because men's tongues are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory, because of the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Christ and his people, of which they will be convinced by flames of fire about them:

*and it is set on fire of hell*; that is, by the devil; for as heaven sometimes is put for God, who dwells in heaven, (<sup><1025></sup>Matthew 21:25 <sup><2518></sup>Luke 15:18) so hell is put for the devil, whose habitation it is; (see <sup><1018></sup>Matthew 16:18), and the sense is, that the tongue is influenced, instigated, and stirred up by Satan, to speak many evil things, and it will be hereafter set on fire in hell, as the tongue of the rich man in (<sup><2124></sup>Luke 16:24). To which purpose are those words of the Talmud <sup>f34</sup>;

“whoever uses an evil tongue, the holy blessed God says to hell, I concerning him above, and thou concerning him below, will judge him, as it is said, (<sup><3018></sup>Psalms 120:3,4). “What shall be done to thee, thou false tongue? sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper”, there is no arrow but the tongue, according to



(<sup>249B</sup>Jeremiah 9:8) and there is no mighty one but God, (<sup>24213</sup>Isaiah 42:13) “coals of juniper”, *μnhyg wnyyh*, these are hell.”

**Ver. 7.** *For every kind of beasts, and of birds*, etc.] Or the “nature” of them, as it is in the Greek text; however fierce, as beasts of prey are, or shy, as the fowls of the air be:

*and of serpents and things in the sea*; the fishes there:

*is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind*, or “by human nature”: by the wit and industry of man; by the various ways, means, and methods devised by man. So Pliny<sup>f35</sup> relates, that elephants lions and tigers among beasts, and the eagle among birds, and crocodiles, asps, and other serpents, and fishes of the sea, have been tamed: though some think this is only to be understood of their being mastered and subdued, by one means or another; or of their being despoiled of their power, or of their poison: and the Syriac and Ethiopic versions render it, “subjected to human nature”.

**Ver. 8.** *But the tongue can no man tame*, etc.] Either his own, or others; not his own, for the man that has the greatest guard upon himself, his words and actions; yet, what through pride or passion, or one lust or another in his heart, at one time or another, bolts out vain, idle, angry, and sinful words: and he that does not may be set down for a perfect man indeed: nor can he tame or restrain the tongues of others from detraction, calumnies, backbitings, and whisperings; who say, their lips are their own, and who is Lord over us? no man can, by his own power and strength, tame or subdue his tongue, or restrain it from evils it is habituated to, be it lying, cursing, swearing, or what else: God, by his Spirit, power, and grace, can, and often does, change the note of the curser, swearer, liar, and blasphemer; but no man can do this, though he can tame beasts, birds, serpents, and fishes; which shows the tongue to be worse than anything to be found in the whole compass of nature:

*[it is an] unruly evil*: an evil it is, for it is a world of iniquity; and an unruly one, being more so than the horse and mule, which are without understanding, who are kept in and governed, and turned any way by the bit and bridle: but though in nature the tongue is fenced by a double fence of the lips and teeth, this is not sufficient to restrain it; it breaks all bounds, and is not to be kept in by nature, art, or argument: nothing but the grace of God can in any measure govern it, or lay an embargo on it:



*full of deadly poison*, which, privately, secretly, and gradually, destroys the characters, credit, and reputation of men; and is of fatal consequence in families, neighbourhoods, churches, and states.

**Ver. 9.** *Therewith bless we God, even, the Father*, etc.] Of Jesus Christ, and of spirits, and of mercies: this is the instrument that is used in blessing God daily every meal that is eaten; and in joining with the saints, though only verbally and outwardly, in blessing God for all spiritual blessings in Christ, both in prayer, and in singing psalms:

*and therewith curse we men*: make imprecations, and wish evils upon them:

*which are made after the similitude of God* as man was originally, (<sup><0025></sup>Genesis 1:26,27) and though sin has greatly defaced it, yet there are still some remains of it: and now, what an absurd and monstrous thing is this, that one and the same instrument should be used in blessing God, the Father of all creatures, and in cursing his children, his offering, as all men are by creation, and bear some resemblance to him.

**Ver. 10.** *Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing*, etc.] Which is not only a contradiction, but unnatural, as well as wicked and sinful:

*my brethren, these things ought not so to be*: in any, and much less in professors of religion: such things are unbecoming men, are a scandal upon human nature, and exceeding unworthy of the Christian name; (see <sup><016></sup>Psalm 50:16,19,20).

