

Good Morning ...

Let's recall ... where we stopped ... back in January.
With James ... ch.3.v17
You may remember....

V17 Names **eight characteristics** of **Godly Wisdom** !
They're (**not**) ... like 8 coloured pencils !
Each colour ~ separate and distinct ...
Think rather ~ of an Octopus ~ with it's 8 long tentacles
Each of it's 8 legs is an essential part of the whole animal
As we come now ... to Chapt. 4,
The Chapter heading reads ... ***Drawing Close to God.***
James is about to use some more **blunt** language ...
But let's start where we finished in Chpt 3.

And read, James 3. v17-to- 4.v10

James, has already covered **6 important subjects** in his letter:

1st The **mistake** ... of saying:

God ... is tempting me to sin (1.v13,16) He doesn't do that.

2nd The **misunderstanding**, that I can be a good Christian,
saying 'all the right things' to impress people, while in my
private life ~ I'm **behaving** like a non-Christian. (1.22)

3rd The **misconception**, that a rich, Christian's, arrogance,
should be pandered to. (ch.2.)

4th The **false separation**, of our **Faith** from our **Actions**.
(also ch2.)

5th The 3 common **errors of the tongue**:

1st) A lack of self discipline in our talk. (ch.3.9)

‘I like to call it ... how I see it’ !

2nd) So, when I **don’t** want you to know, **what** I know
I’ll adjust the truth ...& tell you **lies** (ch.3.1)

3rd) Blasphemy, using God’s name inappropriately.

6th Confusing Worldly wisdom, with Godly wisdom. (3.13)
Now, in Ch.4 ... James wants us to apply our understanding
of Godly Wisdom ... to our **attitudes** ...
to His LORDSHIP ~&~ to our SERVANTHOOD

‘**He**’ is our **Lord** ~ BUT ‘**We**’ are His servants !

There is no time ~ or situation ~ when this is reversed !

I’ve met some very Godly people, who’ve never understood this.

They say: “But if you claim God’s promise, He’s got to do it”

Got to !? No ! God has the absolute right to say,

I will fulfil that promise, but not till My timing, is right !

v1. The **fighting** that James has heard about,

Doesn’t fit ... with Godly wisdom, and Peace making !

What are the causes ? ‘**Your out of control personal desires**’

Pleasing yourself, as an absolute priority, with no regard for others

“I want that ! ... **give it to me**...or I’ll take it” !

Then someone says ‘**Oh no, you won’t**’ & there’s a fight on.

v2. Uses hyperbole, once more ~ saying:

**You want, what you don't have,
so you scheme ...& kill to get it.**

When someone thinks differently from us ...

Especially when it's ... Their plan ... **instead** of Ours !

We want **their** plan, off the agenda ~ in the dustbin !

So that **our** plan, can succeed !

James continues ~ **the reason you don't have what you want,
Is you don't ask God for it.**

And even ...when you do ask ...you don't get it,

Because your whole motive is wrong !

You only want what will give you pleasure.

They were not seeking to find out **God's plan or guidance,**
but asking God to bless **their own plans,**

This problem ...is still alive and well ... today !

BUT ...'Prayer' was **never** meant to be a **method,**
of how I get ...my own way !

So in v.4 he uses **more** strong language:

And gets their attention by calling them ~

You Adulterers ! meaning ... you Unfaithful people...

You're trying to have a foot in both camps.

V.4 amplifies these 'double standards' ~ Both the fighting,
& the expectation that God will say '**Yes**' to every prayer,

Reflects a worldly ~ and immature, childish view :

That the purpose of my faith ~ is **my personal advantage.**

Genesis tells us ... that when God created man ~
He **breathed his Spirit** into him, and he became a living soul.
He Created us ~ He made us different ~ from the animals !
Through God's H/S ... **We can have fellowship with Him.**
In a unique way that doesn't apply to any other part of creation.