**Ver. 11.** *Doth a fountain send forth at the same place*, etc.] “Or hole”; for at divers places, and at different times, as Pliny<sup>f36</sup> observes, it may send forth

*sweet [water] and bitter*: and it is reported<sup>f37</sup>, there is a lake with the Trogloditae, a people in Ethiopia, which becomes thrice a day bitter, and then as often sweet; but then it does not yield sweet water and bitter at the same time: this simile is used to show how unnatural it is that blessing and cursing should proceed out of the same mouth.

**Ver. 12.** *Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries?* etc.] Every tree bears fruit, according to its kind; a fig tree produces figs, and an olive tree olive berries; a fig tree does not produce olive berries, or an olive tree figs; and neither of them both:

*either a vine, figs?* or fig trees, grapes; or either of them, figs and grapes:

*so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.* The Alexandrian copy reads, “neither can the salt water yield sweet water”; that is, the sea cannot yield sweet or fresh water: the Syriac version renders it, “neither can salt water be made sweet”: but naturalists say, it may be made sweet, by being strained through sand: the design of these similes is to observe how absurd a thing it is that a man should both bless and curse with his tongue.

**Ver. 13.** *Who is a wise man.*] Meaning, not in things natural and civil, or merely moral, but in things spiritual: and he is a wise man, who is both wise to do good, and wise unto salvation; who has learned to know his own ignorance, folly, and stupidity; for the first lesson in the school of spiritual wisdom is for a man to know that he is a fool: and he is a wise man who considers his latter end, thinks of a future state, and what will become of him in another world; and who builds his faith and hope of eternal salvation on the sure and only foundation, the rock Christ Jesus; and who takes up a profession of religion upon principles of grace, and with views to the glory of God, and, upon mature deliberation, reckoning the cost, and what he must expect to meet with; and which he holds fast, without wavering, and yet does not depend upon it; and who walks circumspectly, and with wisdom, towards them that are without; and who observes both providences and promises, for the encouragement of his faith; and keeps looking to the mark for the prize, preferring heavenly things to earthly ones.

*And endued with knowledge amongst you?* as he is, who is endued with the knowledge of himself; of the impurity of his nature, and the plague of his heart; and of his impotency and inability to do any thing that is spiritually good of himself; and of the imperfection and insufficiency of his righteousness to justify him before God; and of his lost state and condition by nature, how deserving of the wrath of God, and obnoxious to the curses of the law; and how miserable he must be without the grace of God and righteousness of Christ: and who is also endued with the knowledge of Christ, so as to see a fulness, suitableness, and ability in him as a Saviour; so as to love him, approve of him, as such, and trust in him; which knowledge is always practical and soul humbling; and the least degree of it saving; and though it is imperfect, it is growing, and will at last come to perfection: now such a man is a Gnostic, in the best sense; for this question is put with a view to the Gnostics of those times, who valued themselves

upon their knowledge, and despised practical religion and godliness: hence it follows,

*let him show out of a good conversation his works, with meekness of wisdom*; such an one ought to perform good works, and he will perform them; and it is right in him to show them forth, that they may be a means of others glorifying God upon the sight of them; and that they may be evidences of the truth of faith in themselves to others; and that they may be for the imitation of others; and that they may put to silence, and stop the mouths of false accusers, and adorn the Gospel, and recommend religion: and these should be shown forth “out of a good conversation”; not in a single act or two, but in a series and course of living; which may be said to be good, when it is ordered aright, according to the word of God, and is honest among the Gentiles, and upright and holy; and is as becomes the Gospel of Christ, and is worthy of the calling of God to grace and glory; and when it is influenced by the grace of God: and the works shown out of it, and in it, are done in faith, from love in the strength of Christ, and are directed to the glory of God: and all this should be “with meekness of wisdom”; in a wise and humble manner, without trusting to, and depending upon, such works for justification and salvation; and without glorying in them, and boasting of them; acknowledging the deficiency and imperfection of them, and his own weakness in the performance of them; and ascribing them to the power and grace of God, by the assistance of which they are performed.

**Ver. 14.** *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts*, etc.]

Though these may not be expressed by words, or actions: envy at the happiness of others, whether at the external blessings of Providence, as riches and honours, or at the internal endowments of their minds, as their wisdom and knowledge, their parts and abilities, is a root of bitterness in the heart, which bears wormwood and gall, and produces bitter effects in the persons in whom it is; it embitters their minds against their neighbours and friends; it is rottenness in their bones, and slays and destroys those who are so silly as to be governed by it; and also in the persons the objects of it; for who can stand before it? and strife in the mind, or an intention to strive and quarrel with others, who are the objects of envy, is very sinful, and of pernicious consequence: and if these be fomented and cherished in the minds and breasts of men, though they may not outwardly show themselves, yet

*glory not*; let not such boast of their being Gnostics, wise men, and endued with knowledge; they are far from deserving such a character; and such boasting is contrary to truth, yea, is lying against it, as follows:

*and lie not against the truth*; for, for a man to assert himself to be a wise and knowing man, and yet cherishes bitterness in his heart, and quarrelling and contention in his mind, arising from envy, at the equal or superior knowledge of others, he lies both against the truth of God's word and his own conscience, which condemn such things as ignorance, folly, and madness.