Mankind is unique ! Men & Women are unique.
Therefore ~ God opposes us ... behaving like animals !
Ignoring his Spirit ~ Ignoring his voice ~ Ignoring his guidance

As we move on: there's an important question ... in v5:-
**What do you think the scriptures mean ... when they say ...
that the Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us,
jealously longs for us ... to be faithful ?**

Suppose your son, or grandson joins a local sports team,
They take his name, take his fees, ...
and send him out to practise.

But a few weeks later ... they find out ...
He's practising every 2nd week, with their **rivals** across town.
He would immediately ~ be **challenged** to commit himself ...
To: **one team OR the other**... but not both !

Full commitment ~ goes hand in hand with a willingness to
take advice, and be guided by 'our coach' ~ 'By the Lord'
We all like **a true story** ... this one's a bit shocking ...
It's from the Solomon Islands.

Tama, was bright enough to **be noticed**, at primary school,
So he was selected for a scholarship at 'King George'
That was the Govt's Secondary School, on Guadalcanal.
It was a boarding school, so he was away for most of the year.
and didn't come home again ~ until Christmas.

On his first day home ~ Tama decides to go fishing.
But he's disappointed...when he only gets **one** fish.
As he's walking back to his house ~ feeling tired & hungry.
When an old man calls out to him ...
'**What** are you going to do with **that**' ?

Tama is surprised at such a dumb question. 'Eat it' he says.
'**No ! you mustn't ~ at this time of the year ~ its poisonous**' !
When Tama got home, there was no one there.
The rest of the family were still away at their gardens.
Tama cooked the fish & ate it ... 'Silly old man' ~ It tasted fine
But when the family got home...Tama was dead !

Maturity ... includes **listening** to advice, and **considering**
its application. Being **willing** to be guided by others !
& **learning** from **their** mistakes.

V6 read. God's Grace...His undeserved, gift ...means ...
God given strength to resist temptation,
& to resist our inappropriate desires,
God's grace brings us ... God's blessing/ God's guidance/
& Gods over-ruling/ in certain circumstances,
These are all available to the person ...
who is humble enough to seek his help, & follow it !

Lots of people, deal with frustration ...thro' 'overconfidence'...
How are **we** going to deal ... with all the **pressures** ...
and **desires** ... and **frustrations** of life ?

God knows all about ~ our frustrations, such as ...
When we see **evil** men ... getting ahead by **evil** means !
James has already warned us: (in Chpt 1) **Don't be deceived.**
Now he says ~ God gives us the strength & grace, to succeed
But ~ with a most important condition: Our humility !

In Mat. 18, the disciples ask ...
'who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven' ?

Jesus called a little child and had him stand among them,
& He said '**unless you change & become like little children,**
You will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
Therefore, whoever humbles himself, like this child,
is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

We expect our children, to ask for things,
but we train them ... **not** to expect everything, they ask for !
Jesus was encouraging 'child-like **Faith** & Trust in God ...
Not **Childish**, behaviour ...that's **immature** & demanding.

There are *some things in life* that don't matter, whether you do
'A' first or 'B' ...But with other things it does matter !
You fill a glass with water, then drink it,
To reverse the order ~ is impossible !

The order in V 7 is crucial ...(read only v 7)

Suppose that you show considerable potential at a given sport.

So much so, that **a famous coach** offers to train you !

If you accept ... it follows that you are willing to **submit**
to the coach's rules ... & training ... diet & exercises.

Even restraint on your social life ... like:

No late nights out ... before a big game!

You are being offered an amazing opportunity.

If you fail ... thro' stubborn resistance to the training,

Then you'll be passed over ~ in favour of somebody else.

Our Christian walk, is a straight forward parallel !

Verses 7 & 8 flow together, read: **(Vs 7 & 8)**

If we **don't** follow God's sequence ... what's the alternative ?

We easily reverse the order ! which would read:

**'Submit yourselves to the Devil,
resist God ... and He will flee from you !'**

Now there's a frightening thought !

God will never force his love on us.