**Ver. 15.** *This wisdom descendeth not from above*, etc.] If it must be called wisdom, as it ought not; an envious, quarrelsome, and contentious spirit, does not deserve such a name; yet if any will call it so, or can think that a man of such a disposition is a man possessed of wisdom; it is such wisdom as does not come from above, from heaven, from the Father of lights, from Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and from the spirit of wisdom and revelation: what the Jews say <sup>f38</sup> of the wisdom of Egypt, may be said of this, that it is **hatt hmkj** “wisdom from below”, or inferior wisdom, as it follows:

*but is earthly, sensual, and devilish*; it is “earthly”, or of the earth, and springs from thence; and it is only conversant about earthly things, and is only suitable to earthly minds: it is sensual, or natural; what a natural man, one destitute of the Spirit of God, and without the knowledge of the things of the Spirit, may have; it is what is acquired by the mere strength of nature, and only relates to natural things; and is only agreeable to corrupt nature, or to a natural and unregenerate man: yea, it is devilish, or such as the devil himself has; and which comes from him, and being used, serves only his kingdom and interest.

**Ver. 16.** *For where envying and strife is*, etc.] Where these are cherished in the heart, and especially where they break out into action, in families, neighbourhoods, states, or churches:

*there is confusion and every evil work*; these occasion disturbances, raise uneasiness, make disquietude, and cause tumults whenever they appear; and put persons upon doing everything that is wicked, to gratify such insatiable lusts.

**Ver. 17.** *But the wisdom that is from above*, etc.] Which has God for its author; which is infused into the soul by the Spirit of God; and leads into the knowledge of things that are above, of heavenly things; and which only is true wisdom and knowledge; and those who are possessed of it are the only true Gnostics; for which, (See Gill on “<sup>SUBB</sup>James 3:13”) namely, the grace of God: this wisdom

*is first pure*; it is pure in itself, it is free from everything that is earthly, carnal, or sensual, or devilish; it produces purity of heart, of life, and conversation; and is the means of keeping persons pure and chaste, and free from impure lusts, lusts of uncleanness, pride, envy, wrath, etc. which prevail in carnal and unregenerate men:

*and then peaceable*; it inclines and engages those who have it to live in peace with the saints, and even with all men; with those of their own household, with their neighbours, yea, with their enemies: it is also “gentle”; or makes men gentle, moderate, and humane, so as that they bear, and forbear; they bear with the infirmities of the weak; readily forgive injuries done them; do not rigidly exact what is their due, but recede from their just right for the sake of peace and love; and do not bear hard upon others for their failings, but cover them with the mantle of love: and it is

*easy to be treated*; or those who have it readily yield to the superior judgments and stronger reasonings of others; and are easily induced to hope and believe all things, and entertain a good opinion of men, and their conduct; and are far from being proud, arrogant, obstinate, and overbearing:

*full of mercy and good fruits*; of compassion and beneficence to the poor; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the widows and fatherless in their affliction; and doing all other good works and duties, both with respect to God and man, as fruits of grace, and of the Spirit:

*without partiality*: to one another; or making a difference between them; showing no respect to persons; bestowing upon the poor and indigent, without any distinction: and

*without hypocrisy*; either with respect to God or man; not making show of that which they have not, or do not intend.

**Ver. 18.** *And the fruit of righteousness*, etc.] Which is either eternal life, which is the fruit of Christ's righteousness, and shall be enjoyed by all those

who are justified by it; and who, in consequence of it, through the grace of God, live soberly, righteously, and godly; (see ~~4162~~Romans 6:22) or else what is enjoyed in this life, as the fruit and effect of a righteous and holy conversation, which is peace of conscience; and may be truly called the peaceable fruit of righteousness; (see ~~2327~~Isaiah 32:17)

*is sown in peace of them that make peace*; that is, either such as are possessed of that wisdom which is peaceable, and makes them so; that peace which they make, pursue after, exercise, and maintain, is a seed, which, being sown by them, will, in the issue, be followed with eternal happiness and felicity; (see ~~4169~~Matthew 5:9) or such who live a godly life and conversation, and are filled with the fruits of righteousness, and, among the rest, with this of making and preserving peace among men, shall enjoy, as what will spring up from such good seed sown, much conscience peace and spiritual pleasure of mind: righteousness and peace promise a large and comfortable harvest both here and hereafter.