In fact **genuine love cannot be forced upon anyone !**

Love is offered ...and if accepted ...

There is a mutual love relationship, a mutual responsibility.

V8. 'Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you'

When **we** respond to **His** invitation,
He responds to us ... every time !

James goes on:

Wash your hands....**fix up the outside**, the visible.
Purify your hearts...**fix up the inside** ...the invisible.

V8b ‘you hypocrites’ ... This is the same word he’s used in
Ch.1 v8: remember the person, who is ‘double minded’
Who wants the best of both worlds
But the responsibilities of neither !
You may remember an illustration...about a boy ...
Whose mother told him to ‘**sit down**’... (but **he** didn’t want to)

And so he said ‘I may be sitting down on the outside ...
But, I’m still standing up, on the inside ...’
This attitude of rebellion against authority is all around us.

It’s important, that we recognise evil ...for what it is,
So we’re not deceived ...

The Prophet Amos says (**5.vs14,15**)

Do what is good, and run from evil, that you may live.
Then the Lord God Almighty, will truly be your helper
Hate evil ... and love what is good.’

Read v 9. Some Christians have taken a passage like this,
to mean ... that we shouldn’t laugh ... and have fun.
That we should be long faced and sombre !

So ... What's the context of v 9 ?

When you place it between v8 & v10 ...it is clear that ...
The context is: **Dealing with sin ~ in the Christian's life.**
He says a double minded attitude, is not on.
Nor is laughing at sin ...and making light of it !

Repentance has been defined as : **not just** being 'Sorry'
but '**Sorry enough to quit**' ! God is never deceived,
He reads our **attitudes** accurately ... every time !

V 10: *When you bow down before the Lord,
& admit your dependence on Him,
He will lift you up, and give you honour.*

This is the same sequence as V8;
Draw close to God and He will draw close to you
The person who turns from his sin, is not left to grovel !
'The Lord will lift him up'

Finally: Vs11 & 12 (read)

One way to draw attention ... away from ourselves,
is to draw attention to the faults of others!
So James says (NLT) '**Don't speak evil against each other**'

It might be an accusation ... or a criticism made ...
without checking the facts !
An assumption of guilt !
but ... we can't 'come nearer to God'
or 'Purify our hearts' by putting other people down !

When there are fights and quarrels in churches,
They're usually over minor issues !

Because James is writing to Jewish Christians,
he makes reference to the LAW without defining it.

But you'll remember ... That one of the Lawyers challenged
Jesus as to what was the most important Commandment ?

The answer was:

'To love God with all your heart & mind & soul ...
& to love your neighbour as yourself.

James has already made ref. to this in Chpt. 2

These 2 verses: (11&12) give us reason to pause,
and think about a common misunderstanding, Sometimes ...
There is a misapplication, of these ideas ~ namely ~

That we should **never** criticise **any** Christian leader at all !
because that is **judging** them.-

People of all shades of religious opinion,
will quote at you: '**Judge not that ye be not judged**'

So let's think about ... what does a Judge do ?

Firstly ... He listens to **all the evidence** ~
from the **Police** or the **Complainant**, from the **Defence**,
& from, any other **Witnesses**.

Then ... he must decide whether he thinks the person is guilty or not ~ and what **the punishment** should be.

Everyone else in the court ~ will have formed an **Opinion**, as to whether the accused ... is guilty or not,

BUT only the **Judge** ~ makes **that final decision** ... & determines the punishment !

This is the real difference between **judgement** ...and: the **evaluation** of an idea, or of a new project, or of a person.

v12: says

God alone, who made the Law,
can rightly Judge among us.
He alone has the power to save or destroy.

So **Evaluation** ... is appropriate and necessary,
Whereas... deciding **ultimate** guilt,
and determining the **ultimate punishment**,
That's **God's responsibility!**

The Key Verses in our passage today...are: vs7,8

So **humble** yourselves before God.
Resist the Devil, and He will **flee** from you.
Draw close to God and He will **draw close** to you.
